MENTORING (Source: <https://awardfellowships.org/fellowship/mentors/>)

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

[WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SUPERVISOR, A COACH, AND A MENTOR](https://awardfellowships.org/)

A coach is usually an outside consultant who is brought in to focus on the development of specific skills through one-on-one tutoring.
In general, a supervisor's responsibility is primarily to the organization, while a mentor's focus is on the individual. Mentors and supervisors are both important and play different roles. One cannot replace the other. If the same person holds these responsibilities, priorities and roles can be confused.

Mentoring is a process of engagement and communication. Mentors encourage the fellows to choose their own direction, offering guidance that takes into consideration the fellows' personal situations, needs and passions. An effective mentoring relationship is characterized by mutual trust, understanding, and empathy.

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[WHAT SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE DOES AWARD LOOK FOR IN A MENTOR?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

Good mentors have the following attributes:

a good reputation and recognition in their field of expertise

in-depth knowledge of a fellow's area of work and/or interests

interpersonal coaching and leadership skills

live/work close to their fellow

a commitment to mentoring others

empathy: the ability to connect/listen

[HOW DOES AWARD MATCH FELLOWS AND MENTORS?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

AWARD applicants are asked to recommend two potential mentors. AWARD also has a database of potential mentors. Mentors are drawn from these two sources, and AWARD's Mentoring Coordinator pairs them with fellows.

As much as possible, AWARD tries to match fellows with their proposed mentors. In cases where no suitable mentors are proposed, or a fellow could not find a mentor, the AWARD Mentoring Coordinator will assist in finding a suitable mentor.

Once paired, both fellows and mentors are asked to comment on the match. If either of the two is not entirely happy, the AWARD Mentoring Coordinator will suggest a different match. It is important that both partners in this relationship are comfortable with each other. Rematches are also possible during the mentoring period, but this disrupts the mentoring process. If rematches are necessary, early decisions are recommended.

[HOW LONG ARE MENTORS EXPECTED TO SERVE?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

Mentors serve for one year in this voluntary role.

[DOES AWARD INVOLVE ONLY FEMALE MENTORS?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

No, both men and women can serve as mentors. On average, 54 percent of AWARD's mentors are female, and 46 percent are male.

[SHOULD MENTORS BE FROM THE SAME COUNTRY WHERE THE FELLOW IS WORKING, OR CAN THEY COME FROM ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

Our experience has shown that mentors and fellows should be within the same country, or even better, the same town (vicinity) to facilitate the monthly meetings. Only in special cases will AWARD permit a fellow to be paired with a mentor who lives outside her country.

[CAN PEOPLE LISTED AS MY REFEREES BE PROPOSED AS MENTORS?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

Yes, they can be included as potential mentors.

[CAN MY MENTOR BE A PERSON WITHOUT AN AGRICULTURAL BACKGROUND?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

Yes. Your mentor should be someone who can support your career development in holistic terms.

[CAN AN AWARD FELLOW ALSO BE A MENTOR?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

An AWARD Fellow can only be a mentor after she has completed her two-year fellowship.

[CAN AN AWARD FELLOW HAVE TWO MENTORS?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

Based on previous experiences and the logistics required, AWARD recommends that a fellow only have one mentor. However, a mentor may have more than one fellow, depending on circumstances.

[WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF BEING A MENTOR?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

AWARD wants to ensure that our valued mentors have the opportunity to enhance their own skills, knowledge, and networks through their involvement with this program. Mentors benefit from AWARD through:

an expanded network of colleagues in African agricultural research and development (ARD)

exposure to new ideas and methods from fellows

skills development via participation in AWARD training courses

a deepened understanding of gender issues in ARD

the opportunity to develop and practice a more personal leadership style

enhanced skills in mentoring, listening, and role modeling

additional recognition and respect by colleagues and those in leadership

the personal satisfaction of directly contributing to the development of Africa's ARD talent pool

skills development: participation in one AWARD course of choice

[HOW AND WHEN DOES THE MENTORING PROCESS START?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

AWARD Fellows and Mentors attend an AWARD Mentoring Orientation Workshop to officially start the relationship. At this workshop, they are equipped with guidelines and tools to help them get to know each other's personality and working style. Each mentoring relationship is tailored to meet the AWARD Fellow's career development goals.

Fellows and their mentors will attend this exciting workshop, which is designed to:

[WHAT IS THE AWARD MENTORING ORIENTATION WORKSHOP ABOUT?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

orient fellows to the two-year fellowship, including opportunities and resources clarify fellows' and mentors' roles and expectations

help fellows and mentors to establish a solid working relationship

initiate a supportive, collaborative network among fellows, mentors, and the AWARD team

introduce the fellows to learning, monitoring, and evaluation as an integral part of the fellowship

explain how personalities, culture, gender, values, communications, and problem-solving patterns influence personal and working relationships

 [WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

Fellows and mentors are both expected to play a proactive role. Fellows bring their own expertise and knowledge to the relationship, and have a guiding role in setting the goals for the mentoring relationship. Fellows are responsible for carrying out the agreed-upon actions between mentoring meetings. The relationship is strictly a professional one. Detailed information about the role of mentors will be shared at the Mentoring Orientation Workshop.

[HOW OFTEN DO MENTORS AND FELLOWS NEED TO MEET FOR THE RELATIONSHIP TO WORK?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

We recommend that they meet a minimum of once a month for one to two hours. Meetings may be held more often, as required.

[WHERE SHOULD MENTORING MEETINGS BE HELD?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

Best practices from international mentorships reveal interesting lessons on this issue. It is recommended that the first mentoring session be held in the fellow's office, so that the mentor becomes familiar with the fellow's work environment. Future meetings should be held in a neutral place, such as a park, cafe, or meeting room. Due to potential distractions and/or interruptions, it is advisable to avoid meeting in the mentor's office, except in unavoidable circumstances.

[DO PROBLEMS OCCUR?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

Typical problems include scheduling conflicts, unclear expectations and goals, and overstepping professional boundaries. Setting schedules, and defining expectations and modes of conflict resolution together at the beginning is crucial in order to avoid problems later. Keeping journals (provided by AWARD) up-to-date also helps to keep the mentoring relationship productive and rewarding.

[WHAT IF WE DON'T GET ALONG?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

It can happen that two people may not "click". Therefore, it is essential that mentoring pairs come to an agreement at the beginning about how they will deal with "chemistry" problems, so that there will be no hard feelings if the mentorship doesn't work out. If they decide to terminate the relationship, the AWARD mentoring coordinator will help with a rematch. This will be discussed further at the Mentoring Orientation Workshop.

[DOES MENTORING WORK?](https://awardfellowships.org/)

Yes! When managed properly, mentoring can be very effective in helping women scientists develop their careers. It can also be satisfying for the mentor. AWARD has seen the positive effects of mentoring during its first five-year phase involving 250 fellows and their mentors. Many positive lessons were also learned during AWARD's pilot program.