Australian Academy of Health & Medical Sciences

Prospectus for partner organisations

Inclusive Leadership Mentoring Program for Health and Medical Research



Facilitated by SERENDIS LEADERSHIP

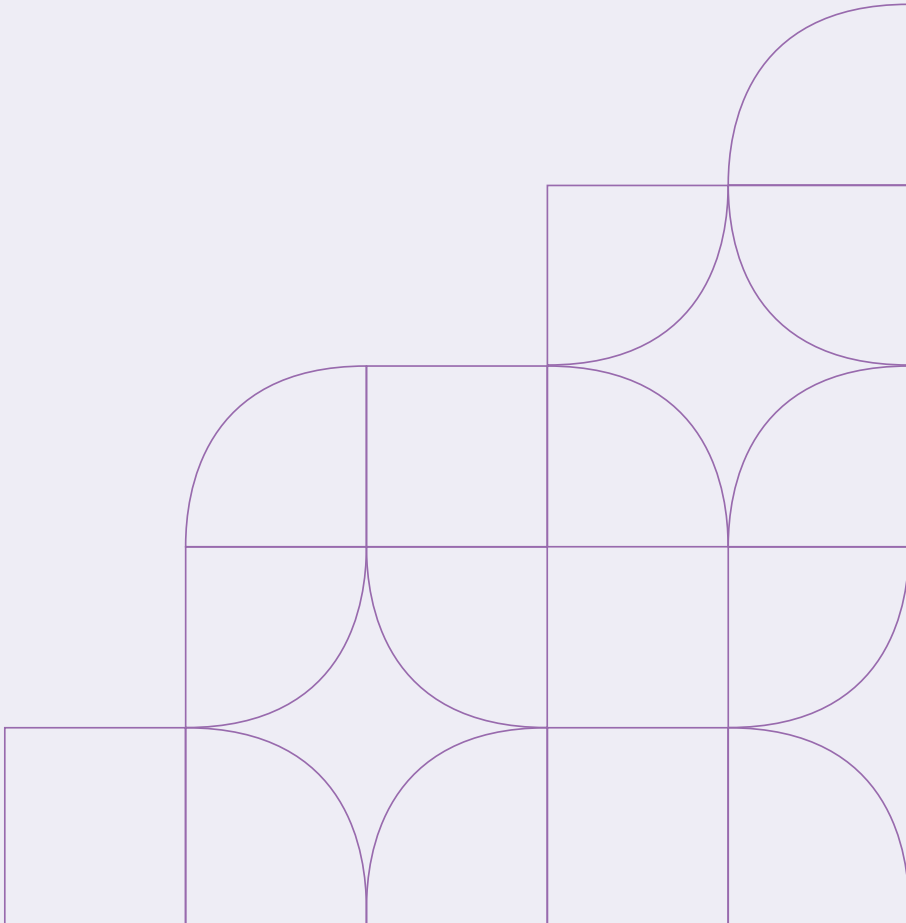
Become a partner in the national rollout

In 2027, the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences will expand the Inclusive Leadership Mentoring Program for health and medical research, as the first stage of a national rollout supported by the Australian Government.

This is an invitation for leading medical research institutes, university faculties and schools, health services and sector organisations to become partner organisations as the program continues in NSW and expands to Victoria and beyond.

The program supports the career progression of mid-career women in health and medical research, while developing inclusive leadership capability among senior leaders across the sector.

It is not a standalone mentoring program. It is a sector-led response to a nationally recognised leadership challenge, backed by Australian Government investment and grounded in the Academy's Decadal Plan for Women in the Health and Medical Sciences.



From sector recommendation to national rollout

2024

The Academy commenced work on the sector's first Decadal Plan for Women in the Health and Medical Sciences, drawing together sector evidence, experiences and priorities.

2025



At the Academy's Gala Dinner, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Rebecca White MP, launched the Decadal Plan – speaking alongside Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP.

The Plan recommended investment in a national proven, evidence-based program of training and support that tackles the pinch points preventing women from reaching senior leadership in health and medical research.

2026

The Australian Government awarded the Academy $1.7 million through Round 5 of the Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship (WISE) grant program to expand the Inclusive Leadership Mentoring Program nationally, building on 10 years of success in NSW.



2027

Victoria becomes the first new state in the national rollout.

The Academy is now inviting leading organisations to partner with us to deliver this next stage.

Why this program matters

Women make up more than half of the health and medical research workforce, yet remain under-represented in the most senior leadership roles.

This represents a structural leadership challenge, not a lack of talent across our sector.

The Inclusive Leadership Mentoring Program is designed to support women at the point where career progression often becomes less linear, less visible and less supported. It also works with senior leaders, of any gender, to strengthen the inclusive leadership capability needed to shift organisational cultures over time.

For partner organisations, participation is a practical way to contribute to a government-funded national initiative, respond to the priorities identified through the Decadal Plan, and invest in the next generation of health and medical research leaders.



Why this program is different

Senior sector leaders have seen many mentoring programs. The Inclusive Leadership Mentoring Program has been designed to be different in the ways that matter.

It is by the sector, for the sector

The program is tailored specifically to health and medical research. It reflects the career structures, institutional settings and leadership pathways of medical research institutes, universities, health services and the broader health and medical research ecosystem.

It combines mentoring *with* leadership development

Participants do not simply meet informally with a mentor. Each mentee works one-to-one with an experience mentor, supported by structured workshops covering career development, leadership progression, strengths, resilience and practical career planning.

Mentors also receive dedicated support to strengthen their mentoring practice and inclusive leadership capability.

It is cross-organisational

Mentees are matched with experienced leaders outside their own workplace. This provides independent perspective, broader networks and conversations that may not be possible within their own institution or reporting line.

It builds capability on both sides of the relationship

Mentees gain confidence, clarity and support to progress their careers. Mentors build practical skills in supporting diverse talent and contributing to more inclusive organisational cultures.

It helps organisations deliver on existing commitments

The program gives organisations a practical mechanism to advance commitments they are already making through SAGE, gender equity strategies, leadership development programs, workforce plans and organisational culture initiatives.

It moves those commitments from aspiration to action by providing structured, cross-organisational development for mid-career women and senior leaders across health and medical research.

It is the first nationally coordinated program of its kind

The national rollout creates an opportunity to build a sustained community of women leaders and inclusive leadership champions across the health and medical research sector.



Evidence of impact

The Inclusive Leadership Mentoring Program is backed by published evaluation evidence.[1]

A mixed-methods evaluation in BMJ Open assessed outcomes 12 months after participants completed the program in NSW.[1] Mentees reported stronger career planning (92%), greater resilience (88%), a greater ability to have difficult workplace conversations (88%), and improvements in supervisory and team management skills (82%). Within 12 months of completing the program, nearly half of mentees (48%) reported a professional promotion opportunity they attributed to the program, and almost a third (30%) reported new grant opportunities.

Mentors benefited too. Despite already being senior leaders, 83% of mentors reported improved knowledge and skills to be more inclusive in their workplace, and 75% reported a positive change in how they manage their teams. This matters, because the program is designed not only to support individual women, but to strengthen the leadership behaviours and workplace cultures that shape women's progression.

For partner organisations, this means participation supports both individual career progression and broader organisational capability. It gives mid-career women structured support at a critical point in their careers, while equipping senior leaders with practical skills to better support diverse talent.

[1] *Vassallo A, Walker K, Georgousakis M, Joshi R. BMJ Open 2021;11:e052560. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2021-052560 (https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-052560)*

About the program

The Inclusive Leadership Mentoring Program supports the career progression of mid-career women in health and medical research, while developing the inclusive leadership capabilities of senior sector leaders.

The program connects mentees with mentors from different workplaces across the health and medical research ecosystem, fostering fresh perspectives, broader professional networks and more open conversations about leadership and career progression.

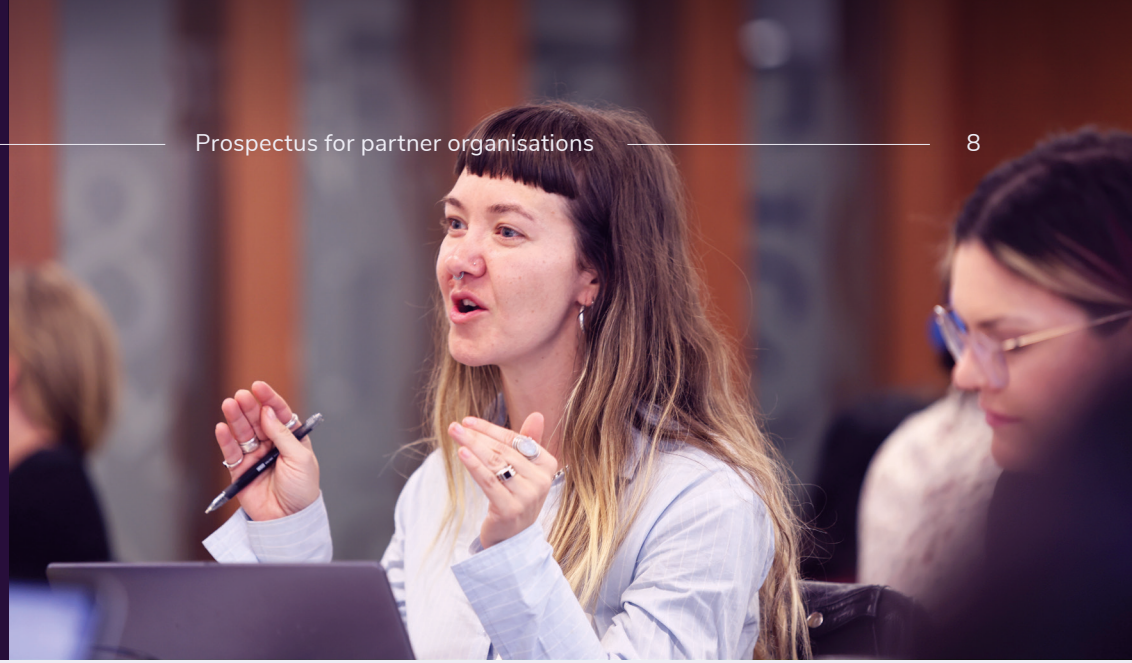
Originally developed and delivered by Franklin Women, the program has strong foundations in the sector. Following Franklin Women's closure at the end of 2025, the Academy partnered with Serendis Leadership to continue the program in NSW and to expand it nationally.

The program is facilitated by Serendis Leadership and delivered in partnership with the Academy.



Program format

The Inclusive Leadership Mentoring Program is a six-month cross-organisational program.



For mentees

One-on-one mentoring with an experienced leader outside their usual networks.

Facilitated workshops on developing their careers, identifying and articulating their strengths, building resilience and progressing as leaders.

Practical frameworks for career planning and progression.

Opportunities to learn from senior sector leaders.

For mentors

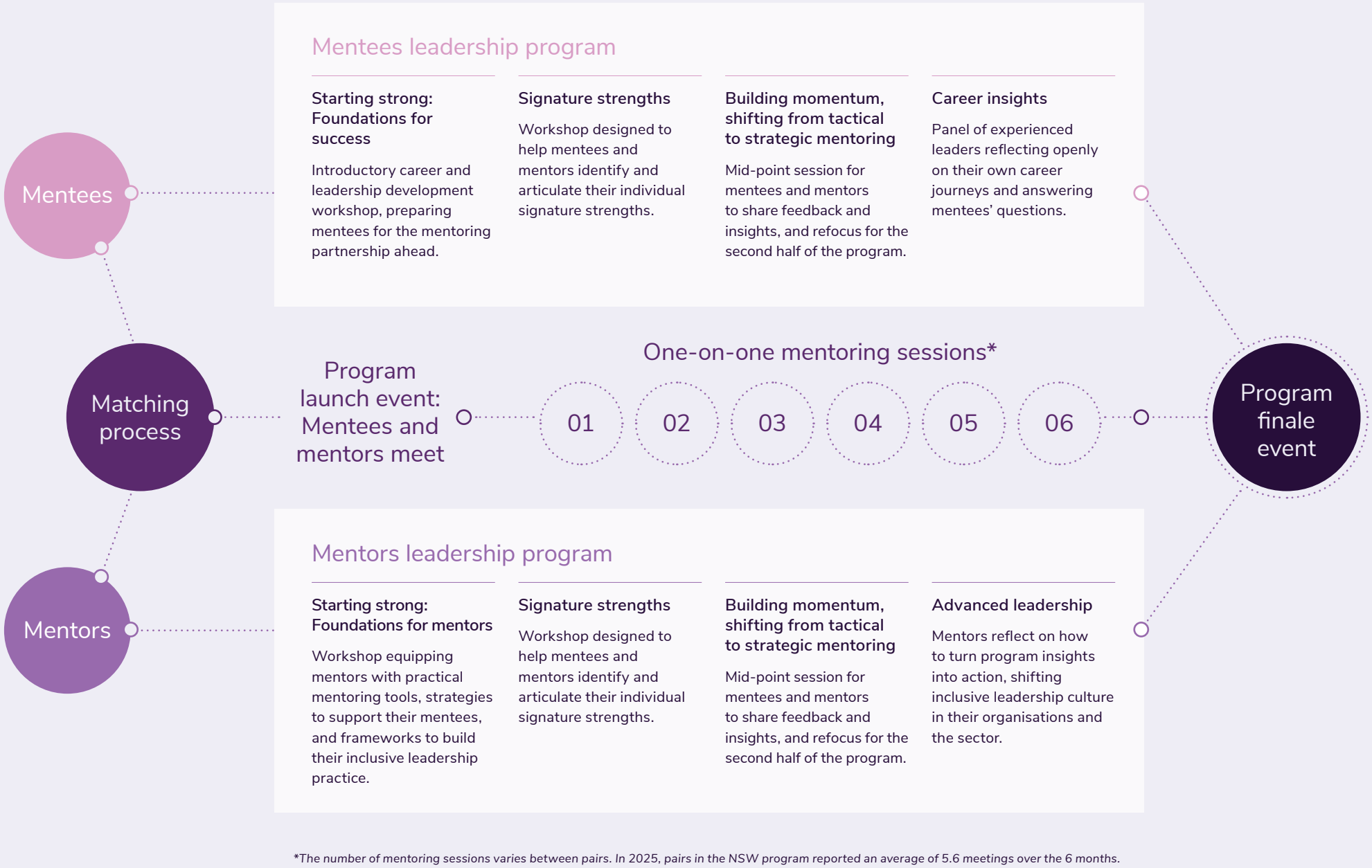
Advanced training on shifting culture towards inclusive leadership.

Dedicated training to strengthen their mentoring and develop their inclusive leadership practice.

For all participants

A cross-organisational cohort of peers and leaders.

Online platform support throughout the program.



*The number of mentoring sessions varies between pairs. In 2025, pairs in the NSW program reported an average of 5.6 meetings over the 6 months.

Participants

Mentees

Mentees are mid-career researchers who identify as women whose work contributes to improving health outcomes.

This may include women working across lab research, clinical research, public health, health technology, medical engineering, policy, implementation science, data, commercialisation, research translation or related fields.

Mentees are typically around 8 to 10 years into their professional career, or at approximately university Level C equivalent.

Mentors

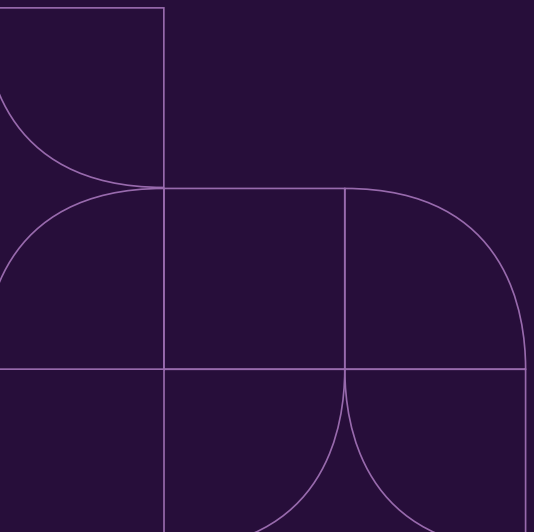
Mentors are experienced leaders of any gender with at least 15 years' professional experience and a current leadership role in the sector.

Mentors may be research leaders, academic leaders, clinical leaders, executive leaders or senior professionals with substantial experience in the health and medical research sector.

Through the program, mentors strengthen their skills in inclusive leadership, mentoring and supporting diverse talent. They also build deeper awareness of the barriers experienced by women and the practical role leaders can play in reducing those barriers.



Partner organisations will be invited to nominate mentees and mentors to participate in the 2027 cohort.



The value of partnering

Your organisation gains:

- access to a high-quality, sector-specific leadership and mentoring program
- structured support for mid-career women at a critical career stage
- development opportunities for senior leaders serving as mentors
- cross-organisational networks for participants.

And demonstrates:

- active involvement in a national, Australian Government funded initiative
- alignment with the priorities identified in the Decadal Plan for Women in the Health and Medical Sciences
- a visible commitment in a sector-led response to women's leadership.

Partner organisations will be invited to nominate mentees and mentors to participate in the 2027 cohort.

National rollout

The program is expanding in 2027 with the support of the Australian Government.

The five-year expansion will support delivery across five states, with opportunities for individuals from all states and territories to benefit over time.

The national model will include:

- expansion beyond New South Wales, beginning with Victoria
- co-design and stakeholder consultation as the program rolls out
- travel grants to reduce geographic and financial barriers
- support for participation from regional, remote and under-represented cohorts
- a free virtual Inclusive Leadership Workshop series
- a national Alumni Network
- longitudinal evaluation to strengthen the evidence base for gender equity interventions in the health and medical sciences.

Alumni Network

From 2027, the program will establish a national Alumni Network to sustain the career development, cross-organisational connections and inclusive leadership practices developed through the program.

The network will include a closed online alumni community, networking opportunities and professional development events co-designed with past participants.

As successive cohorts complete the program, the alumni community will grow into a national network of women leaders across health and medical research.

Travel grants and broader access

Travel grants will be available in 2027 to reduce barriers to participation.

These grants are intended to support people from under-represented groups and from rural and regional areas to take part fully in the program.

This will help the national rollout reach beyond major metropolitan centres and better reflect the breadth and depth of the health and medical research sector.

Why partner now

For organisations, this is an opportunity to:

- invest in mid-career women with leadership potential
- develop inclusive leadership capability among senior staff
- contribute to a practical national response to gender equity in leadership
- align with a government-funded priority
- demonstrate sector leadership
- help address the structural barriers that hold women back – and, over time, strengthen the sector that underpins Australia's health.

Partnering is not simply taking part in a program. It is a shared commitment to the next stage of a national initiative for women in health and medical research, one that strengthens the sector as a whole.

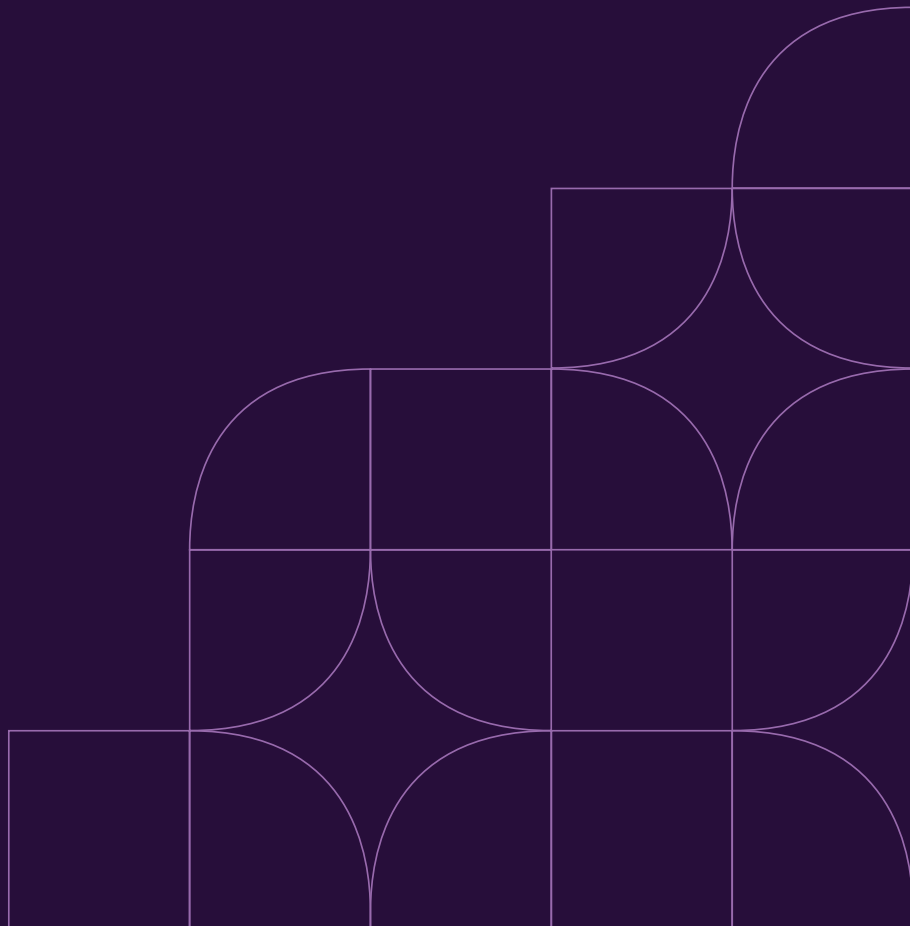


Invitation to participate

Your organisation is invited to become a partner organisation in 2027.

Partner organisations will be asked to nominate mentees and mentors, support their participation in the program, and contribute to the shared sector effort to build a stronger, more inclusive leadership pipeline.

Further information, including participation costs, nomination processes and program dates, will be provided to interested organisations.



Contact

Further information will be provided to interested organisations.



Lisa Crocker

Manager, Program and Partnerships
Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences

t 02 5135 6188
e Lisa.Crocker@aahms.org

Catherine Luckin

Chief Executive Officer
Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences

t 02 6189 8222
e Catherine.Luckin@aahms.org

Bianca Havas

Director
Serendis Leadership Consulting

t 02 8278 7435
e Bianca@serendis.com.au

Australian Academy of Health & Medical Sciences

The Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences

Canberra | Sydney | Brisbane

PO Box 6114, Woolloongabba, QLD 4102

e info@aahms.org t +61 (0) 7 3102 7220

www.aahms.org

linkedin.com/company/aahms

@ausacademyofhms

@MedSciAcademy