

Terms of Reference (ToR): Gender Audit and Gender Strategy Consultant

Contracting authority	African Climate Foundation
Contract period	July 2026 to December 2026
Submission portal	RFP 15 – GEN RFP Portal
PLEASE NOTE NO SUBMISSIONS VIA EMAIL WILL BE ACCEPTED	
Proposal submission deadline	15 June 2026
Queries	For any technical queries, please contact Mshai Mkoji (admin@africanclimatefoundation.org) via email with subject: RFP- Gender Consultancy If you need any technical assistance with the portal, please reach out to grants@africanclimatefoundation.org
Deadline for queries	5 June 2026 (17h00 SA standard time)
Queries posted link	Queries: Google Docs

Introduction

The African Climate Foundation (ACF) is an African-led regional climate foundation working at the nexus of climate change and development, enabling African-led climate solutions through strategic grant-making.

ACF is guided by its mission to support interventions that deliver long-term socioeconomic transformation and inclusive development across the African continent and its vision of a climate-resilient Africa where sustainable and equitable growth is realised. ACF’s Africa-centred approach is anchored in African leadership, systems thinking, ecosystem building, strategic partnerships, policy engagement, narrative shift and fiscal stewardship with a focus on strengthening a thriving and interconnected climate ecosystem.

As part of its 2026–2030 strategy, ACF seeks to embed gender equality and African feminist-informed approaches across its governance, operations, grant-making, partnerships, communications and thematic work. ACF recognises that gender integration is not a technical add-on but requires institutional transformation, including shifts in systems, decision-making and organisational culture.

ACF seeks a consultant (or firm) to undertake an organisation-wide gender audit and support the development of a comprehensive Africa-centred gender strategy and a mainstreaming architecture grounded in lived realities, African feminist perspectives and aligned with ACF’s strategic priorities.

The assignment is expected to go beyond designing a gender strategy document. It should support ACF to:

- Make clear strategic choices and trade-offs regarding its approach to gender integration,

- Define institutional ownership, roles and accountability mechanisms, and
- Establish practical pathways for implementation across systems, functions and programmes.

To this end, ACF invites proposals from qualified consultants or firms with demonstrated experience in gender, climate and development in Africa and a strong grounding in African feminist and intersectional approaches to design and deliver a practical, decision-oriented and implementable gender mainstreaming architecture.

ACF encourages proposals that adopt a co-creation and decision-oriented approach in which the consultant or firm supports ACF in actively shaping and owning its gender strategy.

1. Background and Purpose

The purpose of the assignment is to design and deliver a comprehensive, evidence-based and actionable package that enables ACF to embed gender equality and feminist-informed approaches across its work, including:

1. An organisation-wide gender audit
2. The development of an ACF Gender Strategy (organisational and programmatic) aligned with the 2026–2030 strategy.
3. A practical gender mainstreaming framework, policy and toolkit
4. A sequenced implementation roadmap
5. Gender-continuum MEL indicators for the strategy and implementation plan

2. Objectives and Scope of Work of the Assignment

The consultant will

1. Conduct a gender audit assessing capacities, gaps, opportunities and risks across:
 - Governance and leadership
 - Programme design and delivery
 - Grant-making systems and partner engagement
 - Communications and narrative
 - HR systems, organisational culture and ways of working
 - Partnerships and external ecosystem engagement
2. Undertake extensive internal and external consultations with:
 - ACF staff across teams and levels
 - Grantees and partners, including projects that have to date focused on gender outcomes.
 - African feminist and women-led organisations
 - Gender experts and actors across ACF thematic areas

Consultations must be conducted ethically and reflect diverse lived realities across the continent.
3. Develop concise, decision-oriented strategic option papers across key components of gender integration, each presenting clear options, associated trade-offs, risks and implications, resource requirements, and a recommended pathway with rationale.
4. Support ACF in the development of a Gender Strategy that reflects agreed institutional decisions, clearly defines strategic priorities and areas of focus, including explicit exclusions. The strategy must align with ACF's 2026–2030 strategy and provide a coherent foundation for implementation.
5. Develop a practical Gender Mainstreaming Framework, Gender Policy that highlights commitments, definitions, governance and accountability and Toolkit aligned to ACF systems (HR, grants, MEL, communications)
6. Develop a prioritised implementation roadmap with sequencing, timelines and responsibilities
7. Design a gender-responsive MEL framework, including indicators, qualitative learning approaches and guidance for integration into existing systems
8. Conduct an implementation readiness assessment identifying capacity gaps, institutional risks, resistance and resource implications

3. Deliverables and timeline

The consultant/firm will be expected to deliver a comprehensive set of outputs that support both strategic decision-making and practical implementation.

Table 1: Deliverables and timeline

#	Deliverable	Description	Estimated duration
1	A gender audit report	Evidence-based assessment of ACF's systems, policies and practices to establish the baseline for the strategy	6 weeks
2	Strategic option papers	Short decision papers presenting 2–4 options per core component with trade-offs, risks and recommendations	4 weeks
3	Decision -oriented workshops	Facilitated sessions with leadership and key staff to align on priorities and agree on strategic direction.	4 weeks
4	Co-created Gender Strategy	Concise strategy capturing agreed priorities and pathways with an embedded gender-responsive MEL framework.	5 weeks
5	Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit and Implementation Roadmap	Practical tools, templates and a phased roadmap to operationalise the strategy across ACF.	5 weeks

4. Budget and Payment Schedule

The final cost will depend on the proposed methodology, team size and depth of work. Bidders must provide a detailed, activity-based budget that is realistic and demonstrates value for money.

The payment schedule will be linked to the approval of key deliverables as follows:

- **15 %** upon approval of the contract signing and the inception plan approval
- **30%** upon approval of strategic option papers
- **35%** upon approval of the draft strategy, framework and toolkit
- **20%** upon successful completion of the consultancy

5. Eligibility Criteria

ACF invites proposals from African-based African-led consultants, firms or consortia. Applicants must meet all compulsory eligibility requirements and submit all mandatory documents listed in the proposal submission requirements below.

Compulsory eligibility requirement

- African-based with demonstrated experience across Africa. Experience in ACF priority countries (Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa) is strongly preferred.

Consultant profile/expertise

The consultant/firm should demonstrate:

- Relevant academic qualification
- Proven experience delivering gender audits and gender strategies for African or comparable institutions, ideally within climate, development, philanthropy or policy ecosystems.

- Deep understanding of intersectional and feminist approaches, including experience engaging African feminist and women-led organisations ethically.
- Demonstrated understanding of the climate and development ecosystem in Africa and the ability to integrate gender across climate priority areas (for example, adaptation, climate finance, just transitions, critical minerals, forests, and related themes)
- Strong experience in multi-stakeholder consultation and facilitation, including engaging senior leadership, staff across functions, partners and grantees.
- Ability to produce practical mainstreaming tools and embed recommendations in systems (HR, grants, comms, MEL, governance).
- Experience designing implementation roadmaps and change management plans.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English. Fluency in French is a plus.

Proposals will be disqualified if they:

- Are received after the submission deadline.
- Do not meet the minimum technical threshold of 70%
- Are missing any compulsory documents or fail to meet most of the eligibility requirements above.
- Contain false or misrepresented information or an undisclosed conflict of interest.

6. Management and Reporting

The consultant will report to the Senior Programme Officer – Advocacy and Outreach, who will serve as the primary day-to-day contact for the duration of the six-month assignment. The consultant will also work closely with the Strategic Partnerships, Communications and Advocacy (SPCA) team.

ACF will establish a small internal reference group to provide guidance to the consultant during the assignment period. The reference group will comprise key ACF staff drawn from Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL), Grants, HR, Communications, Programmes, and the Senior Management Team. The reference group will convene at key milestones during the assignment to provide technical input, review emerging findings and support the validation of draft deliverables.

7. Proposal Invitation and Submission Guidelines

Qualifying providers are invited to submit an electronic proposal outlining the provider's approach to fulfilling the requirements. All proposals must be submitted by 29th May 2026 on the ACF Giving Data platform, as detailed below

Service providers have the option to submit proposals as individual entities or as part of a consortium. When submitting as a consortium, the lead organisation must be African-led and based on the continent. Consortia must demonstrate that the full range of necessary skills and experience required for this assignment is collectively represented within a single proposal. Additionally, consortium proposals must clearly outline the proposed project's governance structure.

7a: Proposal Submission Requirements

Interested consultants/firms must submit detailed technical and financial proposals (in USD) that clearly explain their understanding of the Terms of Reference and the approaches and methodologies they will use to undertake the assignment.

1. The technical proposal

The proposal may not exceed eight (8) pages, comprising an Expression of Interest, Methodology, Work plan, MEL Approach, Deliverables, and a brief description of the project team. CVs of the lead consultant and all proposed team members (maximum 2 pages per CV), and at least two examples of relevant prior work demonstrating gender mainstreaming strategy or gender audit assignments must be provided in an annex.

2. The financial proposal

The proposal shall include, but not be limited to, the proposed budget with a cost breakdown, as well as the proposed payment schedule and its terms.

3. Additional Documents Required for Submission

- a) Signed Conflict of Interest Declaration (completed on portal).
- b) Valid Tax Clearance Certificate (uploaded on portal).
- c) Company registration document (uploaded on the portal).
- d) CVs of lead consultant and all proposed team members (uploaded on portal)
- e) Two examples of at least two relevant previous assignments (e.g., external issued references and evaluation reports of a similar scope and complexity) (uploaded on portal)
- f) Two contactable references

7b: Evaluation Criteria

#	Criteria	
Technical		90%
1	Relevant experience developing Gender Mainstreaming Strategies in the Gender, Climate and Development ecosystem	20%
2	Demonstrated African feminist credibility and strong relationships within feminist and women's rights movements	15%
3	Relevant experience working in Africa including key ACF priority countries (Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa)	15%
4	Methodology and approach	25%
5	MEL approach and learning orientation including qualitative dimensions	15%
Financial		10%
1	Cost-effectiveness	10%
Total		100%

* **Minimum technical threshold: 70%**

Only proposals meeting the technical threshold of 70% will proceed to financial evaluation.

8. RFP Timeline

#	Step	Description	Tentative Dates
1	RFP Release	Request for Proposals published and circulated to invited consultants/firms.	15 th May 2026
2	Questions and Clarifications deadline	Final date for bidders to submit written questions.	22 nd May 2026
3	Questions and Answers	Consolidated responses to all submitted questions shared with bidders. All questions and answers shared with all bidders to ensure fairness and transparency	22 nd May 2026
4	Proposal Submission Deadline	Final deadline for technical and financial proposals. Late submissions will not be accepted.	29 th May 2026

5	Evaluation Period	ACF review panel assesses proposals against published evaluation criteria; shortlisted bidders may be invited to interview. Internal Proposal Approval Process	1 st -19 th June 2026 25 th June 2026
6	Award Notification	Successful bidder notified; unsuccessful bidders informed with feedback available on request.	Week of 29 th June 2026
7	Contracting and Inception	Contract signed and inception meeting scheduled to kick off the assignment.	Week of 6 th July 2026

9. Confidentiality and Conditions

- **Confidentiality:** All information submitted in response to this TOR will be treated as confidential and used solely for the purposes of evaluating the proposal. Service providers may not disclose information relating to this TOR of ACF's operations without prior written consent.
- **Language:** Proposals, documents and correspondence must be submitted in English.
- **Validity of Proposals:** All pricing and conditions contained in the proposal shall remain valid for a minimum of 90 calendar days from the closing date of submission. Any deviation from this must be clearly stated and may affect the evaluation outcome.
- **No Obligation to Award:** ACF reserves the right not to award a contract because of this TOR and is under no obligation to provide reasoning or feedback for its decision. ACF may cancel or modify this procurement process at any time.
- **Due Diligence:** ACF reserves the right to conduct due diligence on service providers, including requesting additional information, reference checks, presentations, or interviews.
- **Conflicts of interest:** Service providers must declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest. Failure to disclose such conflicts may result in the disqualification of the proposal or termination of any subsequent contract.
- **Cost of submission:** ACF shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by the service providers in preparing and submitting the proposal. All such costs will be borne solely by the service provider.
- **Ethical Conduct:** ACF expects all service providers to adhere to ethical business practices, including compliance with applicable anti-bribery and anti-corruption laws and regulations.
- **Amendments and Clarifications:** ACF may issue amendments or clarification to the TOR. These will be communicated to all bidders who submitted queries or expressed intent to submit proposals.