INDIVIDUAL POLICY EXCHANGE PROGRAMME (IPEP) 2.0 REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

BACKGROUND

The Africa Pandemic Sciences Collaborative seeks to nurture and equip the emerging generation of young African scientists and researchers to address current and future health challenges, contribute to strengthening the continent's health ecosystem and pandemic preparedness and response capabilities, and to create pathways to dignified and fulfilling careers in pandemic sciences. A thriving research ecosystem in Africa will be essential for achieving this goal and retaining a critical mass of high-calibre young scientists across the continent, ensuring knowledge continuity between generations of researchers.

The Individual Policy Exchange Programme (iPEP) fellowship is an initiative of the Africa Pandemic Sciences Collaborative that seeks to enhance the adoption of evidence from science into policy by promoting cross-working of young researchers and policymakers from institutions across Africa that are engaged in the complete range of epidemic and pandemic-related research.

Through iPEP, we aim to:
- Advance and nurture professional relationships between pandemic researchers and policymakers in Africa, with a particular emphasis upon the emerging generation of African science leaders
- Build cross-sectoral collaborations and synergies for translating pandemic research into policy in Africa
- Catalyse the exchange of people and ideas to strengthen African regional institutions involved with pandemic prevention, preparedness and response

Following the success of the first cohort of iPEP fellows in 2024-2025, we are opening this call to give opportunities to more early- or mid-career researchers to benefit from this fellowship.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants **must:**
1. Be citizens of African countries
2. Complete their applications in English
3. Be students or researchers affiliated with EPSILONs based in Africa
4. Be early- or mid-career researchers, defined as master's, PhD students and postdoctoral researchers (or their equivalents)
5. Be engaged in pandemic sciences research
6. The submitted concept notes must align with the predefined policy topics outlined in the application guidelines (link)

7. Submit a complete, signed and stamped letter of support from your respective EPSILON PI or co-PI. The letter should confirm institutional support and the applicant's availability to participate in all iPEP fellowship activities

APPLICATION PROCESS

All applications to this call should be done through Science for Africa Foundation's grants management system. Applicants submitting the application **MUST** fully meet the eligibility criteria.

1. All applications must be submitted through the SFA Foundation's Agaseke online system. Click here to access the online application portal.
2. Applicants must ensure they validate and submit their applications.
3. The grants management system automatically sends you an email notification once you have submitted your application.
4. Applications submitted through email or via any other means shall be deemed ineligible.
5. Applications **must** be submitted in English.
6. The form includes a standard template for the relevant applicant's qualifications and experience.
7. Applicants **must** upload letters of support signed and stamped by the consortium's lead or research leads.

Policy Topics – Prioritisation and Eligibility

All current host institutions have been pre-engaged to identify and prioritise pandemic policy–related topics for this fellowship. Click this link to access the list of predefined policy topics and the corresponding expected policy outputs.

As part of your application:
1. Rank the topics from the most preferred to the least preferred topic
2. Develop a short concept note (not exceeding 350 words) on their most preferred topic.

AWARD PERIOD

June 2026 - June 2027

AWARD PROCESS AND TIMELINES

- Call for applications opens: **16 February 2026 (1700hrs EAT)**
- Webinar for prospective applicants (English): **26 February 2026 (1500hrs EAT)**
- Webinar for prospective applicants: (French Speaking) **10 March 2026 (1500hrs EAT)**

- Webinar for prospective applicants: **12 March 2026 (1500hrs EAT)**
- Deadline for applications: **20 March 2026 (1700hrs EAT)**
- Administrative review concludes: **29 April 2026**
- Final selection: **7 May 2026**
- Award Communication to final selected fellows: **12 May 2026**
- Onboarding engagement: **02 June 2026**
- Award start date: **02 June 2026**
- Commencement of iPEP 2.0 activities: **June 2026 – June 2027**

IPEP WEBINAR FOR PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS

The Science for Africa Foundation (SFA Foundation) will host a Q&A webinar for the iPEP call for applications on **26 February 2026 at 1500 hrs EAT**, **10 March 2026 at 1500 hrs EAT**, and **12 March 2026 at 1500 hrs EAT**.

Prospective applicants are invited to register for the webinar using the following links:

1. 26 February 2026 – 1500hrs EAT [English] **(Register here)**
2. 10 March 2026 – 1500hrs EAT [French] **(Register here)**
3. 12 March 2026 - 1500hrs EAT [English] **(Register here)**

Kindly register based on your preferred language and time.

APPLICATIONS REVIEW PROCESS

Eligibility checks (Triage)
Applications will be assessed for eligibility by a pre-assessment and shortlisting team from SFA Foundation.

I. Triage review criteria
a) Application must cover a concept note of the most preferred policy topic
b) Application must be completed in English
c) Applicant must be clearly associated with EPSILONs and early career researchers (Masters, PhD, Post-Doctoral fellow)
d) Submit a complete letter of support from their institution, signed and stamped by their respective EPSILON's PI or co-PI. The letter should confirm institutional support and the applicant's availability to participate in all iPEP fellowship activities.

II. Technical review criteria

Each application that goes through the triage phase successfully will be reviewed for technical merit scored by two independent reviewers.
The assessment criteria will be based on:
1. Merit of the applicant
2. Quality of Proposed Policy Concept

3. Capacity Building Potential
4. Equity and Representation Factors
5. Ethical and Risk Considerations

III. Applicant matching to host institutions

A selection committee comprised of members from the host institution will determine the final list of fellows and their respective host institution placements. The matching process will be guided by both **merit** and **diversity principles** to ensure a balanced and inclusive cohort.

Key factors to be considered include:

- **Geographical representation**
- **Gender balance**
- **Fellowship level (early- or mid-career)**
- **Alignment of topic areas**

FINAL AWARDS

In this phase, up to eight (8) awards will be made.

Selected applicants will undergo a KYC check using the Dow Jones before receiving their award letters.

There will be a two-week residential exchange between the host institution and the researcher's institution. An iPEP research fellow will visit their designated policy host institution, and in return, an iPEP fellow from the policy host institution will visit the researcher's institution. After this exchange, iPEP fellows will continue collaborating virtually for one year.

The SFA Foundation will cover the expenses related to travel and accommodation as defined below:
1. **Travel Costs:** Round-trip economy class airfare to and from your destination and return airport transfer in the country of visit.
2. **Visa and Related Costs:** Reimbursement for visa application fees and other associated travel documentation costs
3. **Accommodation:** Bed and breakfast accommodation for the duration of your two-week stay
4. **Stipend:** A non-accountable stipend of $1,050 to cover incidental expenses, including meals, local transportation, and other personal costs during your stay.

COMMUNICATION

All queries or comments about this call should be addressed to: info@africapandemicsciences.org

Please note that due to our working hours, we will be responding to enquiries from Monday – Friday 0800 hrs – 1700 hrs EAT until the call ends.