



# **African Forest Forum**

A platform for stakeholders in African forestry

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Development of a Career Path Framework for the African Forest Forum (AFF)**

## **1. Introduction and Background**

### **1.1 About AFF**

The African Forest Forum (AFF) is a pan-African non-governmental organization with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. It is an association of individuals with a commitment to the sustainable management, wise use and conservation of Africa's forest and tree resources for the socio-economic well-being of its peoples and for the stability and improvement of its environment. AFF is involved in voicing the concerns of African forestry stakeholders; and using science, indigenous knowledge, and experience to advocate for the importance of forests and trees outside forests to peoples' livelihoods, national economies and the stability of the environment.

AFF provides a platform for independent and objective analyses, as well as technical and policy advice to national, regional and international institutions and actors, on how economic, food security and environmental issues can be addressed through the sustainable management, use and conservation of forests and trees outside forests.

Currently, AFF works with a lean secretariat of about 10-12 persons while outsourcing scientific work to consultants for planned activities. Some of the services required are outsourced to AFF's host institution, ICRAF. The outsourced services are **some** financial services, human resource management, procurement, ICT, protocol, and security.

As AFF advances the implementation of its Programmatic Approach (2025–2030) and expands its partnerships and technical portfolio, there is an increasing need to strengthen internal systems that support organizational growth and sustainability. Establishing a structured career path and competency framework is essential to enhance talent attraction, staff development, performance management, and succession planning within the Secretariat, while also supporting staff motivation, retention, and engagement through clear progression pathways, recognition mechanisms, and aligned reward structures.

Within the context of its current operational model, including existing institutional support arrangements, AFF recognizes the importance of developing a tailored, organization-specific career development framework that aligns with its mandate, structure, and long-term strategic ambitions.

Furthermore, in response to evolving donor expectations around institutional capacity, accountability, and effectiveness, and within the context of the ongoing Sida-supported institutional transformation phase aimed at strengthening AFF's sustainability, the development of a transparent and benchmarked career path framework will position AFF to build a motivated, high-performing workforce capable of delivering on its mandate.

### **1.2 Purpose of the assignment**

AFF seeks to engage a qualified Human Resource Management expert to design a robust, multi-level career path and competency framework aligned with its current structure, benchmarked against peer regional organizations, and scalable to support strategic growth.

## **2. Scope of Work**

The expert will deliver the following key outputs:

## **2.1 Assessment of AFF's Current Organizational Structure and Career Path Framework**

- Conduct interviews with the AFF Executive Secretary - CEO, Chairman of the Governing Council, Unit Heads, Head of CIFOR-ICRAF HR, and secretariat staff.
- Clearly define and document AFF's existing organizational units (e.g., Programmes; Knowledge Management and Communication; Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting; Partnerships Development and Resource Mobilization; and Finance & Administration), including their respective staff positions, reporting lines, and detailed job descriptions for each role.
- Based on the documented organizational structure above, the new Programmatic Approach 2025-2030, review and analyse AFF's existing Secretariat career path framework, focusing on the alignment of roles with required qualifications, competencies, and experience, and their effectiveness in supporting structured career progression.

## **2.2 Benchmarking Study**

Undertake a benchmarking study with comparable Pan-African and international organizations (e.g., FAO Regional Offices, CIFOR-ICRAF, African Union Development Agency–NEPAD, PACJA, and AGRA) to inform the development of a comprehensive and contextually relevant career path framework for AFF.

This process will involve identifying, analyzing, and drawing insights from established human resource practices, organizational structures, strategy documents, and career development models currently in use within comparable regional organizations.

The aim is to assess best practices for career progression, talent development and retention and competency frameworks that align with institutional goals and continental priorities required for its growth trajectory. By benchmarking against these institutions, AFF seeks to ensure that its career path framework enhances staff motivation, professional growth, and succession planning, while also fostering a high-performing and resilient workforce with capacity to navigate dynamic and evolving workplace environments.

## **2.3 Career Path Framework Design**

**The aims of the career path framework are:**

- (i) To provide a clearly defined career structure, which will attract, motivate and facilitate retention of suitably qualified and competent staff of the Forum.
- (ii) To provide for clearly defined job descriptions and Job Specifications with clear delineation of duties and responsibilities at all levels within the career structure to enable the staff understand the requirements and demands of their job.
- (iii) To establish standards for recruitment, training and development, and advancement within the career structure based on knowledge, competence, merit, experience and ability as reflected in work performance and results.
- (iv) To ensure appropriate career planning and succession management.

The design of the career path framework is expected to take into consideration the following aspects:

### **2.3.1. Units Required**

Based on AFF's Strategic Plan, Programmatic Approach, and building on the existing organizational structure and career framework documented under Section 2.1, as well as findings from the benchmarking study under Section 2.2, identify and refine the required organizational units needed for AFF's long-term structure. This process will focus on enhancing and strengthening the current framework, and will inform future proposal development, organizational planning, and budgeting processes.

### **2.3.2 Definition of Career Levels**

Based on the proposed organizational units, categorize roles into appropriate job families i.e., technical/scientific, professional, administrative/operational, and consultancy. Establish progressive career levels across all job families. Each level should clearly define job descriptions, expected outputs, required qualifications, experience, and corresponding organizational impact.

In addition, propose standardized career levels e.g., Entry, Mid, Senior, Leadership, and Executive and map typical progression pathways for AFF roles.

Each level will be aligned with AFF's organizational structure and mandate, offering both vertical and lateral mobility opportunities.

### **2.3.3 Framework for Career Progression, Remuneration and Reward Systems**

Develop clear and objective criteria for career progression, remuneration, and reward systems, including performance, competencies, qualifications, and experience. The framework should incorporate a structured and market-informed salary scale aligned to defined career levels, while integrating both financial and non-financial incentives such as recognition mechanisms, professional development opportunities, and expanded roles and responsibilities to enhance staff motivation, retention, and career growth.

These may include:

- Completion of required training or certifications
- Years of relevant experience and proven capacity at current level
- Demonstrated achievement of key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Evidence of leadership, innovation, or added institutional value
- Performance appraisals and peer/supervisor reviews
- Market benchmarking of salary structures.
- A provision for annual percentage increase in remuneration

These criteria will be consistently applied and periodically reviewed in line with evolving institutional needs.

Based on the criteria, develop a tool to graduate staff from one position to another including the authorization procedure.

#### **2.3.4 Competency Framework**

A structured competency framework will be developed, defining the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required at each level. This model will reflect AFF's values and areas of technical expertise, including:

- Core Competencies (e.g., communication, teamwork, ethics, adaptability in multicultural setting, innovation)
- Technical Competencies (e.g., forestry science, biodiversity, policy analysis, climate change)
- Leadership Competencies (e.g., strategic thinking, change management, mentorship)

The competency model will also serve as a guide for performance management, training, and recruitment.

#### **2.3.5 Expansion and Flexibility Provisions**

To ensure the framework remains relevant and adaptable, provisions will be included to allow for:

- Role evolution in response to strategic or thematic shifts in AFF's work
- Creation of new levels or tracks, such as research fellows, technical experts', regional coordinators, internships, industrial attachment, or volunteers
- Cross-functional movement to promote staff versatility and institutional resilience
- Integration with external professional development (e.g., fellowships, secondments, partnerships with academic institutions)
- The framework should also outline administration processes for the career pathway.e.g. the approval process and its authorisation

These provisions will allow the framework to grow organically as AFF's scope and staffing needs expand over time.

#### **2.3.6 Validation Meeting**

Conduct a one-day validation meeting with the AFF secretariat to review and validate the draft career path and competency frameworks prior to finalization.

### **3 Deliverables and Timelines**

The assignment is expected to be completed within a period of two (2) months from the date of contract signing. The Consultant shall implement the assignment in line with an agreed workplan, ensuring structured engagement with AFF throughout the process. Key deliverables will be submitted in phases, including:

- An inception report

- Draft career path and competency framework document
- Validation meeting report
- Final career path framework document.

Each deliverable will be reviewed by AFF before final approval.

#### **4 Required qualifications**

An expert will be considered as per the requirements below:

- A Master's degree in Human Resource Management, Organizational Development, or a closely related field.
- A minimum of 10 years of progressive professional experience in Human Resource Management, Organizational Development, or a related field, with at least 5 years' experience in designing and implementing career path frameworks, competency models, or similar HR systems.
- A valid Certified Human Resource Professional (CHRP-K) certification, or an equivalent recognized professional HR certification, is mandatory.
- A PhD in a relevant field will be an added advantage.
- Demonstrated knowledge and experience in designing and implementing career path frameworks, competency-based human resource models, performance management systems, and other HR systems, with prior experience in African regional institutions or related organizations, preferably within the non-profit or international development sector.
- Strong analytical and report writing skills, with the ability to synthesize complex information into clear, actionable outputs.
- Demonstrated experience in social/human resource development research and ability to deliver high quality reports within time frame.

#### **5 Application Submission Guidelines**

Interested experts are invited to apply, demonstrating their suitability for the assignment. The applications should include the following:

##### **5.1 Technical Application**

- A brief statement demonstrating understanding of the assignment, including the context, key issues, scope of work, and expected deliverables.
- A concise description of the proposed approach to undertaking the assignment
- Curriculum Vitae (CV) of the expert, including academic qualifications, relevant experience and areas of expertise.
- Provide copies of academic certificates and relevant professional certifications to support the stated qualifications.
- At least three (3) examples of comparable assignments undertaken including the developed Career path and competency framework, including client references and/or contact details.

## **5.2 Financial Proposal**

Provide a summary of the proposed professional fees for the assignment, including a breakdown of costs by key deliverables and the total cost. The financial proposal should also specify any applicable taxes and be presented clearly and transparently.

*All applications including all the requirements indicated in the ToR must be submitted via email addressed to [d.mutta@cifor-icraf.org](mailto:d.mutta@cifor-icraf.org) cc [c.kajuju@cifor-icraf.org](mailto:c.kajuju@cifor-icraf.org) not later than 14 May 2026.*

*Applications received after the deadline or submitted in an incomplete form will not be considered.*