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Practical Action is an international development group, putting ingenious ideas to work so people in poverty can change their world.

They help people find solutions to some of the world’s toughest problems. Challenges made worse by catastrophic climate change and persistent gender inequality. Practical Action work with communities to develop ingenious, lasting and locally owned solutions for agriculture, water and waste management, climate resilience and clean energy. And they share what works with others, so answers that start small can grow big.

Practical Action’s vision is for a world that works better for everyone.
Practical Action’s aims

- Farming that works: making agriculture work better for smallholder farmers, many of them women, so they can adapt to climate change and achieve a good standard of living.
- Energy that transforms: helping more people harness the transformational effects of clean affordable energy and reduce avoidable deaths caused by smoke from indoor stoves and fires.
- Cities fit for people: making cities in poorer countries cleaner, healthier places to live and work.
- Resilience that protects: building disaster resilience into the lives of people threatened by hazards, reducing their risks and minimising their impact on lives and livelihoods.
Practical Action works on holistic solutions that change systems. Operating as a multi-disciplinary change making group, we combine these specialisms to multiply our impact.

• A highly innovative community development organisation operating in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Practical Action community projects use ingenious ideas to design, test, refine and prove new ways to overcome poverty and disadvantage and then ‘open-source’ knowledge of what works so that it can be implemented at a greater scale by others.

• A world-class consulting operation that helps socially responsible business, government policy makers and other development organisations. This draws on learnings from our own development work as well as the combined brainpower of a roster of over 2,000 expert consultants. Practical Action Consulting (PAC) helps to extend the reach of our influence by providing the best advice to others, whose work can make a bigger difference.

• A well-respected specialist development publisher. Practical Action Publishing brings together development practitioners, researchers and thought leaders to create publications that stimulate discussion, strengthen peoples'
Practical Action’s work in West Africa

Practical Action’s exciting strategy in West Africa has a twin focus: (a) building resilience to climate change with small-holder farmers and low-income households, and (b) using energy to enable farmers and displaced people to transform their lives. They also have scope to explore new areas of work on regenerative agriculture and urban water and sanitation. From a central office in Dakar, Senegal, their West Africa work covers several, mostly francophone, countries.

Practical Action Consulting, West Africa, offers a unique approach to achieving impact through a consultancy business. They use their know-how and expertise to influence and shape the policies, strategies and approaches of governments, the private sector, donors, UN agencies, development banks and NGOs so that the needs of people living in poverty or vulnerable to climate change are integrated within development processes.

Over the past six years, they developed a market-driven strategy, built brand visibility, good partnerships and income streams and established a team of full-time consultants with a roster of associates. In the coming period, they want to grow our business and impact, be strategic about their country focus, ensure business sustainability and consider broadening their business model to be even more effective.
This is an exciting, senior opportunity to lead and grow a young, strategic consultancy business and contribute to Practical Action’s group strategy.

Reporting to the International Director, you will shape, grow and deliver an ambitious regional consultancy strategy. You will also serve as an active member of the Strategic Leadership Team for the overall Practical Action group, lead specific aspects of the strategy globally and coordinate with PAC teams in other countries.

The PAC West Africa Director will be a dynamic, entrepreneurial leader who brings a blend of:

- Strategic vision, leadership, ambition and sound decision-making to refine and develop strategies that will grow the business, in terms of impact and viability. This may involve reshaping business models that may integrate some elements of programming. An external orientation, networking, representation, relationship building and a good understanding of the region will be important.
The Role

- Strong business, management and financial acumen to manage and mentor a small, professional team of full-time consultants, operational support and a roster of associates to consistently expand the client base, develop competitive bids, deliver high quality assignments, and ensure operational and financial compliance.
- Demonstrable skills in generating income, creating new funding streams, and leading on strategic business development opportunities to drive growth. PAC West Africa is financed through consultancy income with a small (and reducing) core grant. Our aim is to make the operation fully financially sustainable.
- Technical expertise in at least one of Practical Action’s four thematic areas of regenerative agriculture, climate and resilience, energy access and/or urban water and sanitation. Approximately 25% of the role will involve delivering consultancy assignments.

PAC West Africa team is a relatively small, start-up business with considerable potential for growth. The Director needs to be comfortable engaging with all aspects of the work including financial oversight, compliance with regulations, resource allocation, and operational decisions.

Success in this role would lead to:
- Increased impact for people living in poverty in West Africa against our strategy to 2025
- A thriving, sustainable consultancy business that secures new and repeat business
- Practical Action Consulting recognized as a leading, go-to provider of technical expertise in at least two areas of our work in the region
- Our team in West Africa – technical and operational – is motivated, and high performing
- PAC operations in West Africa are effectively and efficiently managed
- Contributions from the West Africa team and, especially the Director, strengthen our overall global strategy and impact.

Practical Action - Director – PAC West Africa
Accountabilities

Business and Strategic Leadership
Continue to evolve and lead the strategy and viable business model to grow our impact in West Africa being clear about technical and country focus, partnerships, financing and resourcing.

Build strategic partnerships with clients, primes and donors through networking and representation in key focus countries to drive business growth, profile and positioning and – importantly – impact. Model and promote an organisational culture of equity and inclusion that values diversity, learning, collaboration, dynamism, accountability and entrepreneurship.

Lead a high performing team of technical experts, operational staff and external consultants to deliver excellence in business development, consultancy services and operational management. Actively contribute to setting and monitoring the group’s global strategic direction and priorities.

Delivery of Quality Consultancy Services
Lead and deliver strategic consultancy assignments in at least one technical area, which may involve acting as a ‘principal’ or senior level consultant as required.

Ensure all consultancy assignments are delivered efficiently, on time and high quality standards, using industry best practices and the group’s knowledge and expertise in the region and globally to create evidence-based, influential deliverables.

Build a culture of strategic and purposeful learning across the team to continuously improve our work.

Income Generation and Business Sustainability
Provide the vision and leadership for an ambitious but feasible income-generation strategy and plan.

Ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of business development processes including timely, quality submissions and competitiveness of offer. This will also involve actively working on bids.

Management for Effectiveness and Efficiency
Ensure that the capabilities, accountabilities and structures of the full-time team and external associates are effective and efficient to deliver on our strategy and the volume of work on hand.

Foster a culture of excellence that is business-minded, results-driven, and high performing.

Have overall responsibility for the financial management & viability of the operation, making decisions about investments, resource allocation, risk mitigation, growth or shrinkage to remain sustainable.

Ensure regulatory compliance with Practical Action’s systems, those of donors and external regulators. This includes the consistent application of Practical Action’s code of conduct, including the safeguarding policy, as well as our safety & security measures and implementation of audit actions.
Person Specification

• Significant experience in the consultancy sector, preferably at a senior management / leadership level.
• Experience of developing and leading ambitious, viable strategies, especially in a consultancy business.
• Proven track record of leading portfolio growth in consulting.
• Networking and representation at a senior level to drive growth.
• Good knowledge of the West Africa context.
• Experience of managing a high performing consultancy team.
• Technical expertise in at least one area of Practical Action’s work and experience of delivering and managing consultancy services.
• Financial and business acumen to ensure financial sustainability, compliance and controls.
• Willingness to get involved in all aspects of the business from strategic to operational; ability to manage multiple responsibilities and set priorities.
• Cultural awareness and sensitivity and a commitment to Practical Action’s culture of diversity, equity and inclusion.
• Ability to work collaboratively and play a global leadership role.
• Excellent written & verbal communications skills: English and French.
• Commitment to Practical Action’s vision, mission and values.
How to Apply

All correspondence, at this stage, should be via Oxford HR. To apply for this post, click on the “Apply” button on the job advert page, complete our online application form, and submit your CV and cover letter. Please provide a CV and cover letter in two different documents.

The cover letter should be no more than two pages long and explain why you are interested in this post and how your skills and experience make you a good fit. The document should be saved in MS Word in the following format: Your First Name-Your Last Name-Document Name-Date (mm/yyyy) e.g., Malika Cook-CV-032021Practical-Action.

Timeline

Closing Date: Applications will be reviewed on an on-going basis from March 29th until 15th April

First stage interviews: Week of 26 April

Final interviews: TBD

Selection process

All applications are acknowledged and candidates will receive an update regarding their application after the closing date. We advise candidates to add the role email to their safe senders list and regularly check their spam folder.

Queries

If you have any queries on any aspect of the appointment process, need additional information, or would like to have an informal discussion about the role and the organisation, please email pac-directorwestafrica@oxfordhr.co.uk in the first instance.
Oxford HR operates globally - mainly within the international development and charity sectors. We carry out retained executive search mandates at board and senior management levels. We also offer human resource and organisational development consultancy.

Oxford HR has many years of experience in search as well as an extensive network of international development, social sector, corporate, public sector, and academic contacts from across the world. We carry out comprehensive and often international searches designed to meet the specific needs of our client.