



Southern Africa Leadership Journey 2026 Application & Program FAQ

Application Questions:

- **How do I apply?**
Please review all components of the **application** [here](#) and apply by 18 September 2025. In addition to basic personal information, you will be asked to submit your Health Leadership Project idea and responses to a set of Leadership Snapshot questions. You will also be asked to submit your resume and a letter of recommendation that speaks to your abilities and experience.
- **When will I find out if I've been accepted?**
After a period of application review, we will notify applicants about their acceptance, waitlist, or rejection status by the latest February 2026.
- **Why am I being asked to submit a letter of recommendation from my supervisor?**
The purpose of the letter from your supervisor is to garner internal support and space for you to take on this Journey and to "sow a seed" with organizational leaders so they begin noticing the environment in which their women leaders work and potentially, begin thinking about ways to make it more gender-equal.

However, if you are unable to obtain a letter of recommendation from your direct supervisor, you may submit a letter written by a senior leader at your current organization or a leader in the global health community who has experience working with you.
- **Will I be able to apply again if I previously applied and didn't get accepted?**
Yes, but we recommend that you apply again only if you believe you have significantly added to and enriched your professional experience since your last application.
- **Is there a cost if I'm selected?**
All the leadership resources provided during the year as well as travel, lodging and food expenses for the in-person engagements are covered by WomenLift Health. However, the year long program does not pay for your time. You will be expected to have access to a computer and internet to attend the virtual touchpoints. We also do not provide funding for your leadership project.
- **Should I apply if I am borderline in terms of years of global health experience?**
Our criteria states that you should identify as a mid-career professional at your institution or have 10-25 years of work experience. If your total public health experience is borderline and close to the minimum of 10 years, there is a possibility that your application passes the screening and onto the review stage. However given our candidate pool over the past few years, we have seen the more junior candidates face much competition during the scoring stage. You may decide to wait until you have accrued more experience for a stronger application to increase your chances of being selected.

Program Questions:

- **What are the program expectations and what does the time commitment look like?**
If accepted, you will be required to attend each virtual touchpoint (learning, mentoring and coaching touchpoints) ; the in-person learning experiences* and to complete any intersession activities and

the deliverables associated with the Health Leadership Project. Please ensure you would be available during the session dates as outlined in the calendar. The time commitment for the required Leadership Journey activities (all virtual touchpoints, intersession activities) ranges between 4-6 hours each month with the exception of the months of the in-person sessions. This estimate does not include the time required for the design, planning, and implementation phases of your Leadership Project, so please consider that in your decision to participate in the program.

You will also be asked to complete a “360-evaluation” and leadership style assessments, inform your understanding of your leadership strengths and growth areas. The 360-evaluation will involve soliciting feedback from your boss, peers, direct reports, and others.

As our approach involves human-centered design, we will ask you to evaluate the experience and contribute ideas for how to enhance the Leadership Journey for future cohorts.

- **What are Learning, Mentoring, and Coaching Touchpoints?**

Learning Touchpoints: Learning Touchpoints are facilitated, virtual group sessions. Cohort members explore leadership frameworks, research & tools in highly interactive learning touchpoints and workshop-style sessions focused on dynamic practice. The touchpoints focus on personal & professional growth, current events in the global health sector, as well as their Leadership Projects.

Mentoring Touchpoints: As part of the Leadership Journey, WomenLift Health identifies senior-level mentors from different backgrounds, health sectors, and disciplines to serve as mentors to the cohort. Mentoring groups, comprised of several cohort members and one mentor, are grouped based on complementary backgrounds and professional trajectory. Cohort members will be able to rely on their mentor to serve as a technical and career resource during the Journey.

Coaching Touchpoints: Cohort members will be paired with a Coach who works one-on-one with them to build on their strengths and address areas for growth. Leadership style assessments, including a “360-degree evaluation,” will inform these conversations and enhance each participant’s understanding of their own leadership skills.

- **What are the Leadership Immersion and Leadership Lift-Off events?**

At the core of the Journey are also two in-person sessions *: the *Leadership Immersion* (early-Journey) and the *Lift-Off* event (end of Journey).

The ‘Leadership Immersion’ is a 3-day convention that takes place a few months into the Journey, where through dynamic discussions, presentations, and hands-on exercises, cohort members enhance their skills, apply them to real-world examples, and reflect on lessons learned. A series of powerful conversations will complement the instruction, featuring eminent figures in global health who have led transformational change, and who are able to impart practical knowledge that can be immediately applied to varied career and life situations.

At the end of the year-long Journey, the 2-Day ‘Leadership Lift-Off’ event celebrates the cohort’s growth as they ‘lift off’ to a new phase of their leadership. This occasion gives time for the cohort to reflect on their leadership evolution through the year and present their leadership projects to their peers and global health audiences.

- **What does a Health Leadership Project entail?**

It’s a core part of the Leadership Journey that allows you to design and lead work that taps into your expertise, network, passion, and creativity. Channel your passion into health impact by addressing a public health issue through a systems lens, connecting to structures, policies, stakeholders, and root causes for sustainable, scalable change. At WomenLift Health we take an expansive definition of the word health to recognize that sustainable improvements in health require coordinated action across interconnected fields that shape and enable health such as climate change, food systems,

agriculture, water and sanitation, education, economic policy, gender equity, and technology.

Please see more information in the [Health Leadership Project Infographic](#).

- **What kinds of ideas would be appropriate for a Leadership Project?**

There are only 3 rules for the Leadership Project:

- Focus on improving health outcomes and integrate gender considerations into interventions, policies, and systems to address differences in burdens, risks, care, and outcomes.
- Apply and enhance your leadership skills. Strike a balance between exercising your control and influence, while stretching yourself and leveraging resources to build sustainable impact.
- Channel your passion into health impact by addressing a public health issue through a systems lens, connecting to structures, policies, stakeholders, and root causes for sustainable, scalable change.

Your Leadership Project could accomplish one or more of the following, but is not limited to:

- Apply new leadership skills approaches, and visionary mindsets to enhance gender-informed health impact
- Collaborate with your cohort and your broader network
- Build on the health projects of other WomenLift Fellows
- Accelerate Health Impact

See examples of Leadership Projects from the [2023 East Africa cohort here](#).

Please remember that this is **YOUR** year to use your leadership skills and the peer, mentoring, coaching support available to you to bring to life a special idea that improves health and gender equality.

€ **Does WomenLift Health provide funding for Leadership Projects?**

Unfortunately, we are unable to provide funding for the implementation of Leadership Projects. However, we offer robust support by connecting you with experienced mentors, coaches, and experts from our team and network. Your peers are also invaluable resources for advancing your project. Additionally, we encourage you to align your project with your current work stream and seek buy-in from institutional leaders. The best outcomes often arise when the project aligns with your professional responsibilities while also challenging you to stretch beyond your everyday tasks.

€ **Why do I need to be based Southern Africa for at least 75% of the program?**

We ask cohort members to attend all touchpoints (which would be scheduled during typical CAT business hours) and we believe that becomes very challenging if they are in a non-Southern Africa time zones. This year, the program will be a hybrid with both in-person and virtual events so there would be travel within Southern Africa . We also want the cohort to fully engage, build community with us and their fellow peers outside of the touchpoint time - which we believe can be tricky with a geographic spread.

- **How will this help me to connect with other women leaders in global health?**

Throughout the Leadership Journey, we will foster a vibrant community where cohort members can collaborate, learn from each other, and build lasting relationships. This sense of community will extend beyond the 12-month program, as we are committed to keeping alumni engaged and continuing to grow together long after your Leadership Journey concludes.

Our goal is to create a strong, interconnected network of alumni at the global, regional, and local levels. This network will not only offer ongoing support but will also provide opportunities for you to mentor new cohort members and advocate for women's leadership on both local and global stages.

To facilitate connections and amplify your voice, we will utilize our digital platforms—website, social media, and more—to enhance networking within the cohort and beyond. You will become a part of the WomenLift Health family, with access to our resources, and we will remain dedicated to nurturing this relationship well into the future.

- **How can I balance this leadership opportunity with my already busy professional and personal life?**

This 12-month Leadership Journey is designed for the working woman. We realize that work-life harmony is a key challenge holding many women back from climbing up the ladder of success, and we do not want to add further burden to your personal and professional life. We promise to work with you and take an integrative approach towards incorporating your personal needs into this Journey.

- **Am I allowed to use AI tools (like ChatGPT) when filling out the Leadership Journey application?**

We've noticed an increase in the use of AI tools in recent applications. We live in a world shaped by AI, and we welcome thoughtful, transparent use of these tools. However, submissions that rely heavily on generic AI generated content often read similarly to others, lack depth, and are less competitive in our highly selective process. Your application should ultimately reflect your own thinking, experience, and goals. Strong responses are specific, contextualized, and grounded in your work and interests, with clear and realistic goals. Throughout the Journey, we do not permit AI notetakers in our virtual touchpoints in order to maintain a psychologically safe and fully present space. We do, however, welcome other accessibility features and are glad to discuss the best options for your needs.

***Covid Caveats:** Please note that due to uncertainties caused by Covid-19, the programming and calendar, including the in-person events, may need to be converted to an all-virtual format.