

## SUSTAIN programme round 13 – application guidelines

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## 1. Introduction

**SUSTAIN** is a programme designed to develop the skills that are important to enable women researchers to thrive in their independent research careers.

Delivered in collaboration by the **Academy of Medical Sciences** (the Academy) and the **Royal Society** (the Society), with support from the **Royal Academy of Engineering**, we are offering places to 24 women on the thirteenth cohort of the programme.

Clinicians, scientists and engineers from all disciplines are eligible to join SUSTAIN, provided they currently hold a qualifying award or fellowship from one of the funding organisations.

## 2. Programme content

SUSTAIN is aimed at supporting women researchers to develop the skills and competencies required to progress to leadership positions and it will include the following:

### Events and workshops

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#### ➤ In person launch event – 9-10 June 2026

The launch will offer an opportunity to meet other SUSTAIN participants and take part in training for the mentoring and co-coaching aspects of the programme, as well as on broader career development topics.

#### ➤ Virtual mentor speed-meeting – 17 June 2026

This event is designed to allow participants to meet some of the mentors for the SUSTAIN cohort.

**Please note that to secure a place on the programme, you must be able to attend both events in person.**

#### ➤ Other workshops throughout the year

The launch will be followed by a series of career development workshops spaced out throughout the year. Each session will be tailored to support participants through the challenges of combining research, teaching, clinical practice, and caring and other responsibilities where relevant. Previous sessions have included topics on:

- Media training
- Career development including negotiation, coaching and pitching
- Researcher resilience
- Setting up a research team for success
- Developing your leadership style

The content will be developed in the coming months and will be tailored to the needs of the participants.

The information you provide in your application form regarding areas that you are interested in covering will also feed into the content of the sessions.

#### ➤ End of cycle event – May 2027

A closing event to celebrate the journey of each cohort. Bringing together the SUSTAIN community, this event will be an opportunity for participants to reflect on their experience, connect with Alumnae and plan the next career steps.

## Network building activities

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### ➤ **A peer support network**

Peer-coaching triads will be set-up to enable connections, sharing of experience and facilitate discussions of issues/challenges. Small group work in these triads at each workshop will help to embed learning and make the sessions more practical.

### ➤ **One-to-one mentoring**

Participants will have the option to be paired with a Fellow of either the Royal Society or the Academy of Medical Sciences. In addition, or in place of this mentor, participants can choose to be paired with a SUSTAIN alumna as well. Bespoke training and ongoing support will be provided to both mentees and mentors over the course of the programme.

We promote a **developmental model of mentoring** to enable mentees to make critical career decisions.

Participants are asked to:

- 1) Attend an afternoon virtual mentoring workshop on 17 June 2026.
- 2) Commit to meet their mentor regularly over the period of one year (meetings may be virtual).
- 3) Complete short feedback surveys at key points during the programme.

### ➤ **Leadership Shadowing Scheme**

This is an opportunity to learn leadership strategies from the lived experience of those at the top of their careers who have overcome challenges and achieved success. Each participant will be matched with a leader in academia, industry, government, or a third sector organization. By spending time with a leader of their choice, participants will have direct experience of how leadership is enacted in real-world situations. The scheme will see each participant taking part in the leader's day-to-day activities and getting to know their team. The content of the scheme will be tailored to the needs of the participants and leaders' availability.

### **Time commitment**

The frequency of your meetings with your mentor and your triad should be decided and agreed upon amongst yourselves, but we encourage participants to meet with their mentors and peer-coaching triads every six to eight weeks. The shadowing scheme will involve a minimum of one day of interactions between each participant and their leader. Beyond this initial requirement, it is up to each pair to decide how their relationship develops. Participants and leaders may choose to continue with additional shadowing sessions, informal check-ins, project collaboration, or other forms of engagement that best support learning and career goals.

### 3. Who can apply

The programme is open to women scientists and engineers (including both clinical and non-clinical researchers) who hold an active award or fellowship from one of the partner organisations.

To be eligible to apply you must hold one of the following awards:

The Royal Society	Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship
	Sir Henry Dale Fellowship
	University Research Fellowship
	Career Development Fellowship
Academy of Medical Sciences	Springboard Award
	Starter Grant Award for Clinical Lecturers
Royal Academy of Engineering	Research Fellow
	Engineering for Development Research Fellow

This award must be active at the time of your application. All applicants must be available to participate in the career development workshops. For the media training workshop, groups will be coordinated depending on participants' availability. Please see 'key dates' section of this document for more details.

#### 4. Key dates

Date	
12 March 2026	Applications open.
8 April 2026	Applications close.
w/c 13 April 2026	Applicants are notified about the outcome of the selection process.
9-10 June 2026	Residential launch at Academy of Medical Sciences' building, 41 Portland Place, London. This will include career development workshops and networking opportunities with other SUSTAIN participants and senior researchers.
17 June 2026	Virtual mentor meeting – during this workshop, you will meet the SUSTAIN round 12 mentors to help you nominate your preferred choices.
6, 14, or 22 October 2026	Media training workshop in London (full day event) – cohort split into three groups across different dates.
February 2027	Virtual career development workshop (two half days).
May 2027	Career development workshop and conclusion event – at the Royal Society in London, date to be confirmed closer to the time (two full day events).

The full agenda for each event will be sent to participants closer to the time.

## **5. Accommodation, travel and childcare**

For any in-person events, reasonable travel expenses will be covered, and hotel accommodation will be offered to all participants. This will typically be for the night before subsequent workshops, to help participants to avoid rush hour travel.

Childcare support, when additional care is required above normal provision, is available to support your attendance at the workshops. Participants who want to claim reasonable costs of childcare should contact either the Academy or the Society to arrange how expenses will be covered.

## **6. Monitoring of progress and continuous development**

Feedback from participants will help us to assess the impact of SUSTAIN and inform future developments. **We expect participants to maintain close contact with the organisers and to complete our feedback surveys after each workshop to support the development of the programme.**

**To ensure continuous improvement of the programme and the achievement of its objectives,** feedback from each annual cycle will be discussed with a reference group including Fellows of the Academies and SUSTAIN alumnae.

## **7. Selection process**

### **Background**

The selection process for the SUSTAIN programme is randomised within the allocations for each funder. A total of 24 places is available for SUSTAIN round 13. Including 16 places for Royal Society Research Fellows, 6 places for Academy of Medical Sciences Research Fellows and 2 places for Royal Academy of Engineering Research Fellows. Places will be allocated from the pool of applicants by a random generator overseen by staff from the Society. The decision of the Society is final.

**Notification of decisions regarding SUSTAIN applications will be made week commencing 13 April 2026.**

## 8. Guidance notes for completing the application form

Please complete and submit an online application by **16:00 BST on Wednesday 8 April 2026** through our [Flexi-Grant portal](#). If you have not used Flexi-Grant before, you will need to register and create a new user account. Please note that the Society and the Academy jointly control the personal data processed as part of the SUSTAIN Pilot Programme. Further information, including how to contact either organisation, is available in our respective Privacy Policies which can be found at the [Society's Privacy Policy](#) and the [Academy's Privacy Policy](#).

This section guides you through completing the online application form for the SUSTAIN programme. Some notes on completing the form are integrated into the form itself.

### Save and resume

Once you have started a section, you can click save at the bottom and log out of Flexi-Grant; your responses in that section will be saved. To return to your application log in to [Flexi-Grant portal](#), click on 'My Account' in the top right corner, and select 'My Applications' to resume.

### Submitting your application

When you have completed all sections of the application form, a 'Submit application' button will become available at the top of the summary page which you will need to click to finalise the application. Once your application has been submitted, you will be able to view your application and its current status, but you will not be able to modify it. You can also download your form as a PDF at any point to keep for your records.

Please read the following guidance notes carefully as you complete the form.

<b>Contact Details</b>	
Full name	Please enter your full name, including title.
Email address	This field defaults to the account in which the application has commenced and is where all correspondence pertaining to the application throughout the application process will be sent. The applicant must therefore commence the application using the login email address used to register a user account on Flexi-Grant®.
Host Organisation	Please enter the official organisation name of your current employer (e.g. University of Bath). If your Host Organisation is not listed, please select "scientific remit based application" and then add your host organisation in the box below.
Title of Current Position	Please state the title of your current position.
<b>Award Details</b>	
Award	Please indicate the title of your current research award, the name of the awarding Academy and end date of your award. Your award must be active at the time of applying to the programme.

<b>Programme Preferences</b>	
Mentoring preferences	Please indicate if you wish to be matched with a Fellow of the Society/the Academy, SUSTAIN alumna or both (Academy Fellow and SUSTAIN alumna)
Leadership shadowing preferences	Please outline the leadership fields you would like to interact with. Please use a 1-4 ranking based on your preferences. 1 being your top choice and 4 being your lowest ranked choice.
Why you are interested in SUSTAIN and any areas of career development you would like the programme to cover	Your answer does not affect the selection process. The information from selected participants is used to help us to further develop and tailor the programme of activities during the year.
Applicant declaration.	Please read and complete the statements so that we can process your application.

<b>Diversity Monitoring</b>	
<b>Diversity Monitoring</b>	<p>The Royal Society is committed to promoting diversity in UK science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) by seeking to increase participation from under-represented groups. Please help us to monitor how effectively we are doing this by providing the requested information. The information provided will form a confidential statistical record in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).</p> <p>This information will be kept separately from the rest of your application.</p> <p>As part of the SUSTAIN Collaboration Agreement, the personal information you provide in your application will be anonymised and shared with the Academy of Medical Sciences to enable both the Society and the Academy analyse and monitor diversity in our activities.</p> <p>The Society and the Academy jointly control the personal data processed as part of the SUSTAIN Pilot Programme. Further information, including how to contact either organisation, is available in our respective Privacy Policies which can be found at the <a href="#">Society's Privacy Policy</a> and the <a href="#">Academy's Privacy Policy</a>.</p> <p>You must either complete the form or tick the boxes stating that you 'prefer not to say'. If you do not select a box for each question, the system will regard your application as incomplete and will not allow you to submit it.</p>

If you have any questions or would like to highlight any specific information with respect to your application, please contact us at [researchfellowengagement@royalsociety.org](mailto:researchfellowengagement@royalsociety.org).