



MENTORSHIP FOR EARLY-CAREER WOMEN WORKING IN VACCINOLOGY

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting vaccine development and distribution demonstrated the need for vaccine development and manufacturing capacity on the African continent as most countries with critical manufacturing capacity focused on their own populations and regions. Africa lacked the capacity to develop and manufacture its own vaccines, importing over 99% of its vaccines and consuming nearly 25% of the global supply. Since then, there have been significant investments in vaccine development capacity in Africa, but equally important to investment in manufacturing processes is the investment in the necessary human capital.

With support from the Gates Foundation, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) are establishing a year-long mentorship program for early-career women in Africa in the field of vaccine development, to enhance their career advancement and leadership skills and to facilitate strong and lasting professional networks.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Mentorship for Early-Career Women in Vaccinology seeks to ensure that early-career women on the African continent are equipped with the career development and leadership skills to benefit from the significant investments in vaccine development and manufacturing on the African continent. The program will empower women through a mentorship structure that prioritizes the soft skills necessary for career advancement, while connecting participants to a larger support network in both the United States and African continent for long-term growth. The program will not provide technical training in vaccine development.

The program is structured as a cohort-based, yearlong mentorship program for women within 10 years of graduation. Cohorts will comprise six early-career mentees from African countries, matched with two mentors, one from the United States and one from Africa and exchanges will be conducted in English. Mentors may be men or women. Cohorts will operate in parallel, convening initially in person for a two-day workshop, and then as a program once a month for training from experts on topics flagged by attendees as most important. Outside of the monthly trainings, peer-mentorship will be a critical component, and cohorts will be expected to meet independently at least once a month, if not more, depending on schedules, needs, and availability. A clear mentorship plan, including meeting frequency, expectations of mentors and mentees, and steps to ensure progress will be developed during the in-person meeting with experts. Travel funds will be made available to participants to convene at host institutions or jointly attend vaccine-related events on the continent.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants must be employed by a university, research institute, government agency, company, or non-governmental organization and must be actively involved in vaccine development in Africa. The program's definition of vaccine development is broad, ranging from research and development to regulation and distribution.

All applicants must have at least a bachelor's degree at the time they apply and must be within 10 years of graduation. All applicants must have professional fluency in English and be available to attend the in-person workshop late July 2025, in Kigali, Rwanda.

ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES

- Algeria
- Angola
- Benin
- Botswana
- Burkina Faso
- Burundi
- Cameroon
- Cape Verde
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Comoros
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Republic of the Congo
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- Equatorial Guinea
- Eritrea
- Eswatini
- Ethiopia
- Gabon
- Gambia
- Ghana
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Ivory Coast
- Kenya
- Lesotho
- Liberia
- Libya
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Mauritius
- Morocco
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Rwanda
- Sahrawi Republic
- São Tomé and Príncipe
- Senegal
- Seychelles
- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- South Africa
- South Sudan
- Sudan
- Tanzania
- Togo
- Tunisia
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

SUPPORT

- Career development training and participation in a tailored mentorship workshop
- Mentoring and guidance from July 2025 through August 2026
- Financial support to attend mentorship workshop and subsequent travel support for cohort activities

TIMELINE

March 10, 2025	Applications open
April 30, 2025	Applications due
Late May 2025	Fellows selected and notified
Late July, 2025	Mentorship Workshop
August 2025	Monthly virtual capacity building sessions begin
October 2025	First Travel Grant Application Announced
April 2026	Second Travel Grant Application Announced

HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be [submitted online](#) via the [program webpage](#).