

The Elsevier Foundation

2025 Partnerships

Female Science Talents

Falling Walls Foundation



Location

Germany, with worldwide participants



Target group

Early-career women researchers from academia and industry



Budget

\$50,000 per year (2022), \$90,000 a year (2023-2025)



SDGs

SDG 5 (target 5.5),
SDG 10 (target 10.2)



Additional partners

Bayer Foundation, DFG (German Research Foundation), Volkswagen Foundation (since 2024)

Synopsis

Inspire and empower women scientists to make their next career step, pursue flexible career paths, build an international network, and promote women leadership in science, business and society.

Program description

While women are well represented in early academic stages, they remain significantly underrepresented in senior leadership, decision-making roles, and high-visibility recognition. The partnership with the Falling Walls Foundation advances the Female Science Talents (FST) Program – an international initiative dedicated to strengthening women's leadership in science and beyond.

Through a highly selective, year-long intensive program for 20 early-career researchers from across disciplines and geographic regions, the program provides tailored leadership development, mentoring, and global exposure at a pivotal career transition point.

In 2023, the Falling Walls Foundation and the Elsevier Foundation also established the inaugural “Women's Impact Award”, designed to recognize women scientists for their visionary research in fields related to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, while also demonstrating commitment to gender equality, justice and the gender dimension in science.



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Advancing human progress together

Goals

- Support early-career women scientists through targeted leadership development, mentoring, and career support.
- Build a strong, international community of outstanding female researchers across disciplines and geographies.
- Connect participants with forward-thinking institutions, companies and decision-makers.
- Drive systemic change by addressing gender disparities in leadership, recognition, research and decision-making in science.
- Recognize exceptional research through the Women's Impact Award, for women who conduct interdisciplinary research and contribute to greater inclusion in science.

Looking ahead

The partnership is focused on strengthening long-term impact to develop emerging women research leaders. This includes refining the mentoring framework with clearer matching and orientation processes, consolidating a coherent curriculum informed by participant feedback, and strengthening structured impact measurement and the alumnae program.



Activities and milestones

Female Science Talents

- Selected 20 Intensive Track participants from ca. 250 applications from high-, middle- and low-income countries.
- Delivered a structured program of thematic workshops, career talks, peer-to-peer exchanges, and alumni networking events throughout 2025.
- Introduced a pilot mentoring program pairing alumnae with current participants, including three formal FST-organized meetings and additional informal sessions to foster mutual growth.
- The Elsevier Foundation co-hosted the International Spring and Fall Gatherings in May and November in collaboration with key partners, providing recommendations for speakers. The events focused on inclusive leadership, responsible innovation, entrepreneurship, public speaking and inclusive AI.
- Enabled active participation in major science platforms, including the Falling Walls Science Summit and Berlin Science Week, where participants contributed to roundtables and organized panels.
- Strengthened impact measurement through pre- and post-participation surveys, and event feedback mechanisms, to assess leadership mindset and skills development.

Women Breakthrough Award winners

- Dr. Ângela Gonçalves, on the influence of reproductive cycling on aging and disease. Dr. Gonçalves was also awarded the Falling Walls Science Breakthrough of the Year 2025 in the Women's Impact category.
- Dr. Colette Wabnitz, on gender equity in fisheries, supporting women's leadership, and advancing just and sustainable ocean governance.
- Dr. Omneya Attallah, on early detection of breast cancer in resource-limited settings via novel cost-effective non-invasive biomarkers and artificial intelligence.

