



Briefing Document

College of Experts

Nurturing research talent

What is the Africa Research Excellence Fund?

The Africa Research Excellence Fund (AREF) was founded by Professor Sir Tumani Corrah in 2015 with a clear vision to bring together an inspired, committed, and talented community of researchers in Africa leading world-class research and participating equitably in international research endeavours for health and wellbeing.

Our fellowships provide African researchers with experience of state-of-the-art research methodologies in world-class research environments to help them build their research network, attend workshops and conferences, and learn from research leaders in their field.

Our grant-writing workshops equip African researchers with the confidence, knowledge and support required to win competitive funding from international funders.

Our leadership programmes equip African researchers with the knowledge and expertise required to be future leaders in their field, to form equitable, international collaborations and, ultimately, to help define the continent's health agenda and research priorities.

What is the College of Experts?

The College of Experts is a group of scientists and health researchers who support our fellowships and programmes by providing advice based on their relevant research experience.

The main function of college members is to act as peer-reviewers for applications to AREF. We may ask you to participate in other activities such as training workshops, speaking at seminars or mentoring programmes from time to time.

What are the Research Development Fellowship?

The Research Development Fellowship (RDF) scheme is our main competitive awards programme.

The aim of the Fellowship Programme is to enable talented African post-doctoral researchers to develop their own research ideas and funding proposals through placements in leading research organisations in Africa, UK and Europe.

These emerging African researchers are working on important challenges for human health in Africa, including infectious disease and non-communicable diseases. We provide up to £40,000 for a 3 to 9-month placement and re-integration into the home (employing) institution after the placement.

[Click here to find out more detailed information about the Fellowship Programme.](#)

What is the scale of the Fellowship Programme?

We have funded [65 fellowship awards](#) since 2015.

Our RDF 2023/24 opens in June 2023, with a deadline for applications in September 2023. This year, **we have funds for approximately 20 awards**, depending on their length and individual costs. We hope to receive significant applications by the deadline.

We will run competitions for additional funding for existing fellows (Seed Fund) in late 2023 -early 2024 and we expect to engage the College of Experts in the process as peer reviewers.

What is AREF looking for in its College of Experts?

We aim to reach at least 90 College members to give us breadth and depth in knowledge and experience.

Typical College Member career profiles

Typically, to be selected, members will be experienced mid-level/senior researchers with a strong track record in research.

They will be working on research problems that have the potential to **improve human health**.

Members will ideally have between **5 and 10 years of active research experience after gaining their PhD**. But we are flexible, recognising that career paths differ – not least between different disciplines and professions. We also welcome more experienced researchers into the College.

Applicants will have evidence of the following:

- **research productivity** (e.g. publishing challenging, original research outputs regularly and in formats that have significant impact in their field)
- **winning significant grant support** as a principal or co-applicant
- **growing leadership and impact** (leading research teams, supervising students and postdocs, engagement in international networks)
- other evidence of independence and recognition (including acting as peer reviewer for a funder).

Nationality and location of College Members

We are recruiting **internationally**.

To build capacity in peer review in Africa, we are keen to recruit **African nationals** who meet the selection criteria who are based in centres of research excellence in Africa or working on Africa-relevant research anywhere in the world.

AREF is also recruiting from among global health scientists of **any nationality** holding a research fellowship (or equivalent) awarded through competition, such as a Wellcome Trust or UK Medical Research Council Research fellowship or equivalent; having worked in Africa is desirable but not essential if the expertise is directly relevant.

We aim for at least two-thirds of College of Expert members being in the first of the above two categories. We would particularly like to encourage applications from female researchers and researchers from francophone and lusophone countries.

Scientific scope

We are seeking to recruit new members across a broad scope, **covering human health and disease**, including **infectious diseases** and **non-communicable diseases** that are significant and/or identified as “neglected” in Africa.

The scope of disciplines and their associated research methodologies and technologies that we should like expertise in are as follows:

- advanced medical statistics
- medical bioinformatics
- biomedical and computational modelling (applied to health)
- molecular biology and omics technologies
- other advanced, laboratory-based
- pharmacology and physiological systems
- epidemiology, demography and population health
- ecological sciences as applied to human health
- quantitative and qualitative behavioural and social sciences
- economics applied to health
- health systems and policy research

How are the members of the AREF College of Experts selected?

Applicants are asked to complete the College of Expert application form on the [AREF website](#).

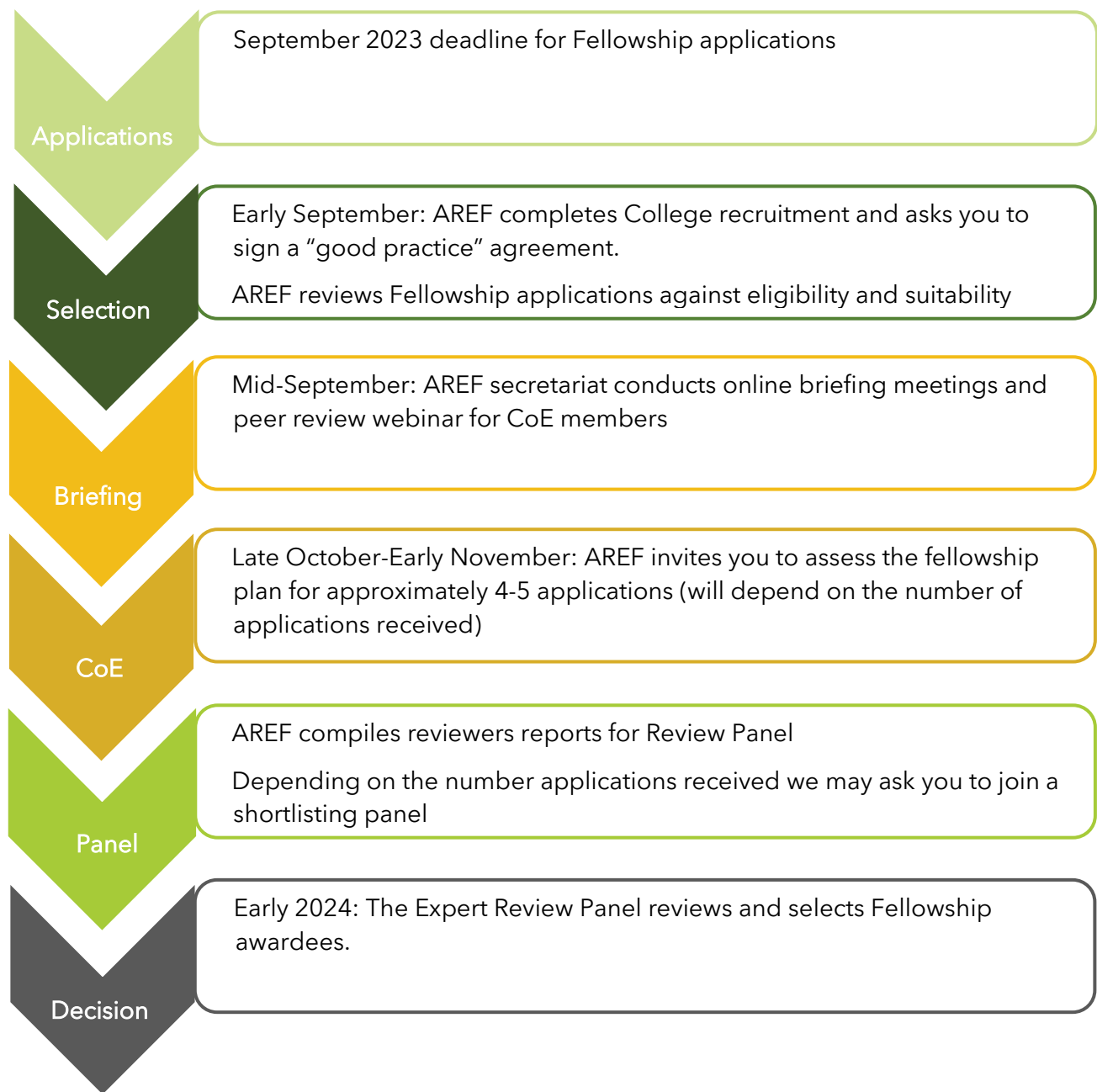
The deadline for applications for this campaign is **31 July 2023**, although we are happy to accept applications at any time.

AREF will review applications, and applicants that meet the selection criteria (stated above) will in most instances be invited to become members of the College.

However, AREF will take account of the following:

- Need for coverage and balance across disease/health areas, research disciplines, technologies and methods.
- Balance between members from Africa and from elsewhere.
- Gender balance.

How does the assessment of Fellowship applications work?



Integrity of the Fellowship application process

Being a peer reviewer involves trust. Reviewers have a duty to act with integrity. This includes the following:

- Treating all applicants and applications fairly and equitably - not favouring your own institution, country, research topic and so on.
- Doing a thorough, objective assessment against the criteria.
- Keeping information, in particular applications and the outcomes of the reviews, confidential.

Members will not review applications involving their home institutions or institutions/programmes in Africa with which they are associated.

We will organise an online briefing in September which will include discussion of a “mock” fellowship proposal and how it would be assessed. The idea is to standardise the assessments to ensure fairness.

Will I be paid?

AREF is working within the framework of “scientific citizenship” in which peer-reviewers give generously of their time and expertise, as a contribution to those who follow them. Therefore, we are unable to pay College of Experts. Many reviewers say that being part of the process broadens their own thinking.

Next steps

If you think you meet our criteria and are keen to contribute and learn, please:

- Send the application form and a short CV (research) to us at programmes@aref-africa.org.uk
- If you have questions, write to us using the same email address.
- Please pass this information to anyone you feel fits the College of Experts membership criteria and might be interested in supporting health research in Africa.

Contact details and links

Contact us at: programmes@aref-africa.org.uk

AREF website: <http://www.africaresearchexcellencefund.org.uk/>

MRC Guidance for peer reviewers: This is a useful guide. It is these standards with which AREF aims to be consistent <http://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/peer-review/guidance-for-peer-reviewers/>