



## **United States Department of State Professional Fellows Program—Advancing Young Women Agribusiness Entrepreneurs and Innovators: A Rwanda-South Africa-Zambia-Zimbabwe-U.S. Partnership**

The *Advancing Young Women* Professional Fellows Program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and is administered by Michigan State University (US), University of Rwanda (Rwanda), University of Pretoria (South Africa), University of Zambia (Zambia) and Chinhoyi University of Technology (Zimbabwe). The goal of the program is to build Fellows' capacity and skills in agro-entrepreneurship and agri-food system innovation and advance their ability to support women's economic empowerment. Rwandan, South African, Zambian and Zimbabwean Fellows will develop their leadership capacity and professional skills through **a fully funded five-week fellowship program in the U.S.**

The U.S. program will include a four-week professional internship with Michigan organizations focused on agriculture, innovation, agro-entrepreneurship, and women's empowerment coupled with additional seminars and training with professionals from Michigan State University and throughout the state of Michigan.

We are recruiting young Rwandan, South African, Zambian and Zimbabwean professionals from diverse backgrounds in the private, public, non-governmental, and education sectors who are either women agribusiness entrepreneurs or individuals working to increase women's economic engagement in the agricultural sector.

The initial application for the program will remain open until February 16, 2024.

Interviews for selected semi-finalists will take place in March, 2024.

Invitations to participate in the program will be sent in April, 2024 and applicants that are not selected to participate will also be notified. Unfortunately, due to the high volume of applications, the program team will not be able to update individual applicants on the status of their submission until the review process is complete.

Tentative Spring 2025 program dates: May 10 - June 16, 2025.

### **Who Should Apply**

- Women entrepreneurs, social innovators, or small and medium business owners or managers and other leaders working in the agriculture and food sectors
- Individuals (of any gender) in civil society and NGOs working on programs that support women in the agriculture and food sectors in their respective countries
- Policymakers, ministry employees, and others in the public sector (of any gender) focused on supporting and improving opportunities for women in the agriculture or food sector
- Academic staff (of any gender) who are implementing programs that advance women in the agriculture and food sectors

### **Eligibility Requirements**



- 25-40 years old
- A citizen, national, or permanent resident of Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia, or Zimbabwe
- Is living and working in Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia, or Zimbabwe at the time of the application
- Fluent in both spoken and written English
- Has at least two years of professional/working experience in their field
- Has demonstrated leadership and collaborative skills and a commitment to community development
- Has employer's support for participating in the program (for those not self-employed). For those self-employed, has recommendation from local authorities at the district and/or community levels
- Is interested in participating in a reciprocal program for American participants coming to your country
- Preference will be given to those who are in an earlier state of their careers
- Preference will be given to applicants who have not previously had the opportunity to travel to the U.S.
- Finalists must be fully vaccinated in accordance with current CDC guidelines, in order to travel to the United States.

Individuals NOT eligible for the Professional Fellows Program includes

- U.S. citizens and/or permanent residents of the United States
- Spouses of U.S. citizens and/or permanent residents of the United States
- Individuals participating in academic, training or research programs in the United States at the time of application
- Individuals residing or working outside their home countries at the time of application
- Employees and their families of non-profit organizations who administer the Professional Fellows Program on behalf of the U. S. Department of State. This provision does not disqualify self-supporting members of families who live apart from their parents
- Local employees of the U.S. missions abroad who work for the U.S. Department of State or the U.S. Agency for International Development are ineligible for grants during the period of their employment and for one year following the termination of employment
- Immediate families (i.e., spouses and dependent children) of U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development employees for a period of one year following the termination of such employment. This provision does not disqualify self-supporting members of families who live apart from their parents

For more information about the program, please contact:

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### **U.S.**

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[LINK TO APPLY](#)

### **Detailed Program Information**

The five-week program in the U.S. is tentatively scheduled for May 10 - June 16, 2025. The program will include:

#### **Part 1: Nine-month virtual program lead-in prior to travel to East Lansing, Michigan**

Program partners will deliver synchronous and asynchronous virtual sessions to prepare Fellows for their professional exchanges, introduce them to the program team and hosts, and end with a pre-departure orientation.

#### **Part 2: Post-Arrival Orientation in East Lansing, Michigan**

The orientation will familiarize the program participants with each other as well as the program and topics to be covered during the exchange. Fellows will also be given resources to help acclimate to U.S. culture and East Lansing.

#### **Part 3: Four-Week Program in Michigan Communities**

Participants will take part in internships with Michigan institutions and participate in seminars and meetings with U.S. leaders in economic development in the food and agriculture sector. Fellows will also identify an agricultural challenge faced by their community and design an individual project to address the issue, which the Fellows will implement upon returning home. Fellows will develop their individual project plan over the course of the exchange, utilizing the skills developed during the on-campus seminars and working with their mentors from the Michigan-based organizations. Seminars will combine presentations and discussions to provide an opportunity for Fellows to share experiences from their home countries and organizations and observations from their internship placements. Fellows will



also have the opportunity to experience U.S. culture through site visits, special events, and sharing dinners with local families.

#### **Part 4: Three-Day Participation in the Professional Fellows Congress in Washington, DC**

The Fellowship program will culminate with a three-day Congress in Washington, D.C. The Congress will allow participants the opportunity to meet and share their experience with Fellows from around the world and participate in dialogue to examine the roles of individual and institutional leadership in economic development and women's economic empowerment.