

Brief for ICF representatives

Firstly thank you to all our reps – previous, new and continuing – for your invaluable contribution. Without your support, your expertise and your time, the voice of our profession would not be heard where it is needed.

This document sets out the rep role, what it offers and what we need from you. Please make sure you are happy with these expectations and speak to the Senior Policy and Research Officer if you have any queries or concerns.

As the professional body for forestry and arboriculture in the UK, the Institute has a unique role to provide balanced and impartial advice – to governments, organisations and a wide range of stakeholders, within forestry and arboriculture and across other sectors.

In the membership survey, 3 out of 5 members said they wanted the Institute to work with key decision makers to influence policy. With an unprecedented focus on trees in public and political discourse, it is vital for the Institute to be clearly visible as a source of authoritative opinion. Without the impartial voice of the profession being heard clearly, there is an increased risk of polarised debates between sectors causing damage to the reputation of forestry and arboriculture.

Volunteers are vital to the success and sustainability of the ICF. Volunteering allows you to participate directly in the Institute's work, influence the future of the profession and develop new skills, knowledge, contacts and opportunities beyond your 'day job'. We want the experience to be as rewarding for you as it is essential for the operation of ICF.

Role and purpose

Our reps sit on groups, panels and committees across the sector, actively participating, feeding back developments and advising us on actions to take. The rep role is a crucial touch point between ICF staff, Council and members.

The purpose of the rep role is to enable the Institute, through the Senior Policy and Research Officer, to deliver on our policy aims to:

- Influence stakeholders and policymakers
- Inform members and give them a voice
- Raise the profile of the Institute, our members and the profession

We also want to engage the wider membership in policy work and improve the two-way flow of information. Reps support this by helping us update members on what the Institute is doing and raising awareness of the Institute and our work in the group and in your professional networks.

Benefits

There are numerous benefits for you as a volunteer. These include opportunities to:

- Influence policy on behalf of your peers
- Develop skills, both personal and professional
- Raise your profile and the profile of your area of expertise
- Boost your career prospects
- Build and enjoy a strong and active network
- Take part in dynamic discussions with policymakers and peers
- Demonstrate leadership and professional expertise
- Actively shape the future of your profession
- Contribute to your CPD requirement

And most importantly,

- Make a positive difference.

Responsibilities

Reps should play an active role in communicating relevant developments and recommending actions for the Institute to take. Specifically we need reps to:

- Help ICF understand how the group/committee functions and get to know the work/members
- Provide relevant expertise and insight in meetings, raising the positive profile of the Institute and reflecting our professional values
- Articulate the views of ICF when this is known, or your professional opinion when it is not
- Be comfortable and clear about representing the Institute rather than presenting personal views or those of your employer
- Share the agenda with ICF staff in advance of meetings you attend as reps
- Feed in updates from ICF to keep the group informed of our work
- Feed back key developments to ICF staff after meetings
- Highlight developments that members should be aware of, including emerging issues
- Consider what actions ICF should take and make recommendations to staff or Council as appropriate
- Consider where we should seek views of ICF Council or members on particular issues
- Link ICF staff with your network to facilitate partnership working

Communication

Communication is one of the most important functions of being a representative. We therefore ask reps to commit to:

- Being responsive in emails and phone calls with ICF
- Sending on any agenda and papers when you receive them
- Providing brief summary reports after each meeting (via quick phone call or email note)
- Providing two brief formal reports each year for ICF Council (or by giving a phone interview and checking the write-up, to reduce the burden on you)
- Providing occasional brief updates to be published on the website or in *Trees* magazine or to be given at CPD events for members

Depending on the work of the group and **excluding** meetings themselves, we estimate this role should take up to five hours of your time per year. If your situation or the work of the group changes, just contact the Senior Policy and Research Officer to discuss options.

Recruitment

Appointment period

Reps are initially appointed for up to a two year term, in line with other Institute roles. This can be renewed for an additional two years on mutual agreement.

Method

We will normally advertise vacancies to members with a description of the role and what particular skills or knowledge we are looking for. Applicants will be asked to provide a short statement of how their skills and experience could best be used in the role. Applications will be reviewed by the Institute and a decision will be made based on experience and suitability.

Wherever possible we want to advertise rep roles to the membership so they are open for applications and drawing in different perspectives. However, there are sometimes constraints on group membership, timing or expertise that mean we may also need to approach people directly.

Eligibility

Formal rep roles are open to chartered members. Enthusiasm for the subject matter is essential, as well as knowledge or experience in the relevant area. You will need excellent communication skills and the capacity in your day to day commitments to fulfil the requirements of the role. Other than that it can be a great learning experience for reps and we welcome fresh perspectives.

Training

You will have support from Institute staff, including if you haven't been on a formal committee before. We also intend to offer online networking and peer support. No formal training is required – you are the professional with the knowledge and skills. We will keep this under review so if you identify training needs please do raise them. We'll arrange an initial discussion with the Senior Policy and Research Officer.

These are some of ICF's core priorities for any initiative which reps may find helpful to keep in mind when representing the Institute:

- Skills – does this initiative have the right people with the appropriate skills and training?
- Standards – is there a question of professional standards being maintained?
- Evidence base – has the appropriate scientific evidence or expertise been sought?
- Collaboration – are there other stakeholders who should be involved (across the UK)?

We'd be happy to arrange a video call for you to meet other staff members and you're welcome to come into the Edinburgh or Bristol office to meet in person when that's possible.

Governance

Council

The [Council](#) is the governing body of the Institute, elected from within the Chartered membership and headed by the President and Vice President. Representation reports go to ICF Council twice a year. This is the formal reporting mechanism for the reps where, through ICF staff, they can make sure Council are aware of key developments and seek their steer on emerging issues.

Accountability

Reps, like all members, will be guided by the Institute's [Code of Conduct](#). In addition:

- Comments made in the capacity of ICF rep must be expressed in a professional manner
- Members must not formally represent ICF in the media or to other organisations without explicit approval in advance
- Members are not authorised to make submissions to consultations on behalf of ICF without express permission (but can of course submit responses in their own name)

Further information

For more information on our policy work and representation see the [ICF website policy pages](#).

We are always keen to improve so please get in touch if you have any suggestions about this brief or about how we manage representation.