

Terms of Reference (TORs) for Expert Evaluators & Facilitators

WFF Youth Innovation Lab

Transformative Research Challenge (TRC)-2025

❖ General information:

The World Food Forum (WFF) Transformative Research Challenge (TRC) is a global competition designed to empower young researchers to develop innovative and impactful solutions to transform agrifood systems. Since its inception in 2021, the WFF Youth Innovation Lab has partnered with leading organizations in agrifood systems research and United Nations Agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to address critical challenges through a global platform.

What are the competition phases?

Phase 1: Open call for applications. Young researchers submit a two-page concept note, outlining an initial innovative research idea for one of the four prize categories.

Phase 2: Applications are reviewed by expert evaluators to select the most innovative and cutting-edge research ideas as semi-finalists.

Phase 3: Semi-finalist teams participate in a month-long capacity development programme including masterclasses and mentorship provided by TRC knowledge partners. During this stage, semi-finalists refine their ideas into detailed research proposals.

Phase 4: After a second round of evaluation, finalist teams are selected. Successful teams are invited to pitch their final research projects at the TRC finals at the WFF flagship event in October.

The WFF Youth Initiative invites experts from all over the world to support these emerging researchers and innovators as **Expert Evaluators**, who will review and assess concept notes and research proposals, and as **Facilitators**, who will conduct capacity-development masterclasses and provide dedicated office hours for the shortlisted TRC teams.

What are the research prize categories?

As part of this year's TRC, five prize categories will focus on critical sustainable development challenges:

1. **Forestry Innovation Prize** (Co-hosted by the the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Forestry Division (NFO)): Recognizes youth-led, transformative solutions that advance sustainable forest management through technological innovations, promoting environmental sustainability, social well-being and economic resilience in alignment with FAO's Strategic Framework and Global Forest Goals.
2. **Gender Mainstreaming in the Eradication of Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) Prize** (Co-hosted by the FAO PPR-GEP Secretariat): Empowers young researchers to develop transformative, gender-responsive solutions to combat PPR, address systemic barriers faced by women in livestock systems and inform policies for equitable and effective disease control.
3. **Integrated Water Management for Food Security Prize** (Co-hosted by the FAO Land and Water Division (NSL) and the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI)): Supports youth-led innovations in sustainable water governance to strengthen resilient farming and fishing communities, ensuring equitable access to water resources while addressing environmental, social and economic challenges.
4. **Sustainable Aquaculture Prize** (Co-hosted by Shanghai Ocean University and the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI)): Empowers young researchers to develop innovative, scalable solutions that advance sustainable aquaculture practices, promoting environmental sustainability, social equity and economic resilience in alignment with the FAO Blue Transformation Roadmap and Sustainable Development Goals.
5. **Nansen Programme Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) Prize** (Co-hosted by the FAO EAF-Nansen Programme and the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI)): celebrates the 50th anniversary of the EAF-Nansen Programme by recognizing and supporting youth-led, innovative, and scalable solutions that advance the adoption and implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, promoting sustainable management of marine ecosystems and resilient aquatic food systems.

1. Facilitators TOR's

1.1 Expert competencies, experience and skills:

- Strong academic or professional background, with a **minimum of a master's degree**;
- A minimum of five years of **experience** in the specific research field of one the five prize categories;
- Excellent knowledge of research methodologies, academic writing and proposal development;
- Affiliation with an academic institution, research organization or relevant professional body is preferred; and
- Excellent communication and presentation skills in English. Knowledge of additional languages such as Spanish, French and/or Arabic is advantageous.

❖ 1.2 Duties and responsibilities of facilitators:

- Deliver interactive masterclasses on one of the prize categories;
- Deliver interactive masterclasses on essential research soft skills, such as academic writing, research methodology and project design, to help shortlisted candidates transform their concept notes into well-developed research proposals;
- Develop concise and engaging training materials tailored to the assigned topics (e.g., presentations, handouts and exercises);
- Host optional office hours to provide targeted support to participants, including answering questions, offering feedback on research proposals and addressing challenges related to methodologies or pitch preparation;
- Provide clear and practical examples during both masterclasses and office hours to help participants understand and apply key research concepts; and
- Maintain regular communication with the WFF Youth Initiative team regarding session plans and any participant-related updates.

❖ 1.3 Timeline and duration of the masterclasses and office hours:

- Facilitators will be expected to commit approximately **2 to 3 hours per week** from 16 June to 16 July, to deliver masterclasses and host office hours. Slight timeline modifications are allowed. This time commitment includes:

- **1.5 to 2 hours** for delivering interactive masterclasses on pre-selected topics provided by the WFF Youth Initiative team.
- **Up to 1 hour** per week for one month for hosting optional office hours to provide additional support, such as answering questions, offering feedback on research proposals and assisting with pitch preparation.
- Facilitators may also be invited to remain engaged with the competition providing additional support to finalists in preparing their pitches for the WFF flagship event in October 2025.

❖ **1.4 Expected results:**

- Facilitators deliver all assigned tasks, including interactive masterclasses and up to 4 hours of office hours.
- Participants gain practical skills to develop strong research proposals and deliver impactful pitches, supported by actionable feedback provided during masterclasses and office hours.

❖ **1.5 Location:**

- Online (e.g.- Zoom or similar platform).

❖ **1.6 Application process:**

- Submit an online application form.
- Depending on the alignment with each training facilitator's area of expertise and the pre-selected masterclass topics, selected facilitators will be assigned to deliver specific sessions.
- Upon acceptance, training facilitators will be sent all relevant details.

2. Expert Evaluators TORs:

❖ **2.1 Expert competencies, experience and skills:**

- Strong academic background with **a minimum of a master's degree** relevant to one or more of the TRC prize categories;
- **A minimum of five years of experience** in a relevant area of expertise;
- Affiliation with an accredited university or research center; and
- Excellent communication and writing skills in English. Knowledge of Spanish, French, and/or Arabic is advantageous

❖ **2.2 Duties and responsibilities of Expert Evaluators:**

- Deliver a thorough evaluation and grading for up to a total of five **Concept Notes** (two pages long) to the WFF Youth Initiative team. The grading sheet and criteria will be provided along with the assigned Concept Notes; and
- Conduct a comprehensive evaluation and grading for up to a total of **five Research Proposals** (five pages long).

❖ **2.3 Timeline and duration of the evaluation process:**

- Expert Evaluators are expected to assess up to five concept notes (two pages long) each during the initial phase of evaluation, scheduled between 26 May – 6 June 2025. There might be slight adjustments to the timeline.
- In the second round, evaluators will be tasked with assessing up to five research proposals each from 21 –25 July 2025.

❖ **2.4 Expected results:**

- Grading sheets must be returned by the agreed-upon deadline, including final scores for each concept note based on the specified evaluation criteria.

❖ **2.5 Location:**

- Online (e.g.- Zoom or similar platform).

❖ **2.6 Application process:**

- Submit an online application form.
- Depending on the alignment with each evaluator's area of expertise and the TRC prize topics, selected evaluators will be assigned to one of the shortlisted teams.
- Upon acceptance, evaluators will receive all relevant details.

