



FUTURE AFRICA RESEARCH LEADERSHIP FELLOWSHIP (FAR-LeaF)

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

<https://www.futureafrica.science/index.php/application/far-leaf/info>

NEW CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS | 14 JANUARY 2022

The Future Africa Institute at the University of Pretoria invites applications for Postdoctoral Research Fellowships, from doctoral graduates and early-career postdoctoral fellows based at universities in Africa.

The Future Africa Research Leader Fellowship (FAR-LeaF) is a two-year research-oriented fellowship program, supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The program is focussed on developing transdisciplinary research and leadership skills, to address the complex, inter-linked challenges of health, well-being and environmental risks in Africa. The FAR-LeaF program recognises the value of creating a long-term network of future-focussed science leaders with transdisciplinary research skills, who can address the challenges of a post-Covid-19 society.

Successful applicants to the program will receive a two-year fellowship, with training on transdisciplinary research approaches, through Future Africa at the University of Pretoria and its partners, and through inclusive co-design of fellows' research projects with relevant role-players. The training and support provided by the FAR-LeaF program will create opportunities to establish research relationships at diverse African universities, in collaboration with and through mentorship opportunities offered by the University of Pretoria.

The areas of research to be supported in the program will address complex well-being issues in the health and environmental sciences through a transdisciplinary approach including the social sciences, humanities, and the liberal arts. This will enable researchers on the African continent to find sustainable solutions and to establish transdisciplinary communities of practice with a core interest in addressing sustainability, resilience, and human well-being.

The program will strengthen the network of African leadership programs and initiatives on the African continent, including those supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY). The program has a strong institutional capacity development dimension whereby supervisors are

part of the support and design of the research through paired submission by a postdoctoral candidate with their supervisor/study leader, and collaboration with mentors from the University of Pretoria.

SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

The program is aimed at candidates from across the African continent (primarily Commonwealth countries). The research may be conducted either in South Africa or in the fellow's home country, or both countries, but the fellows will retain their position or base at their home institutions. Fellows should have a position at a home institution, or have a commitment from a home institution to support or consider a future position. The program will be flexible to allow for minimal disruption of the academic responsibilities at the fellows' home institutions.

The FAR-LeaF Fellows will be selected based on their research interests in developing solutions for addressing transformation towards sustainability and well-being, and advancement of the complementarity between various science disciplines related to the human-health-environment nexus.

The program will provide to selected candidates the opportunity to establish transdisciplinary research teams. Applicants must be receptive to applying transdisciplinary science and developing leadership skills to generate positive societal changes, whilst striving for a future academic leadership position.

Selection criteria

The following criteria will be used for the nomination and selection of fellows.

Applicants must have:

- A PhD degree
- A faculty or a continuing research position at a research-active institution in Africa
- Active involvement in research at an African institution of higher education or research
- A strong record of excellent scientific or scholarly achievement
- Interest in translating and communicating the results of their work for impact in society
- Interest in developing leadership ability in research and beyond.

Other criteria which will guide selection include:

- An interest in the role of research in addressing issues related to sustainability and well-being through transdisciplinary research
- An interest in collaborations across disciplines and sectors (e.g., industry, civil society, government, etc.)
- A commitment to participate in all the activities of the fellowship

- The intent to share what is learned in the program with their broader networks.

Application requirements

- **Applications must be submitted using the Online Application Form** provided at <https://www.futureafrica.science/index.php/application/far-leaf/>

The Online Application Form will be live from December 6th 2021.

- **All applicants must provide two support letters from academic referees**
Details for uploading are provided in the Online Application Form.

One letter should be from the applicant's line manager or current supervisor, and should include confirmation that the applicant will be released from responsibilities, to allow them to fulfil the requirements of the fellowship.

- **All applicants must have a supervisor in their home institution**, who is prepared to work with the applicant in developing the application *jointly*, between fellow and supervisor, and a publication plan.

The supervisor will be a co-applicant with the fellow, in the application and the proposal for the research project.

The supervisor is requested to complete the relevant section on the Online Application Form.

- Agreements will be signed by host institutions and declarations will be required, for successful applicants, in due course. The funding will be provided up to a maximum funding level (see below), taking into consideration any sources of other income.

- **Fellowship financial support**

The fellowship will provide a scholarship (stipend) of USD 12 000 per year for 2 years, and will also cover expenses for travel to local and regional workshops, and to Future Africa, and for accommodation, as appropriate, and depending on conditions allowing for travel. The fellowship is intended to allow for scientific mobility between the home university of the candidate, another African University and Future Africa, where possible.

Application schedule:

- **Information webinars will be available from 7th December 2021.**
Applicants are strongly advised to view these webinars before submitting their application.
See: <https://www.futureafrica.science/index.php/application/far-leaf/info>
- Queries can be addressed to: Professor Stephanie Burton (stephanie.burton@up.ac.za)

- All applications will be reviewed and shortlisted by representatives of Future Africa at the University of Pretoria, in collaboration with expert reviewers and members of the FAR-LEAF International Science Committee. The final decision will be made by the Science Committee.

Key dates:

1 December 2021

5 December 2021

6 December 2021

7 January 2022

14 January 2022

December/January 2022

February 2022 onwards

Call for proposals released

Information webinar available for viewing

Online application form available

Closing date for applications

New closing date for applications

Adjudication and outcome letters sent to applicants

Program begins – dates to be confirmed.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

INFORMATION ON THE FAR-LEAF PROGRAM

The FAR-LEAF program positions itself on the premise of the Sustainable Development framework, specifically Goal 3 that speaks to “ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all”, and aligns to the imperatives of the continental strategy STISA-2024 by investigating approaches to address issues of well-being with a particular focus on the human-health-environment nexus. Supporting well-being means acting on social life, economic conditions, and technological improvements in a context where resources are depleted, poverty protracted and health and environmental crises seriously affecting vulnerable communities.

The FAR-LeaF program aspires to build on the current context to develop a program that investigates approaches to addressing issues of well-being in the human-health-environment nexus, such as reducing health inequalities; affordability, and accessibility of basic services environmental risk preparedness; improved preparedness to hazards improving governance for social inclusion; and developing and promoting inclusive policies.

The transdisciplinary approach supported by Future Africa aims not only at integrating academic fields and disciplines but also promoting a divergence from a linear way of thinking and towards a systems’ thinking approach to propose sustainable solutions to global wicked challenges. The FAR-LeaF program will implement this approach in research skills training and leadership development on the African continent, with specific focus on developing and up-skilling transformation-minded science leaders.

Future Africa’s focus on sustainable science, transdisciplinary research approaches, system thinking skills development, and inter-sectoral collaboration is reflected in the agenda of the FAR-LeaF program:

1. Focus area I: Health challenges and well-being in Africa

The context of health and well-being in Africa is broad, and complex, requiring multiple approaches to finding new knowledge and understanding that will enable new and sustainable solutions. Closely linked to understanding of needs related quite directly to health care and health systems, is the need to develop communication strategies, including risk communication strategies, and to understand how to bring about behaviour change, in a complex environment which is strongly influenced by culture and cultural truths, language diversity, limitations on literacy, and restriction on access to scientific information.

2. Focus area II: Environment risks and well-being in Africa

Climate change is a major risk in Africa, with enormous impacts that disrupt lives and affect many climate sensitive aspects of life. While driven by global factors, their impacts are complex: for example, the population growth in the continent increases the demand for energy, food and other goods and services. The choice of technologies for their production poses environmental pressures (carbon emissions/air pollution, water pollution, etc). Added to other environmental challenges, such as erratic weather events, and human activities, climate change is likely to exacerbate health risks in the coming decades. Environmental risks thus include long and short-term events which have the potential to disrupt human life and impact human health and well-being in numerous ways. Finding effective responses to environmental risks also requires systems approaches and research that considers the complex interrelatedness of the multi-faceted causes of the environmental risk.

3. Transdisciplinarity

Future Africa's interpretation of transdisciplinary research is that it is a demand-driven and problem-oriented form of research which combines inter- and trans-disciplinary research with the participation of a range of stakeholders, including community stakeholders and policy makers, in co-creation of the research programs. The purpose is to create multiple learning opportunities (such as exchanges, knowledge generation, and integration of existing or newly developing knowledge).

4. Leadership training in this context

Research leadership encompasses issues specific to the research ecosystem such as building linkages with policy makers, being an effective ambassador for science, and engaging with other role-players and science communities to influence research and its resourcing. As such, the program will require a strong focus on research development and management, career development, establishing interdisciplinary relationships, building networks, and acquiring leadership competencies.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Fellows will engage in three inter-related types of research and skills development experiences:

1. Supporting institutional capacity building through engagement with the host institution's regional areas of interest. The research should be in a research topic of interest to the fellow and will be integrated into a broader strategy for leadership development through practical experience, exposure to leadership opportunities and mentoring, in conjunction with a balanced career development plan.
2. Individual skills development that simultaneously builds on what is learned at the host institution and meets a home institution's research need in addressing well-being in a local context.
3. Transdisciplinary teamwork supported by a strong engagement with communities. This activity will include as far as possible, joint field work in communities to test planning and transdisciplinary research tools.

The core leadership training will be provided by Future Africa, so that after completion of the program, fellows will have mastered skills related to foresight, critical thinking, innovation, communication, analysis, policy-making and international negotiations.

To achieve these goals, the program will include initiatives that support postdoctoral fellows through a structured skills development program. The program will provide opportunities for partner organizations to contribute to the science dialogue, as well as opportunities for fellows to meet scholars outside of their home and host institutions.

Supervision and Mentorship

Academic supervision and mentorship are foundational values of the program, and are expected to be demonstrated by the active involvement of the supervisors and/or mentors, from the application phase until the final completion of the fellowship. Mentorship is crucial in supporting research which expands beyond the traditional disciplinary boundaries of the rigid academic discipline structures.

Each fellow will need to have a supervisor (in their home institution) and a mentor (from the University of Pretoria). Academics at the University of Pretoria who are working in relevant (transdisciplinary) research fields will be invited to collaborate and to provide mentorship where appropriate, so that each research team includes the fellow, home supervisor, and a University of Pretoria researcher acting as a mentor.

Workshops and seminars

Within partner countries, when/where domestic travel is possible, Future Africa will seek to arrange and support workshops and seminars for the participants, to enable them to interact and build stronger linkages. Fellows from partner institutions will have the opportunity to visit any partner African institutions for short term exchange visits. This will be for the purpose of gaining valuable research experience in a new environment, broaden their views by building on their existing knowledge, and to enrich their research skills. In addition, fellows will be offered travel opportunities to attend relevant regional workshops and training opportunities. Should

this not possible during the program, the virtual knowledge platform will be critical to facilitate intensive and extensive interaction.

Digital scholarship

FAR-LeaF envisions a three-fold digital platform to enhance research collaboration and strengthen the network of developing young scientists. In the first initiative, a **repository service** will be developed to allow access to recordings of workshops, research related learning materials, and other relevant information in multimedia formats. The repository will be developed as an open access platform for all fellows to use. We will include a **digital skills assessment tool** that will assist with the identification of digital literacy proficiency and identifying the required course of action to provide relevant support.

The FAR-LeaF program will also develop a **Virtual Research Environment (VRE)** in tandem with the selection process for the new cohort, to allow for access to diverse virtual tools at the onset of the program, to support individual online research spaces, online collaboration platforms, data sharing, etc. **A digital platform for collaboration** will serve the need to create a virtual platform for sharing and nurturing ideas to advance research collaboration.

The fellowship is intended to allow for scientific mobility between the university of the fellow, Africa universities and Future Africa at the University of Pretoria, if and when possible. In the FAR-LEAF program, Future Africa will seek to support other institutions to share in the program *with* Future Africa. Future Africa will also host any selected candidates who need to spend time with mentors who are based at the University of Pretoria. Future Africa will also host the leadership and skills development training and the final conference of the fellows.

The following provisional schedule is planned:

1. Open Call - December 2021
2. Transdisciplinary webinars in support of the Open Call - **December 2021**
3. Selection of suitable candidates from the Open Call for participation - **January 2021**.
4. Program orientation for all fellows, supervisors, and mentors - last week in February 2022 (single day virtual session).
5. Establish collaboration partners from diverse networks and platforms after all the participating Universities are identified - February and March 2022 (virtual sessions).
6. Access to a Research Collaboration Space - Development of core research tools that will be available to the cohort and their research partners (Virtual workshops, March 2022).
7. **Ongoing:** Online lectures for diverse skills development to ensure fellows have access to adequate transdisciplinary research resources. This is core to the program and will be developed in line with the identified program needs.

8. **Annual** workshop training on Transdisciplinary science - 2022 and 2023 (compulsory, in person at Future Africa if possible).
9. **Quarterly** regional workshops/seminars - April, July, October, January (2022) and April, July, October (2023) virtually or in person attendance if possible).
10. 30-day continental institutional visit (if possible).
11. **Monthly** collaboration workshop - February-December (2022) and February-November (2023) (virtual)
12. Attendance of conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. - in person or virtual.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA AND FUTURE AFRICA

The University of Pretoria is one of South Africa's leading research universities, and is emerging as a leading academic institution on the African continent. The implementation of the 2025 vision of the University of Pretoria strongly focuses on initiatives that have helped to establish the university as a leading research-intensive university in Africa, recognised internationally for its quality, relevance, and impact. The University has nine faculties and a business school, and numerous Research Centres and Institutes, including a number which are engaged in transdisciplinary research.

Future Africa is an Institute at University of Pretoria, established in March 2019 with the aim of promoting transdisciplinary research excellence, capacity development, fostering the development of research networks, training at an advanced level, and thereby, contributing to Africa's sustainable and equitable development. Future Africa seeks to develop novel research ideas and build scientific capacity around them. It also aims to shape a new generation of researchers and academics through mentorship and science leadership development programs. Future Africa's vision is to contribute to societal and policy change in Africa.

The objectives of Future Africa are:

- To promote the broad field of convergence research through a transdisciplinary approach with linkages among a wide range of academic disciplines and trans-sectoral role-players. To stimulate collaborative and transdisciplinary research of the highest possible quality, while at the same time providing workable solutions to Africa's long-term developmental challenges.
- To train and develop emerging researchers in transdisciplinary research skills and practices in support of the human capital development needs of Africa.
- To bring together researchers from the University of Pretoria, from elsewhere in South Africa, the rest of Africa, and the global scientific community, to collaborate in advancing excellence in transdisciplinarity in support of sustainable development.

- To establish partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, including government, policymakers, business, civil society and the media, to create new opportunities for inter- and transdisciplinary research skills development.
- To promote the sustainable future development of Future Africa and the University of Pretoria with its African and international partners.