



**REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
(CONSULTING SERVICES – FIRM SELECTION)**

Country: Ethiopia

Name of Project: The Building Institutions and Systems to Harness and Realize Agenda (BIASHARA) 2063 Project

Grant No: P180117

Assignment Title: Consulting Services for an Independent Verification Agent (IVA)

Reference No. ET-AUC-534916-CS-QCBS

The African Union Commission has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of *The Building Institutions and Systems to Harness and Realize Agenda (BIASHARA) 2063 Project* and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The consulting services (“the Services”) include to verify the status of the agreed performance targets, assessing whether they have been achieved (or not) in accordance with the PBC and results framework, as outlined in the relevant project documents.

The detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment are attached to this Request for Expressions of Interest.

The African Union Commission now invites eligible consulting firms (“Consultants”) to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. The shortlisting criteria are:

- Demonstrated knowledge, understanding, and experience with performance based or disbursement linked indicator mechanisms. Knowledge of Investment Project Financing (IPF) with Performance Based Conditions (PBCs) modality preferred.
- Proven experience of independent verification of results or performance assessment of government agencies or large private sector firms within the last ten (10) years.
- The IVA shall present at least two references to prove possession of each of the above qualifications and experience.

Key Experts will not be evaluated at the shortlisting stage.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to Section III, paragraphs, 3.14, 3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank’s “Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers” July 2016, revised November 2020 (“Procurement Regulations”), setting forth the World Bank’s policy on conflict of interest.

Consultants may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications but should indicate clearly whether the association is in the form of a joint venture and/or a sub-consultancy. In the case of a joint venture, all the partners in the joint venture shall be jointly and severally liable for the entire contract, if selected.

A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Consultants Quality and Cost-based Selection method set out in the Procurement Regulations.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours *0900 to 1700 hours*.

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by e-mail) by **20 May 2026 before 1700Hrs**.

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

(CONSULTING SERVICES – FIRM)

CONSULTING SERVICES FOR AN INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION AGENT (IVA)

1. Background

The *Building Institutions and Systems to Harness and Realize Agenda 2063 (BIASHARA)* project is a five-year US\$50 million (2023 – 2028) Investment Project Financing (IPF) initiative funded by the World Bank to enhance regional integration and intracontinental trade in Africa. Among the 13 AUC Agenda 2063 flagship projects, BIASHARA specifically supports the implementation of i) the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement ii) Single African Air Transport Market, (SAATM) and the Free Movement of Persons (FMP). It is jointly implemented by the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat through separate project implementation units (PIUs). As part of the project’s result monitoring and evaluation framework, the AUC is seeking the services of an Independent Verification Agent (IVA) to validate the achievement of the project’s Performance Based Conditions (PBC) and submit formal verification reports.

The project is being delivered under three main components:

Component 1: Improved effectiveness of the AUC and AfCFTA management functions. This component strengthens the AUC’s institutional systems by modernizing financial management, procurement, HR, and ICT. It supports activities to improve efficiency and accountability through upgraded tools, policies, and automation, while improving service delivery and data security. These reforms support the AUC’s transformation into a high-performing, results-driven organization aligned with international standards

Component 2: Improved capacity for implementation of commitments to enhance intracontinental trade and investments. BIASHARA finances activities to accelerate the deepening of measures to expand intracontinental trade and investment, liberalize air connectivity, and enhance the free movement of people.

Component 3: Project Implementation, Result Based Management, and Stakeholder Engagement. This component supports effective project management, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, communications, and adherence to environmental, social, financial, and procurement standards. It also strengthens inter-agency coordination, and finances stakeholder engagement and communications across the AUC, AFCAC, AfCFTA Secretariat, and RECs. Key activities include developing and implementing change management, stakeholder engagement strategies, conducting support workshops and regular Steering Committee (SC) engagements.

The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to improve the capacity of the AUC and the AfCFTA Secretariat in supporting member states to negotiate and implement selected commitments to enhance regional integration and intracontinental trade in Africa. There are several PDO level indicators to track progress and Intermediate Result Indicators (IRIs).

There are **three (3) Performance-Based Conditions**

PBCs as shown in the table below are well aligned to the respective project components.

- PBC 1: US\$5 million is committed to support the AUC Finance Department to have modernized critical financial management processes within 5 years. It is implemented by the AUC.
- PBC 2: An allocation of US\$10 million over the five-year project period to ensure compliance of State Parties with the AfCFTA Treaty obligations. It is implemented by the AfCFTA Secretariat.
- PBC: 3: The AfCFTA secretariat is allocated US\$7million to undertake activities towards the operationalization of the AfCFTA Dispute Settlement Body.

PBC	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES TO BE COMPLETED
1. The Finance Department Has Modernized Critical Financial Management Processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Implementation of multi-year planning and budgeting. b. Deployment of SAP modules: Grant Management, and business consolidation. c. Expansion of e-procurement. d. Data warehouse and business intelligence.
2. Increased Compliance of State Parties with the AfCFTA Treaty Obligations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assessing State Parties' Implementation of AfCFTA Commitments b. Increasing Transparency in the Implementation of AfCFTA Provisions c. Promoting Adherence to Rules and Disciplines d. Identifying Challenges and Facilitating Solutions e. Encouraging Peer Learning and Experience Sharing f. Development of a mechanism for conducting trade policy g. Conducting AfCFTA implementation reviews in at least 10 countries
3. Operationalization of the AfCFTA Dispute Settlement Mechanism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Selection and onboarding of the Appellate Body. b. Development of training materials for State Parties c. Development of the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) portal d. Selection and onboarding of an expert review group.

2. Objective of the Consultancy Assignment

The objective of this assignment is to verify the baselines and achievements of all the three (3) PBCs in line with the project's monitoring and evaluation framework, and in accordance with specific verifications protocols as approved by the World Bank.

3. Scope of Work

The main task of the IVA firm is to liaise with the PIUs of the AUC and AfCFTA Secretariat to verify the status of the agreed performance targets, assessing whether they have been achieved (or not) in accordance with the PBC and results framework, as outlined in the relevant project documents.

4. Deliverables

The following are the key deliverables for this assignment:

4.1 Inception Phase and Reporting – (2 weeks into the assignment)

The consultant is expected to prepare and present an inception report, detailing among others, the following: -

4.1.1 Methodology for the assignment

- a. Outline the tools for assessing the baselines and results against each PBC, informed by the verification protocol and guidance described in the following project documents i) Project

Appraisal Document (PAD), ii) Financing Agreement (FA), and the Project Operation Manual (POM).

- b. A proposed list of stakeholders to be consulted, including a schedule of suggested meetings and or site visits (if any).
- c. A draft Work Plan – specifying timelines for the assignment. The team composition.
- d. A final Inception Report revised following the Consultant’s presentation to a team of AUC, AfCFTA and World Bank staff.

4.1.2 Conduct Verification and Analyses of the PBCs

Conduct verification activities for PBC 1, 2 and 3 in a timely manner in accordance with the verification protocol approved by the World Bank. Specifically:

- a. Review and analyze internal and external documents held by the PIUs¹
- b. Ascertain the level of completion of reported results for the PBCs.
- c. Conduct field visits to the AUC HQ and the AfCFTA as may be appropriate and necessary.
- d. Conduct verification of the results through virtual consultations with selected key informants

4.1.3 Draft and Final Reports

Prepare and submit draft and final PBC Verification report, At minimum, the report should:

- a. Highlight of major achievements and discrepancies, if any, across the 3 PBCs.
- b. Provide detailed analysis of progress for each indicator, against their agreed targets based on the collated evidence.
- c. Assess why achievement against specific PBCs may be above or below targets, highlighting areas of non-achievement and reasons for under performance.
- d. Compare reported and verified results along with explanations if there are any discrepancies.
- e. Recommend disbursement levels / amounts for each PBC indicator based on the achieved and verified results, and the performance standards
- f. Indicate the major barriers and constraints which impede progress towards the attainment of the PBCs.
- g. Recommend ways to achieve indicators which are below targets.
- h. Conduct validation workshops with key stakeholders (including but not limited to technical committees, directorates and the PIUs) prior to submission of the final report.
- i. Incorporate evidence in the report (e.g., Annexes with screenshot copies of key data).

4.1.4 End of Project Completion PBC Report

A concise **End of Project PBC Report** focused on the following: -

- a. An assessment of the extent to which the objectives of the assignment have been achieved.
- b. Key challenges faced during execution of the assignment.
- c. An overview of the achievements of the PBCs under the BIASHARA Project.
- d. Lessons learnt in implementing the PBC modality of Investment Project Financing (IPF).

5. Duration

The consultancy service will run for 12 months.

The IVA will be expected to conduct assessments annually. The timing of the assessment should be at least 30 days ahead of the World Bank’s Implementation Support Mission (unless a different schedule is agreed between the AUC, the AfCFTA Secretariat and the World Bank).

¹ Access to the Repository of Documentation to be provided by the PIUs

6. Correspondence and Review of Reports:

The PBC Technical Committee, comprising representatives from the AUC, AfCFTA Secretariat, and the World Bank, will oversee the PBC exercise. The Committee will, among others, review documents and engage in validation meetings. All reports shall be submitted via email with electronic copies to the two (2) PIU Coordinators. The basis of this confirmation will be the detailed verification protocols and reporting requirements

7. Qualification and Experience Requirements

The IVA will be a consulting firm with diversified technical competencies including, but not limited to, management consultancy services; monitoring and evaluation; and institutional performance assessment.

The IVA shall have the following qualifications and experience:

- a. Demonstrated knowledge, understanding, and experience with performance based or disbursement linked indicator mechanisms. Knowledge of Investment Project Financing (IPF) with Performance Based Conditions (PBCs) modality preferred.
- b. Proven experience of independent verification of results or performance assessment of government agencies or large private sector firms within the last ten (10) years.
- c. The IVA shall present at least two references to prove possession of each of the above qualifications and experience.

The IVA will deploy a team of well-qualified personnel/experts to undertake field activities. All the experts shall be highly skilled and experienced, and curriculum vitae (CV) of proposed staff shall be reviewed as part of the bid evaluation process.

The proposal of the IVA shall be set out in detail showing the list of experts required for each stage/cycle of the assignment and the duration (person/days) for which the services are required. The IVA shall present the staffing schedule in a manner that makes it clear as to which personnel will be involved in a specific activity. A staff organogram reflecting the activities envisioned should therefore be presented.

The IVA's team shall comprise key experts (or an equivalent staffing configuration which includes the qualifications and experience. The team can have technical, non-technical, and administrative staff from experts to enable the timely delivery of the assignment and to the required standard. The table below specifies the expected qualifications and competencies.

Key Expert	Qualification and Experience
Project Manager (Team Leader)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Should have post graduate qualification in Public Administration, Business Management, Economics, Statistics, Project Management or relevant field.• Should have at least 10 years of direct experience in leading and managing, monitoring and evaluation of projects in developing countries.• Should have led at least one similar assignment involving verification of project/programme results.• The Project Manager/Team Leader will: (i) provide overall leadership and direction to the team; (ii) supervise the IVA team; (iii) function as the link between the IVA and the PBC Steering Committee of the BIASHARA Project, comprising the AUC, AfCFTA Secretariat, and the World Bank; (iv) take responsibility for

	scheduling, planning and delivery of IVA activities and outputs/deliverables; and (v) be responsible for quality assurance for all IVA outputs/deliverables.
M&E Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should have a minimum of at least a master’s degree in economics, ICT, Sociology, Engineering or related field. • Should possess at least 8 years of direct experience in project related M&E work and in conducting socio-economic research. • Experience in results-based M&E is required.
Financial Management Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should have a minimum of master’s degree in accounting or Final professional accounting qualification such as ACCA, CA, CIMA etc. • Should possess at least 8 years of direct experience in project related financial management work. • Experience with results-based disbursement procedures is required.
Trade Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must hold at least a university master’s degree in international Trade, Economics, Business Administration or International Economic Relations from an internationally reorganized institution. • A minimum of Ten (10) years of relevant professional experience in trade policy and or customs administration. •

8. Confidentiality Statement

All data and information received for the purpose of this assignment are to be treated confidentially and are only to be used in connection with the execution of this TOR. All intellectual property rights arising from the execution of this TOR are assigned to the AUC. The contents of written materials obtained and used in this assignment may not be disclosed to any third parties without the expressed advance written authorization of the AUC / World Bank.

Annex 1: PBC Targets for Verification

Result	Year	Targets
PBC 1: Finance Department has modernized critical financial management processes	2024	Finance Department achieves at least 75 percent compliance with financial reporting timelines.
	2025	The Finance Department has established an end-to-end automated payment processing system.
	2026	Finance Department has institutionalized a multi-year planning and budgeting process
	2027	At least 75 percent of internal audit findings are resolved within six months after the end of the previous Financial Year.
	2028	The following are in place and functioning: a) multi-year planning and budgeting; (b) midyear budget review; (c) end-to-end automated payment system; and (d) compliance with financial reporting requirements.
PBC 2: Increased compliance of State Parties with AfCFTA Treaty obligations (Text)	2024	AfCFTA Secretariat has developed and approved a mechanism for conducting policy reviews – The AfCFTA Implementation Review Mechanism (AFIRM)
	2025	AfCFTA Secretariat has undertaken a policy review in at least 10 other countries.
	2026	AfCFTA Secretariat has undertaken a policy review in at least 10 other countries.
	2027	AfCFTA Secretariat has undertaken a policy review in at least 10 other countries.
	2028	AfCFTA Secretariat has undertaken a policy review in at least 10 other countries. NB. The targets for the policy reviews in 40 countries include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of the final review reports to the Council of Ministers, and • submission to the Annual Secretary General’s Implementation Assessment Report to the Council of Ministers
PBC 3: Operationalization of the Dispute Settlement Mechanism	2024	Additional core elements of the Dispute Settlement Body established, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert Review Group, • DS Portal • DS Procedures • Panel.
	2025	An established and functional DS Portal

	2026	Training conducted on key elements of dispute resolution (e.g., dispute settlement and the appeal process) to key stakeholders in 15 State Parties
	2027	Training conducted on key elements of dispute resolution (e.g. dispute settlement and the appeal process) to key stakeholders in another 15 State Parties
	2028	Training conducted on key elements of dispute resolution (e.g., dispute settlement and the appeal process) to key stakeholders in another 15 State Parties