

The Accountability Framework initiative (AFi)

Terms of Reference for AFi Supporting Partners

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Introduction

Organizations outside of the AFi Steering Group may become AFi Supporting Partners in order to formalize their status as contributors to the AFi. This designation enables organizations to:

- Advance their objectives related to forest and ecosystem conservation, human rights, climate change mitigation, and ethical supply chains by associating with an effective consortium working toward these same ends
- Indicate their support for the AFi and interest to promote the consensus-based good practices for ethical supply chains specified in the Accountability Framework
- Engage regularly with the AFi, request and receive support as needed, and have the opportunity to contribute to the further development of the AFi, as outlined below

Supporting Partners enable the AFi to broaden its coalition in order to:

- Increase capacity and reach to support adoption of the Accountability Framework by companies and other key user groups
- Strengthen support for the Framework from key stakeholders
- Better communicate the value of and use cases for the Accountability Framework

Supporting Partners carry out specific activities to help promote and support awareness and use of the Accountability Framework, or otherwise to contribute to the AFi. Such activities are tailored to each

Partner's mission, capacity, and interest. Each Supporting Partner is paired with a designated liaison person from the AFi Backbone Team to help facilitate effective implementation of the mutually agreed activities. These activities are documented at the outset in a Partnership Plan. The Partnership Plan provides the basis for the Supporting Partner's activities and roles within the coalition. The plan may be revised and updated as needed, in accordance with these TOR, by mutual agreement of the Supporting Partner and Backbone Team.

Parameters and roles for AFi Supporting Partners

The follow pages elaborates the parameters and roles for AFi Supporting Partners.

Eligibility

- Supporting Partners may include any organization that is in a position to promote or support application of the Framework across multiple companies or other target users. These include NGOs; service providers; industry associations; other sustainability initiatives or platforms; governmental bodies, platforms, or programs; and initiatives for monitoring, reporting, or assessment related to responsible supply chains.
- Organizations whose primary or sole function is as owners/managers of individual standards or tools are not eligible to be Supporting Partners. However, such organizations are encouraged to collaborate with the AFi on relevant activities, for instance related to increasing the alignment of their standard or tool with the Accountability Framework. Organizations that own or manage standards or tools related to responsible supply chains and also have other significant programs or areas of work are eligible to be Supporting Partners.
- Individual companies engaged in commodity production, trade, or financing are not eligible to be Supporting Partners. However, companies are invited to participate in the AFi in other ways, such as by applying the Framework, providing feedback on the Framework and its application to help improve future versions, and raising awareness and promoting the Framework's use by the company's suppliers, business partners, and peers.

Criteria for inclusion

Supporting Partners must meet the following criteria:

- The entity's mission and objectives support and are aligned with the [AFi's vision](#) and the [Core Principles of the Accountability Framework](#).
- The organization is not promoting positions or engaging in activities that are contrary to the AFi's vision and the Core Principles of the Accountability Framework.
- There is no conflict of interest.
- The organization has interest and capacity to engage with the AFi on topics of mutual interest and benefit.
- The organization is interested and able to engage with specific target audiences to help drive awareness and uptake of the Accountability Framework

Nomination and approval process

- Organizations interested in becoming Supporting Partners may contact the AFi to indicate their interest and request consideration. Prospective Supporting Partners may also be nominated by members of the AFi Steering Group, Backbone Team, or Regional Teams.

- Prospective Supporting Partners work with representatives of the AFi to develop a Partnership Plan that outlines the activities that the Supporting Partner plans to carry out, as well as the support or coordination to be provided by the Backbone Team. A Partnership Plan template is provided below.
- Organizations become Supporting Partners upon approval of the Partnership Plan by the AFi Steering Group. Upon approval, the Backbone Team provides the Supporting Partner with initial onboarding to help them integrate effectively into the AFi.

Roles and activities of Supporting Partners

Supporting Partners are expected to participate in the AFi's regular coalition meetings, which are a primary way that the AFi fosters coordination, knowledge sharing, and joint planning and activities. As of the date of this document, regular coalition meetings typically include two multi-day workshops (format may vary, depending on the focus of each workshop) plus four 90-minute tele-conferences each year.

Additionally, Supporting Partners contribute to the AFi through at least one activity that is aligned with the AFi's Phase 2 Strategy. Typically, these activities will be among the following:

- **Promote and support adoption of the Accountability Framework:** Supporting Partners help drive adoption of the consensus-based good practices for ethical supply chains specified in the Accountability Framework. This may be done in various ways, for instance service providers working with their clients; local NGOs advocating adoption in the context of plantation establishment and management, local land-use plans, or government policy; or industry associations developing common guidelines for their members that are aligned with the Framework. The specific focus of the proposed uptake activities should be specified in the Partnership Plan.
- **Raise awareness about the Accountability Framework:** Supporting Partners help increase awareness of and interest in the Framework, for instance by featuring it as part of webinars, events, or other engagement activities with companies and other stakeholders.
- **Collaborate on or coordinate communications:** Related to the previous activity area, Supporting Partners may collaborate to coordinate and cross-promote messages and communications collateral related to the Framework and, more broadly, to the rationale for and practical ways to implement responsible supply chains. Supporting Partners may also help develop and disseminate editorial content in support of the Framework and its component elements. Supporting Partners are invited to nominate a representative to participate in the AFi Editorial Review Group to provide input into the AFi's messaging and to provide pre-publication review specific types of communication materials, as detailed in the AFi's governance document.
- **Integrate elements of the Framework into relevant standards, guidelines, metrics, methods, or tools:** Organizations or initiatives that develop, manage, or contribute to standards/guidelines/tools/etc. may contribute as Supporting Partners by working to align these with the Framework or to integrate relevant elements of the Framework into new or revised versions of such standards/ guidelines/tools/etc. This modality is also relevant for organizations and initiatives involved in reporting, assessment, and accountability related to responsible supply chains.
- **Develop or contribute to user tools, case examples, or other supporting materials:** Supporting Partners may collaborate to develop various kinds of supporting materials that help target users to put the Framework into action. Such materials do not necessarily need to be branded or published by the AFi. The Partnership Plan should summarize the types of materials that are envisioned and how they will be disseminated and promoted to target users.

- **Contribute to the development or revision of elements of the Accountability Framework:** Over time, the AFi may decide to revise or further elaborate the Framework’s Core Principles, Definitions, or Operational Guidance to reflect user feedback and the evolving context for ethical supply chains. Supporting Partners may participate in selected Framework development or revision processes, as appropriate to their expertise and interest. This may include by participating in topical working groups or otherwise helping to develop and review draft content.
- **Provide feedback to accelerate uptake and increase positive impact:** Via their Backbone Team liaison, Supporting Partners are requested to share feedback about how their organization and/or other Framework users and stakeholders are using and perceiving the Framework. This feedback will be used to consider adjustments to the Framework, uptake strategies, communications, and other aspects of the AFi to further improve the AFi’s value proposition to its target users and to accelerate uptake of the Framework and effectiveness of the AFi overall.

Supporting Partners may also propose activities that are not listed above, in which case these should be detailed in the Partnership Plan.

Roles and responsibilities of the AFi liaison

One member of the AFi Backbone Team will be designated as the liaison for each the Supporting Partner. This liaison will play the following roles:

- Maintain regular contact with the Supporting Partner on implementation of the agreed activities and address any challenges or opportunities that arise.
- Provide training or other forms of support, as priorities dictate and capacity permits, to help members of the Supporting Partner organization or network to effectively carry out the activities specified in the Partnership Plan.
- Keep the Supporting Partner up to date on AFi events, announcements, or new materials.
- Invite the Supporting Partner to participate in AFi learning and information-sharing opportunities.
- Share materials that the AFi is developing and that are relevant to the Supporting Partner’s interests and scope of collaboration (such as proposed Framework revisions/additions, user tools, communications collateral, or updates to the uptake strategy) to invite input and consultation; as appropriate, invite the Supporting Partner to participate in processes to refine existing Framework sections or develop new ones.
- Support any needed adjustments to the Partnership Plan over time to reflect updates in the activities on which the Supporting Partner and AFi agree to collaborate.

Logos and recognition

- Each Supporting Partner’s logo will be included on the AFi website and may be included in other AFi communications that present the set of organizations involved in the AFi.
- Supporting Partners may publicize their relationship with AFi via their website or other communications. The AFi logo may be used only in accordance with the AFi’s logo use guidelines. In the event that such guidelines are absent or unclear, the Supporting Partner must obtain prior permission for each use of the AFi logo, which may be requested via the designated Backbone Team liaison.

Partnership term and termination of partnership

- Once it is approved by the Steering Group, Supporting Partner status is indefinite, provided that:

- The Supporting Partner remains an active participant in the AFi and contributes or collaborates in a manner that is broadly in line with their Partnership Plan.
 - If their Partnership Plan becomes outdated, the Supporting Partner works with their Backbone Team liaison to update it, in accordance with this TOR, to reflect current or foreseen activities.
 - The Supporting Partner continues to act in accordance with this TOR, including the above-listed Criteria for Inclusion.
- The AFi Steering Group or Backbone Team may require a Supporting Partner's resignation at any time if either of these entities judge that:
 - the Partner has behaved or is behaving in a way that undermines the vision, objectives, strategy, or integrity of the AFi; or
 - the Partner has consistently failed to fulfill the expectations set out in their Partnership Plan and has not taken action to develop a revised Partnership Plan that better reflects the partner's current interests, capabilities, and intentions.
- Supporting Partners may resign at any time by informing their AFi liaison. Prior to resigning, the AFi requests that the Supporting Partner discuss any concerns with the liaison to see if there is a way to resolve them to sustain the partnership. If the Supporting Partner takes the decision to resign, it is requested that the Partner inform the liaison of the reason for the resignation.
- By mutual agreement, the Partner and their AFi liaison may choose to develop a joint statement on the reason for the resignation

Suggested partnership template for AFi Supporting Partners

Partnership plans should contain at least the following information:

Partnership plan information to include	Information
Supporting Partner organization	
Representative(s) of Supporting Partner organization	
AFi liaison person	
Rationale and objectives for the organization to become a Supporting Partner	
Activities to be carried out by the Supporting Partner organization	
Support and coordination to be provided by the AFi (via its liaison)	
Any stipulations regarding permissions for use of Supporting Partner logo*	
Effective dates of the partnership plan	
Stipulations regarding information sharing and confidentiality, if applicable	

* The default arrangement is that the logo of each approved Supporting Partner will be included on the AFi website (in the list of Supporting Partners) and may be included in other AFi communications (such as brochures and slide presentations) that present the set of organizations involved in the AFi. The AFi will not use the Supporting Partner's logo in other ways without the advance written permission of the partner. Any deviations from this default approach should be stated in the Partnership Plan.