Eligibility and Evaluation Criteria

2026 OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Awards for Early Career Women Scientists in the Developing World

'Sustainable, Affordable, and Reliable Energy'

Eligibility

Applicants must be women scientists in the Early Career stage (**within ten years of earning their PhD degree**), whose current scientific research is related to the area of **sustainable, affordable, and reliable energy.**

Given that from 2022 the awards are focusing on better respond to the call for action set forth by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), applicants must demonstrate how their research contributes to advancing knowledge in the area of **sustainable, affordable, and reliable energy** and to achieving SDG7 (Affordable and clean energy).

The application can include, but is not limited to, references to the SDG7 target areas, e.g. ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services; increasing substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix; doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency; enhancing international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology; promoting investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology; and expanding infrastructure and upgrading technology to supply modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States, and land-locked developing countries.

The OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Awards are offered to women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Applications from women in Social sciences, Humanities, Arts or other are NOT eligible.

Eligible STEM fields:

- Agricultural Sciences
- Astronomy, Space and Earth Sciences
- Biological Systems and Organisms
- Chemical Sciences
- Computing and Information Technology
- Engineering Sciences
- Mathematical Sciences

- Medical and Health Sciences (including Neurosciences)
- Physics
- Structural, Cell and Molecular Biology

Any combination of these fields (i.e. interdisciplinarity) is acceptable.

In addition, the applicant must have **lived and worked for at least 5 of the last 15 years*** in one of the 66 scientifically and technologically lagging countries (STLCs) listed here:

Africa region: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Dem. Rep. Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Arab region: Djibouti, Palestine (West Bank & Gaza Strip), Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen

Asia & Pacific region: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Kiribati, Lao People's Dem Rep, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

Latin America & Caribbean region: Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay

*Please note:

- The 5 years of residence in the eligible country do not have to be consecutive.
- Applicants can be citizens of any country, provided that they fulfil the above residence requirement.
- Citizens of an eligible country who have not been able to live or work in that country due to active conflict may still exceptionally apply for the award.
- Although anyone having lived and worked at least 5 of the last 15 years in an eligible country may be considered, this award is intended to recognize the achievements of women scientists who have had to overcome challenging circumstances in developing countries. Therefore, candidates currently living and working in these countries or with longer presence in these countries may be given priority.

Preference will be given to those candidates not currently (or within the last three years) in receipt of The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) awards, fellowships or grants. Please note that OWSD Early Career Fellows and Alumnae are not eligible for these Awards.

If you have doubts about your eligibility, please contact owsd@owsd.net.

Evaluation

Above all, the Selection Panel is looking for candidates who have made significant contributions in the area of sustainable, affordable, and reliable energy whose research is linked to the SDG7 (Affordable and clean energy).

The selection committee will be looking for excellent science of relevance to and with a demonstrable impact in the developing world. Innovative techniques or methodologies (especially with regard to sustainable development) will be favourably considered. Applications that demonstrate an awareness of the importance of sex and/or gender considerations in research methodology and content may be prioritised.

Additionally, researchers are encouraged to demonstrate interdisciplinary collaboration within the natural sciences, but also with the social sciences and humanities.

Assessment is based on the applicant's achievements in her scientific field and specially in the contributions of her work to the achievement of the above mentioned SDGs. Additional attention is paid to evidence of leadership skills, initiative and innovation, as well as to the candidate's involvement in capacity building, outreach and civic contribution.

1. **Scientific merit**

   This will include an assessment of:

   - current research and/or scientific activities;
   - relevance of the research (e.g. how related to SDG7 (Affordable and clean energy), awareness of gender/sex issues and differences, evidence of impact on community);
   - quality of the applicant's publications;
   - awards, grants and/or prizes received;
   - collaborations with other scientists on research papers and projects;
   - participation as invited speaker or chair at scientific or academic events.

   Maximum marks for scientific merit are 40 (i.e. 40% of total marks).

2. **Leadership, initiative and innovation**

   Evidence of these skills includes involvement in the organization of workshops, conferences or other academic events. Membership of academies, societies and other organizations is very relevant, especially if the applicant is a member of the Board or Executive Committee, or head of a team or association. Membership of an OWSD national chapter's executive committee (and the relevant duties carried out) can also be included here. The applicant's links with industry (e.g. registered patents) and the use of innovative technologies, techniques or methodologies will also be highly valued.

   Maximum marks for leadership, initiative and innovation are 20.

3. **Capacity building**

   Evidence of capacity building includes running active MSc or PhD training programmes; involvement in developing or providing resources for students and young researchers; participation in mentoring or supervision activities. Involvement in relevant activities of OWSD national chapters can also be included here.

   Maximum marks for capacity building are 20.

4. **Outreach and civic contribution**
   Here the Selection Panel will be looking for the applicant's engagement with local communities; involvement in volunteering initiatives, as well as participation in public talks for non-scientific audiences and visits to schools. Involvement in relevant activities of OWSD national chapters can also be included here.

   Maximum marks for outreach and civic contribution are 20.

Grading Summary:

Scientific merit	40
Leadership, initiative and innovation	20
Capacity building factors	20
Outreach and civic contribution	20
Total	**100**

For more detailed guidelines and a sample application please go here.

Selection

Each year, there is a total of five awards: the highest ranking candidate from each of the four OWSD regions (see above) plus an additional "floating" award to a fifth candidate from any of these regions.

The competition will be judged by a distinguished panel of specialists in the appropriate research areas and who are aware of the challenges facing women scientists in developing countries.

Since 2020, the selection committee has been held online in order to incorporate a broad pool of experts based in the developing world, as well as local experts based in Trieste, Italy, including the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), the University of Trieste, Elettra Sincrotrone, The International School for Advanced Sciences (SISSA) and the International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), and experts from UNESCO science programmes. The Selection Panel is chaired by the OWSD Coordinator with full administrative support from the OWSD Secretariat.

Winners will be informed of their selection no later than 31 December 2025.