

Conservation Trust Fund

Practice Standards Assessment

The Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF) is a regional environmental fund dedicated to ensuring continuous funding for conservation and sustainable development in the Caribbean. Established in 2012 and with a flexible structure, the CBF is designed to accommodate the receipt, investment, distribution, and monitoring of conservation funding throughout the region.

Through the “Caribbean Organisations for a Resilient Environment” (CORE) project, the CBF is strengthening environmental organisations to deliver nature-based climate solutions with a gender lens, empowering women and vulnerable communities through targeted capacity- building and an innovative Gender Smart Facility. The CORE project is implemented by the CBF with funding from the Government of Canada.

The Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) Practice Standard Assessment is a comprehensive evaluation designed to enhance the management, design, monitoring, and evaluation of the National Conservation Trust Funds (NCTFs) in the Caribbean countries where the CBF currently operates.

Governance Standard 1, 2020 Practice Standards for Conservation Trust Funds, Conservation Finance Alliance, Original 2014 version by B. Spengel and K. Mikitin with 2020 update by P. Bath, V. Lujan Gallegos, and A. Guzman Valladares.



Methodology: The Conservation Trust Fund Practice Standards Assessment consultancy was conducted using the 2020 Practice Standards for Conservation Trust Funds primarily through collaborative sessions with NCTF CEOs and staff as a capacity-building exercise. Each NCTF assessment began with an introduction to the Practice Standards framework, followed by a review of existing organisational documentation and completion of a comprehensive questionnaire that typically required 4 hours split across 2 sessions. This hands-on approach aimed to enhance NCTFs' capacity to conduct future self-assessments independently while generating standardised results across all participating funds for regional comparison and analysis.

The data in this report was collected between January and February 2024, and serves as a baseline study for future governance assessments. All visual representations of data reflect NCTF status as of February 2024.



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Developed by the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF) and under the Caribbean Organisations for a Resilient Environment (CORE) project. The publication date of this product, September 2025. Consultant: Geeta Devi Singh.

Regional NCTF Performance Dashboard

NCTF Performance Across 7 Core Areas

The assessment evaluated eight NCTFs under the CORE project along with the CBF across seven core governance areas using a 0-3 implementation scale. Results show significant variation in governance maturity across the region.



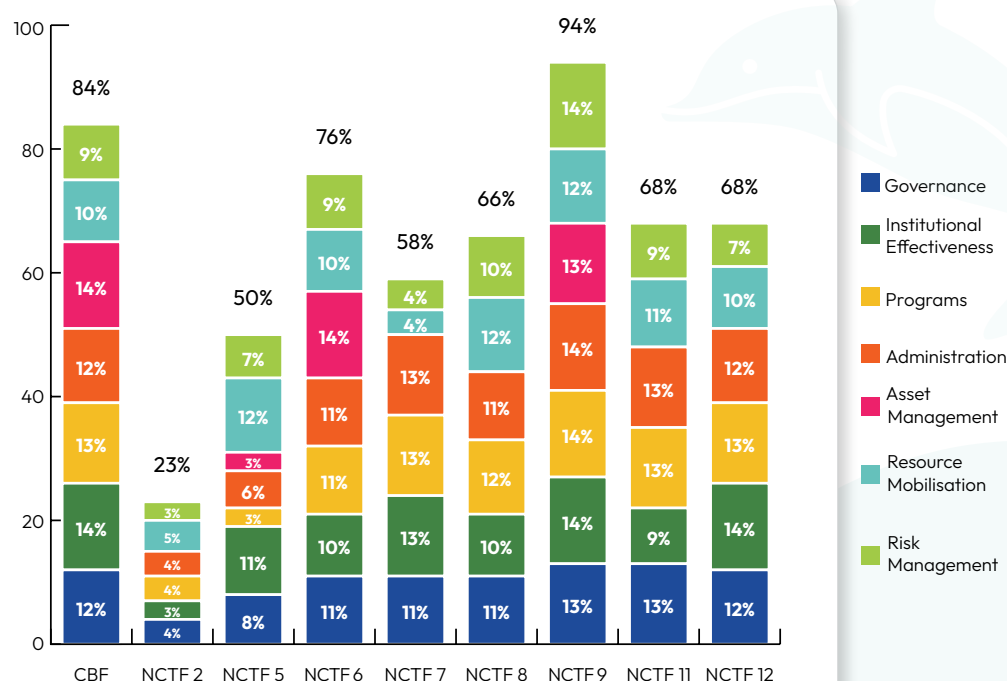
Data Source:
Table 1, pages 10-19 of Good Governance Practice Assessment Report

Overall NCTF Implementation Scores

Overall implementation rates reveal a wide performance spectrum, with NCTF 9 and CBF achieving over 80% compliance, while newer funds like NCTF 2 show significant room for growth at under 30% implementation.

Data Source:

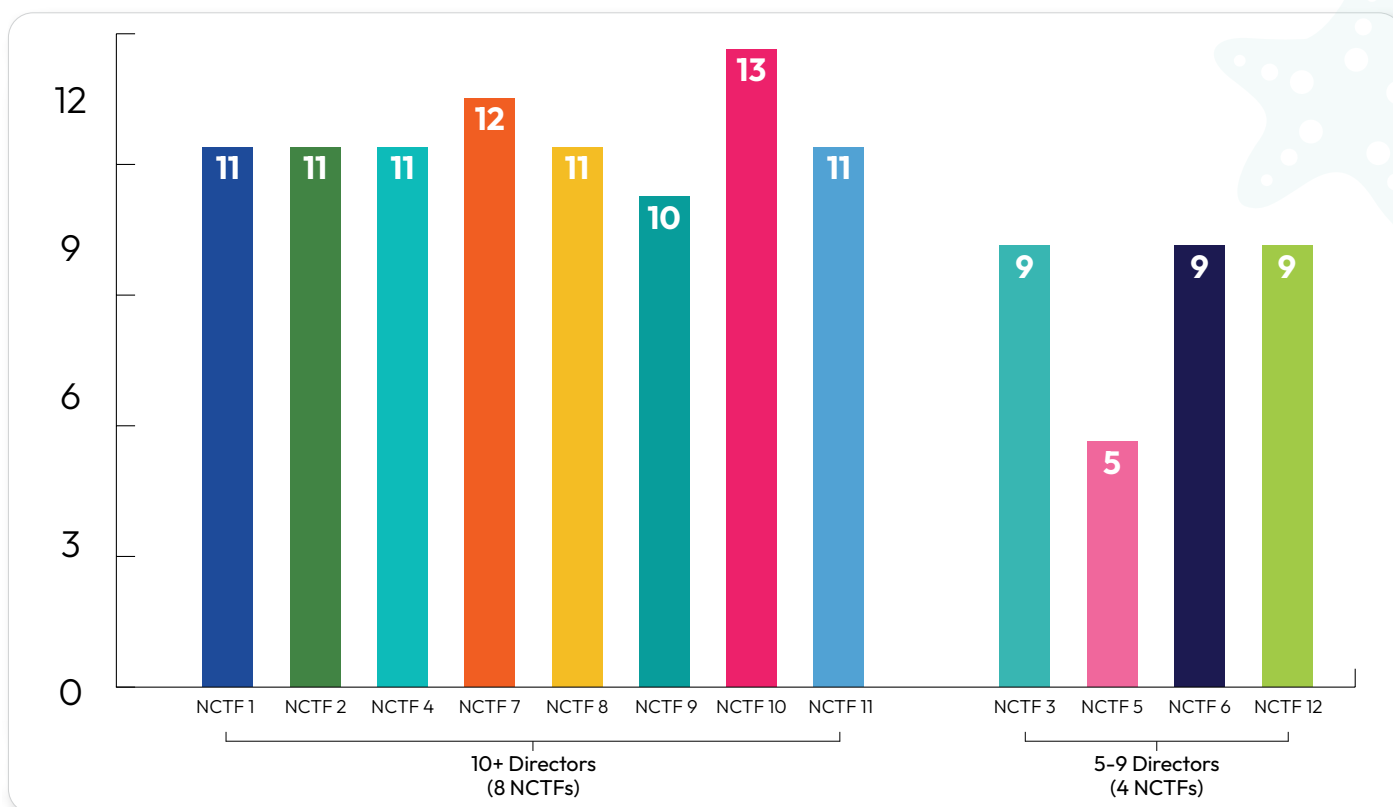
Figure 3, page 21 of Good Governance Practice Assessment Report



Key NCTF Governance Challenges

Board Size Distribution

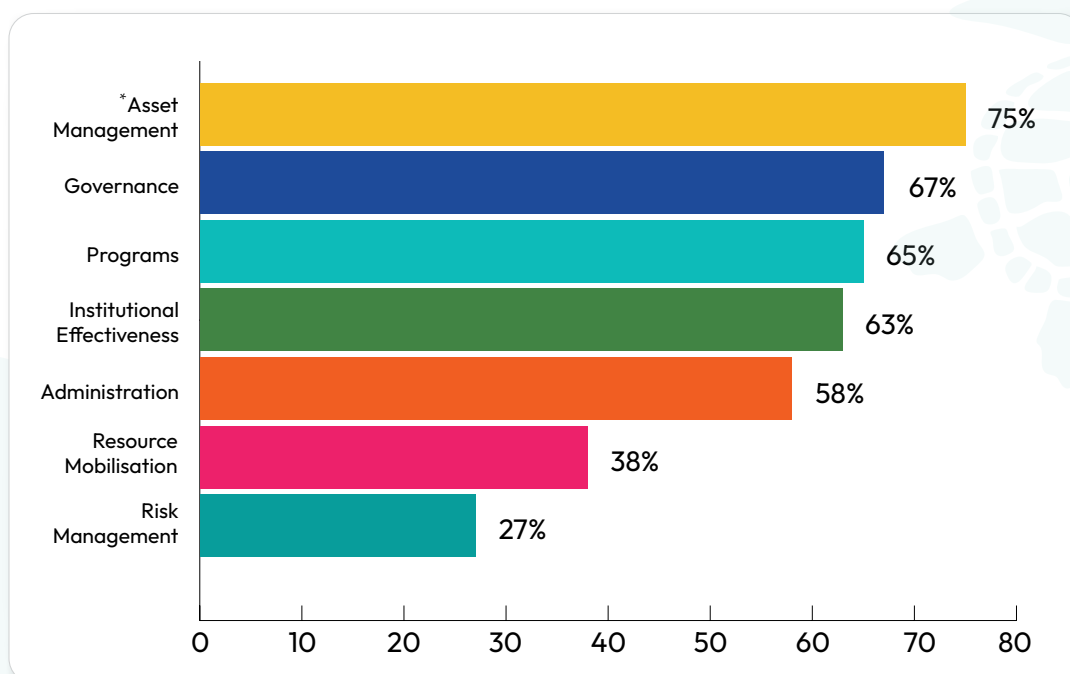
Large board sizes present operational challenges for most NCTFs, with seven organisations operating boards of 11 or more directors in small Caribbean countries with limited pools of qualified candidates.



Data Source: Annexe 1, pages 15-16 of Good Governance Practice Assessment Report

Core NCTF Area Performance Comparison

Regional analysis reveals consistent patterns: NCTFs demonstrate strong foundations in governance and program management but struggle significantly with resource mobilisation and risk management implementation.



Data Source: Figure 2, page 20 of Good Governance Practice Assessment Report

NCTF Gender Representation Achievement

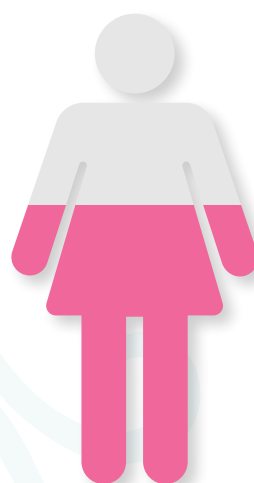
Female Leadership in NCTFs

The governance assessment revealed strong female representation in Caribbean conservation leadership, with seven of twelve NCTFs led by female chief executives and approximately half featuring female board chairs, demonstrating the region's commitment to gender equity in environmental governance.



58%

Female CEOs:
7 of 12



50%

Female Board Chairs:
6 of 12



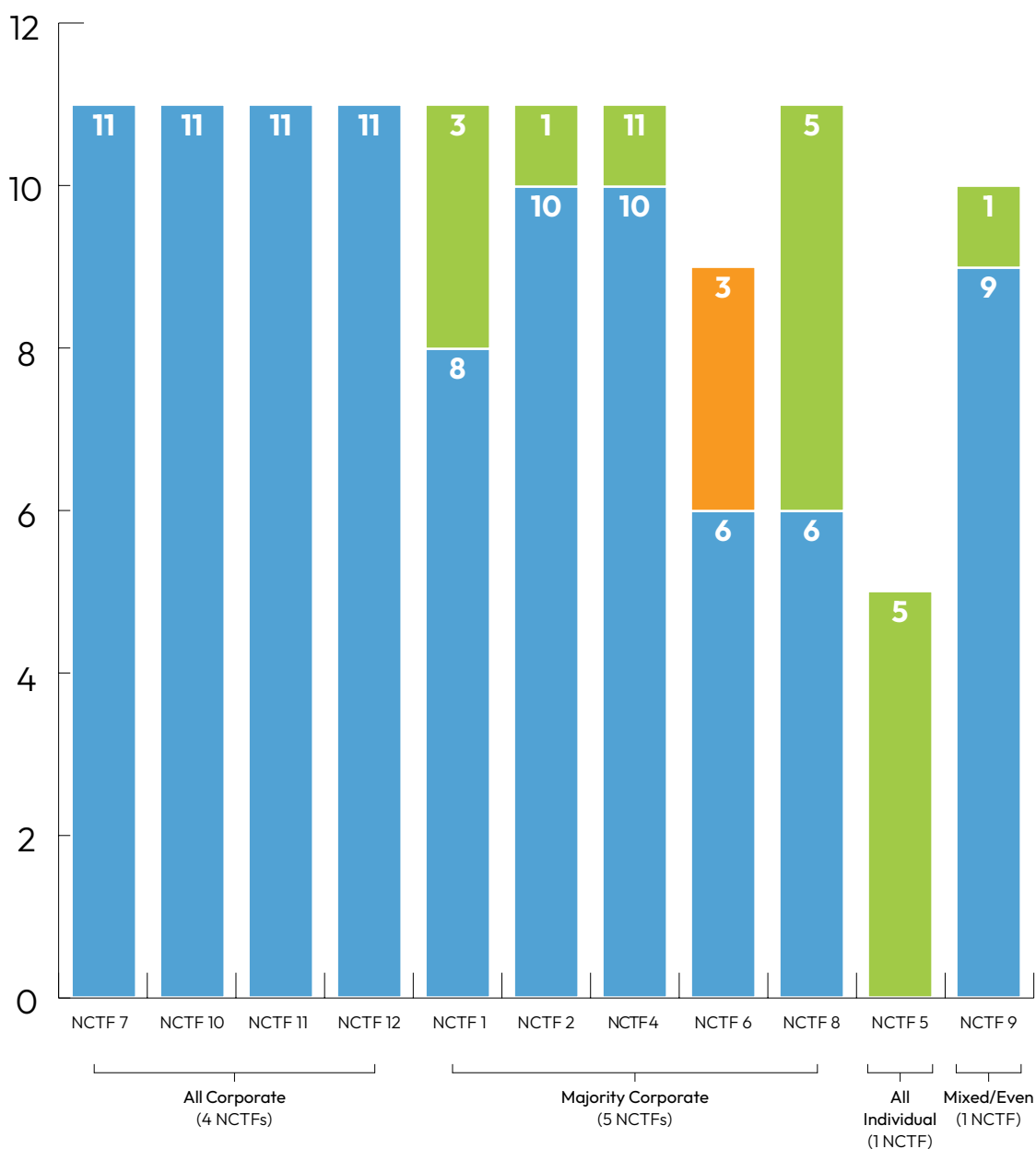
83%

Boards with 33%+ Female Directors:
10 of 12

Corporate vs Individual NCTF Directors

Corporate vs Individual Directors

Nine of twelve NCTFs rely predominantly on directors appointed by organisations rather than individuals, potentially limiting the boards' ability to select members based on needed competencies.



Data Source: Annexe 1, pages 15-16 of Good Governance Practice Assessment Report

■ Corporate ■ Individual ■ Unspecified

Gaps

The evaluation revealed a critical disconnect between executive management and boards of directors across most NCTFs. Board members require greater awareness of their fiduciary responsibilities and deeper engagement with organizational operations. To resolve these gaps, the consultant prepared the recommendations summarized on page 6.

Recommendations for NCTF Development

1 Governance:

Establish board training programs and Terms of Reference to ensure directors understand their fiduciary responsibilities.

2 Institutional Effectiveness:

Develop strategic plans with monitoring frameworks that align with national priorities and include gender-based indicators.

3 Programs:

Implement comprehensive grant-making processes that incorporate gender-responsive approaches and co-financing requirements.

4 Administration:

Create human resources and technology policies that ensure staff safety, clear accountability, and cybersecurity.

5 Asset Management:

Establish investment policies aligned with organizational missions and provide board training on investment management.

6 Resource Mobilization:

Develop diversified funding strategies with donor screening policies and impact metrics for stakeholder communication.

7 Risk Management and Safeguards:

Create risk management policies with environmental safeguards, gender mainstreaming, and whistleblower protections.

CBF Institutional Support Mechanisms for NCTFs

Partnership Agreements & Evaluations:

Establishes formal agreements and conducts End-of-Agreement assessments to guide future partnerships.

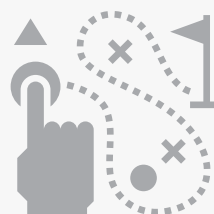


Capacity Building Through Assessment:

Commissioned governance assessments that serve as both evaluation tools and hands-on learning experiences.

Organizational Strengthening Plans:

Develops detailed action plans with prioritized recommendations and clear timelines for each NCTF.



Technical Support & Resources:

Forges partnerships with organizations like Cuso International and through funding mechanisms like the Gender Smart Facility.



Standards Implementation:

Introduces NCTFs to international best practices and standardized governance frameworks.

Regional Network Development:

Support initiatives to facilitate knowledge sharing across the Caribbean and the world.



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CBF Key Performance Indicators

1 

Annual percentage growth of the endowment fund/annual returns on investment.

2 

Total assets under management.

3 

Number and total amount (\$) of diversified funding sources for CBF and NCTFs.

4 

Annual total amount (\$) disbursed to NCTFs.

5 

Number of CTFs using the self-assessment tool.

6 

Total number of projects supported by CF funding.

7 

Percentage of CF-funded projects reporting up to global initiatives.

8 


Number and percentage of NCTFs with projects achieving milestones/outputs.

9 

Number of hectares of priority ecosystems under improved natural resource management.

10 

Number of hectares with improved ecological integrity providing ecosystem services benefits.

11 

Number of people using skills learned in trainings/workshops or other efforts/tools promoted by CF-funded efforts.

12 

Total number of people engaging in improved, sustainable, place-based economic opportunities supported by CF funds.

The CBF introduced these KPIs in 2024, as part of its commitment to support and promote the development of its NCTF partners in the region.