



Position Specification

International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd)
Chief Executive Officer

The International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd)

The International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd) is an innovative financing institution established to mobilise additional, affordable financing for education and skills development in lower-middle-income countries. Launched at the UN Transforming Education Summit in 2022 and established in Geneva in 2023, IFFEd was created in response to a fundamental challenge in global education: lower-middle-income countries are home to 2 billion children and young people, yet face an annual education financing gap of approximately US\$70 billion. Seventy per cent of children and young people in these countries live in learning poverty.

Working with multilateral development banks (MDBs), sovereign and philanthropic donors, and eligible countries, IFFEd uses grants, guarantees and paid-in capital to enable MDB partners to expand financing and offer countries more affordable terms. Its model is designed to make scarce development resources go significantly further: by combining guarantees and grants, IFFEd can turn every US\$1 of donor resources into up to US\$7 of affordable financing for education and skills. Rather than creating a parallel lending infrastructure, IFFEd works through existing MDBs, expanding their capacity to finance education while reducing borrowing costs for participating countries.

This financial multiplier is coupled with an education impact multiplier. IFFEd works with countries and MDB partners to ensure that additional financing supports evidence-based reforms and measurable improvements in education and skills outcomes. Its remit spans the education lifecycle, from early childhood and foundational learning through primary and secondary education to technical and vocational education and training (TVET), with a growing emphasis on the relationship between learning, skills, employment and wider economic development.

IFFEd has now moved decisively from concept to delivery. The Asian Development Bank was its founding MDB partner, and in 2026 the World Bank became its second. Its first two education and skills programmes have been announced in Uzbekistan and India, in partnership with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank respectively, while the organisation is developing a wider pipeline across Africa and Asia. IFFEd is backed by sovereign donors including Canada, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Korea, alongside a growing group of philanthropic partners.

IFFEd has also established significant institutional credibility for a relatively young organisation. It is recognised by Switzerland as an international institution under the Host State Act, has received top-tier credit ratings from Moody's and S&P, and its innovative approach has been recognised by the G20.

Headquartered in Geneva, IFFEd operates through a lean, specialised team of approximately 15-20 employees and consultants. Having established its model and institutional foundations, the organisation is now at an important inflection point: moving from establishment towards scale, financial sustainability and greater institutional maturity. The challenge now is to translate a proven and increasingly recognised proposition into greater scale, expanding the pipeline of investments, deepening MDB and country partnerships, broadening the sovereign and philanthropic funding base, and demonstrating measurable education and skills impact.

IFFEd is seeking to appoint its next Chief Executive Officer to lead this future phase. Reporting to the Board, the CEO will be accountable for strategic leadership, resource mobilisation, institutional direction and the overall management of IFFEd. The successful candidate will position IFFEd as a distinctive and credible part of the international education and development-finance architecture, converting relationships and institutional credibility into tangible outcomes for countries, partners and donors.

The Opportunity

This is a rare opportunity to shape the next chapter of an innovative international financing institution at a pivotal point in its development. IFFEd's financing model has been established, its institutional foundations are in place and a high-calibre management team has been assembled. The next CEO will therefore inherit considerable momentum, while retaining an unusual degree of opportunity to shape the institution, its strategy and its place within the international development-finance architecture. The task now is to move from proof of concept towards scale, expanding IFFEd's impact while continuing to build the organisational foundations required for long-term sustainability. Building on the foundations established under its founding CEO, the next leader will shape IFFEd's future direction and establish its position within the evolving international development-finance architecture. The next few years will be critical to IFFEd's long-term trajectory and require a CEO able to quickly mobilise capital, establishing a sustainable path to scale and cement IFFEd's relevance within the evolving international financing architecture.

This next phase will unfold against a rapidly changing international development and financing landscape. Traditional sources of development assistance are under increasing pressure, while the wider multilateral architecture continues to evolve. The next CEO will need to anticipate and respond to these shifts, positioning IFFEd to remain relevant, innovative and financially sustainable while identifying new opportunities to mobilise resources for education.

Resource mobilisation will be central to the mandate. The CEO will take personal responsibility for growing and diversifying IFFEd's sovereign and philanthropic support, working closely with the Director of Resource Mobilisation and Partnerships and wider leadership team to convert high-level relationships into concrete funding commitments. This will include building on IFFEd's existing coalition of sovereign and philanthropic supporters, while exploring the potential of newer approaches, including IFFEd's developing philanthropic guarantee model, to mobilise additional capital for education.

The mandate requires an unusually broad leadership range. The CEO must be able to operate credibly across global education, international development and innovative finance; engage at the highest levels with governments, MDBs, donors and philanthropies; understand the choices and constraints facing lower-middle-income countries; and lead a lean, entrepreneurial organisation as it matures. They will need to build capacity, drawing on the significant specialist expertise within the management team, creating clarity and conditions and organisational capability to translate that expertise into impact. Influence will matter as much as institutional authority; IFFEd achieves impact through partnership, and its CEO must be able to build coalitions and secure outcomes across stakeholders with different mandates and interests. The successful candidate will combine external stature with a builder's mindset: credible at the highest political and institutional levels, while equally comfortable working hands-on within a lean organisation where priorities, systems and ways of working continue to evolve.

Importantly, the opportunity is not simply to mobilise more capital. IFFEd's proposition rests on connecting finance with demonstrable improvements in learning, skills and economic opportunity. The next CEO will therefore need to make a compelling case for greater investment in education and skills, while ensuring that IFFEd's financing translates into measurable improvements in learning, employment and wider economic opportunity.

The Role

Reporting to the Board, the Chief Executive Officer is primarily responsible for donor mobilisation, strategic leadership, institutional direction and overall management of IFFEd. They will act as IFFEd's principal external representative and will personally steward its most important political, institutional and donor relationships.

The CEO will lead IFFEd through its next stage of development as a credible, effective and financially sustainable institution that delivers tangible value for lower-middle-income countries, by enabling them to deliver education and skills to their citizens, with a focus on the most marginalised.

They will bring the executive leadership, political judgement and sufficient understanding of education and development finance to engage credibly with the sector, MDBs and financing partners, and to connect country priorities, education outcomes and development finance.

In doing so, they will mobilise an experienced leadership team with substantial expertise across education, MDBs and financing, setting clear priorities and enabling that expertise to translate into results. Deep technical specialism in every area is not required, but candidates must be able to leverage and empower the team as appropriate and bring the relevant experience and stature to establish credibility rapidly across IFFEd's principal stakeholder groups.

Key Responsibilities

1. Strategic Leadership and Institutional Direction

- Set IFFEd's strategic direction in line with its mandate and Board priorities, translating this into focused organisational objectives and measurable results.
- Position IFFEd as a leading global financing platform for education, demonstrating distinction and IFFEd's role as a complementary part of the international education and development-finance architecture.
- Ensure coherence across country engagement, education priorities, financing, partnerships and institutional development, maintaining a clear focus on impact for lower-middle-income countries and on IFFEd's dual ambition to multiply both the financing available and the education and skills outcomes achieved.
- Lead IFFEd's evolution from a nascent organisation towards greater scale and maturity while retaining its entrepreneurialism and agility, adapting its strategy and proposition as the international development and financing landscape evolves.

2. Resource Mobilisation and Financial Sustainability

- Take personal responsibility and provide visible leadership for IFFEd's resource mobilisation efforts, set the overall ambition and remain accountable to the Board for results.
- Actively cultivate, lead and grow IFFEd's most important sovereign, philanthropic and other donor relationships and negotiations, working in close partnership with the Director of Resource Mobilisation and Partnerships, who leads the coordinated execution of the resource mobilisation plan and donor pipeline.
- Ensure the conversion of relationships and IFFEd's institutional proposition into concrete funding commitments, while maintaining donor confidence through transparent reporting, strong financial stewardship and evidence of results.
- Broaden and diversify IFFEd's funding base, including exploring appropriate opportunities for philanthropic and private-sector support.

3. Country Engagement and Demand-Side Leadership

- Develop and maintain a well-informed understanding of the policy options, constraints and financing trade-offs facing education systems in lower-middle-income countries, drawing on the expertise of colleagues and partners.
- Engage credibly with ministers and senior officials across education, finance and planning, ensuring IFFEd remains grounded in country realities and national ownership and that IFFEd's education and partnerships teams sustain the detailed engagement.
- Help countries strengthen and articulate the case for sustained investment in education, including in dialogue with MDB partners and through consideration of domestic resource mobilisation and education-financing reform, while respecting national ownership and the respective roles of MDBs and IFFEd's technical teams.

- Listen actively to civil society and other national stakeholders and promote constructive dialogue around broadly supported solutions.

4. Strategic Partnerships

- Set the strategic direction for IFFEd's relationships with MDBs and personally steward the most senior institutional relationships.
- Ensure country and MDB engagement supports a credible pipeline of education and skills investments, with transaction-level work led by the relevant senior leaders.
- Build and champion high-value alliances with international organisations, bilateral agencies, education funds, philanthropies, civil society and relevant private-sector partners, working closely with the Director of Resource Mobilisation and Partnerships on their cultivation and ongoing management.
- Operate effectively through influence and coalition-building, aligning stakeholders with differing priorities around IFFEd's mission and proposition.

5. Global Education Leadership, Advocacy and Representation

- Represent IFFEd at the highest political and institutional levels, strengthening its credibility across education, development finance and international development communities.
- Articulate a compelling case for how innovative finance can expand sustainable investment in education while complementing domestic financing, grants and existing international initiatives.
- Build IFFEd's profile and influence in ways that translate into funding, country demand, partnerships and demonstrable impact rather than profile alone.
- Ensure IFFEd's external positioning reflects country realities and remains focused on learning, equity, inclusion, skills and measurable outcomes.

6. Organisational Leadership and Management

- Build, inspire, align and get the best from a high-performing, diverse and collaborative leadership team with a shared understanding of IFFEd's mission and priorities, recognising and drawing on the expertise of others, empowering colleagues and delegating effectively while remaining appropriately close to execution.
- Foster a culture of integrity, openness, accountability, mutual respect, innovation and results, integrating education, finance, partnerships and operational perspectives.
- Continue to strengthen the systems, policies, controls, capabilities and operating foundations required for a lean and effective international institution.

7. Financial Management, Risk and Governance

- Oversee IFFEd's budget, financial management, assets, liabilities, guarantees, grants and operational expenditure, supporting the Director of Operations and Director Development Finance and ensuring appropriate delegation.
- Maintain effective risk management, fiduciary controls, compliance and assurance arrangements and keep the Board promptly informed of significant risks.
- Build a constructive and transparent relationship with the Board, providing timely and accurate information and ensuring effective implementation of Board decisions.

Candidate Profile

IFFEd is seeking an accomplished and internationally credible leader who can bridge global education policy, country-level realities and development finance; careers may have been built in various environments, but it will be key to demonstrate agility and institution building capabilities. The successful candidate will combine strategic judgement, political acuity, and financial understanding. They will bring the stature to operate credibly with ministers and international senior leaders and a demonstrable ability to mobilise resources, build trust across institutions with different mandates, and lead a growing organisation through its next stage of development.

Experience and Knowledge

- 15+ years of senior executive leadership experience gained in an international, multilateral, development-finance, public-sector, philanthropic, private-sector or similarly complex environment.
- A strong track record of securing significant sovereign, private sector resources and/or philanthropic donor commitments, with clear evidence of substantial personal involvement in major resource mobilisation, business development or financing partnerships, while working through and empowering the senior leadership team to support execution.
- Strong understanding of education and/or an adjacent development sector, with the ability to establish credibility rapidly around the policy, financing and political-economy challenges facing education systems in lower-middle-income countries.
- Demonstrated ability to engage credibly with ministers, senior officials and other country stakeholders, understanding the choices and trade-offs they face, and to navigate complex political and institutional environments.
- Strong political judgement and a proven ability to influence, negotiate and build consensus among stakeholders with differing priorities and interests, including ability to manage the Board;
- Strong knowledge of international development finance, with the ability to engage substantively with MDBs on sovereign lending, concessional finance, guarantees and related instruments.
- Credibility in building and stewarding high-level relationships with a proven ability to influence, negotiate and build consensus across governments, MDBs, international organisations, donors, philanthropies, civil society and other partners.
- Experience of building, scaling or transforming an organisation, function or platform; comfortable operating in a lean environment rather than relying on the infrastructure of a large established institution.
- Experience leading internationally diverse teams and overseeing organisational performance, budgets and institutional risk.
- Experience working with or reporting to a governing Board.
- Fluency in English.

Desirable Experience

- Direct experience within an MDB, international financial institution, global education organisation, philanthropic institution, private-sector organisation or specialised financing mechanism.
- Professional experience in or with lower-middle-income countries, ideally spanning both education policy and finance.
- Experience with guarantees, blended and concessional finance, sovereign financing or comparable mechanisms.
- Fluency in French or another language relevant to IFFEd's partners and eligible countries.

Leadership Competencies and Personal Attributes

- Entrepreneurial with strategic drive and agility: identifies and pursues opportunities with energy and persistence, mobilises support, and translates a clear long-term vision into focused priorities and measurable results.
- Coalition and relationship leadership: builds trust across institutional, political and cultural boundaries.
- Country orientation: listens carefully to political, technical and civil society perspectives and understands diverse national contexts.

- Political judgement, influence and negotiation: exercises sound judgement in politically sensitive environments; operates credibly at the highest levels; and builds consensus and negotiates effectively with governments, the Board, and other stakeholders with differing interests.
- Organisational leadership: inspires, aligns and develops a small multidisciplinary senior leadership team, delegates effectively and remains appropriately close to execution.
- Financial and operational judgement: balances ambition and innovation with rigorous stewardship, controls and risk management.
- Gravitas and humility: bring the stature and confidence to command credibility externally, combined with the curiosity and low ego to draw on the expertise of a specialist, experienced team.
- Resilience and integrity: demonstrates sound judgement, adaptability, cultural intelligence and low-ego leadership, with a strong commitment to public purpose.

Location

The Chief Executive Officer will be based at IFFEd's headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, with international travel as required.

How to Express Interest

IFFEd is being supported in this appointment by executive search and leadership advisory firm Russell Reynolds Associates.

The closing date for applications is **23:59 UK time on Monday 23rd November 2026**. To express interest, please email: **responses@russellreynolds.com** quoting "IFFEd" in the subject line. Your submission should include a CV (setting out your career history, with key responsibilities and achievements, and reasons for any gaps within the last two years); and a supporting statement (no longer than two pages) explaining how you consider your personal skills, qualities and experience provide evidence of your suitability for the role. All expressions of interest will be acknowledged.