

Reach Alliance 2027: Call for Mentors

Application deadline: September 21, 2026

About the Reach Alliance

The [Reach Alliance](#) is a consortium of global universities - with partners in Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Mexico, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, United States, and Singapore - developing the leaders we need to solve urgent local challenges of the hard to reach – those under-served for geographic, administrative, or social reasons.

Working in interdisciplinary teams, Reach's globally-minded students use rigorous research methods to identify innovative solutions to climate, public health, and economic challenges. Research is conducted in collaboration with local communities and with guidance from university faculty members, building capacity and skills among Reach's student researchers. The power of the Reach Alliance stems from engaging leading universities to unleash actionable research insights for impact. These insights have been published in top journals and taken up by policymakers and sector leaders around the world.

The Reach Alliance was created in 2015 by the University of Toronto in partnership with the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth. It is guided by an Advisory Council of leaders in academia, and in the private, public, and non-profit sectors who help to drive impact, influence and scale, and support fundraising efforts.

- See Research Reports <https://reachalliance.org/research-reports/>
- See Library page for wider range of publications from our community: <https://reachalliance.org/library/>

The Reach Alliance at UCT

UCT joined the Reach Alliance in 2021 and is administered by the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, which is based at the Graduate School of Business.

The initiative falls under the broader Healthy Futures South Africa programme, led by the UCT Faculty of Health Sciences, and is a part of the Africa Health Collaborative. The Africa Health Collaborative is a multistakeholder partnership working towards transforming Africa's Primary Health Care systems, bringing together nine higher education institutions and the Mastercard Foundation. The shared vision is to prepare a diverse youth for the meaningful work of transforming health and well-being in Africa through contextually appropriate and sustainable primary healthcare systems.

Opportunity for Mentors

This call seeks expressions of interest from a Principal Investigator (PI or two co-PIs, called “Mentors” under the Reach programme), from different faculties, working on an urgent challenge of reaching the hardest to reach - those under-served for geographic, administrative, economic, or social reasons - to lead the next Reach Alliance research team at UCT in 2027. This challenge should have a health-related focus, whether directly or indirectly.

UCT encourages the selection of case studies that are embedded in local communities in South Africa. The following examples of [previous research reports from UCT](#) may help to provide a sense of how this has been approached through the platform to date.

For 2027, we are interested in projects that address the following broad research question: *To what extent does participation in health entrepreneurship contribute to sustained employment, improved income, venture development, and enhanced livelihoods for youth and marginalised groups?*

Within this research, projects could address:

- Does youth entrepreneurship training and support result in increased employment/income generating opportunities?
- What factors enable or prevent participants from converting entrepreneurship training into sustainable income-generating activity?
- To what extent do youth-led ventures contribute to health-system priorities and community health needs?
- How do local economic, social, and health-system conditions shape youth entrepreneurship?
- How do local organisations, health workers, funders, employers, and entrepreneurs work together to support young people?
- What can be learned from young people whose ventures grow over time or fail?
- How can inclusive practices within community health enable belonging and well-being for youth and marginalized groups?

The Mentor(s) is required to provide a general abstract of the research challenge to be addressed by their students and plan to select **4-5 students** to conduct the **10-month** project. This research focus usually complements some of the current PI’s research. Given the relatively short timeframe, research questions that benefit from pre-approved ethics/low risk ethics are encouraged. It is also recommended that the PI benefits from an existing relationship with a partner organisation related to that research activity to facilitate contacts and fieldwork by the students. The PI, in consultation with the Bertha Centre and the Reach Alliance leadership team will select the students.

The students are recruited through an application process, and the recommendation is for a primary focus on the involvement of Masters and PhD students. Undergraduate students not in their final year may also be considered where the case for their inclusion is strong, as continuous involvement across 10 months needs to be ensured. Teams may be composed of students from

different levels of study and and different departments/faculties, as interdisciplinary research is required.

Overview of Mentor Experience

The Reach Research Model

Reach's model is intentionally designed to bridge academic rigour and applied impact. Core features of the model include:

- interdisciplinary, case-study-based research addressing complex public health, climate, and economic challenges for hard to reach communities
- student-led, faculty-mentored research projects conducted over the year-long period
- community-engaged methodology, co-designed with local partners
- strong emphasis on ethics, research integrity, and contextual understanding
- knowledge translation that extends beyond traditional academic outputs, such as blogs and policy briefs.

Faculty Mentors guide students through developing their research question, literature review, and the preparation and submission of Research Ethics Committee (REC) applications, including any required revisions. As research progresses, Faculty Mentors work with institutional staff to coordinate fieldwork logistics in accordance with university safety and security protocols. Faculty Mentors are expected to advise and/or accompany their teams during field interviews and site visits to provide mentorship, oversight, and support throughout the data collection process.

Following fieldwork, Faculty Mentors guide data analysis and oversee report development in collaboration with Reach Alliance editorial and design staff. Research reports are published on the Reach Alliance website and launched at the annual Reach Research Conference. Faculty Mentors are also encouraged to support additional knowledge translation activities, including academic publications, policy briefs, op-eds, blogs, and practitioner resources, as appropriate for the intended audience.

UCT will provide funding for the successful team across the project timeline to primarily cover research and fieldwork costs. A funding 'top-up' will be given as necessary to support further impact and knowledge exchange activities, including, for example, participation in the 2027 Reach Conference. The overall funding covers the research costs and the travel costs of the team and Mentor to conferences and relevant events and field trips. Students are expected to draft a budget in their first month of the project under the mentors' guidance.

Faculty Mentor Responsibilities

Activity	Responsibility
Meetings with student team	- Participate in regular meetings with the research team, ideally on a biweekly basis. - Respond to student communications in accordance with university and community norms.
Large Group Meetings (LGM)	Review and provide input and feedback on LGM presentations (x2).
Leadership and team coaching	- Review monthly reports. - Collaborate with the leadership and team development coach to address emerging challenges and support team success.
Literature review and research methods	Provide guidance on research design, methodology, literature review, and research direction.
Research ethics	Support students in preparing and submitting Research Ethics Board applications and responding to revision requests.
Fieldwork	- Support students in securing interviews and stakeholder engagement opportunities. - Review interview guides and participate in interviews as appropriate. - Coordinate or support travel planning, budgeting, and fieldwork logistics. - Accompany student researchers during fieldwork, site visits, and primary data collection activities, including required travel. Faculty Mentor participation in fieldwork is an expected component of the Reach research model. Exceptions may be granted in only exceptional circumstances and require prior approval from both the Reach Alliance and the university.
Research report analysis and report	- Provide guidance throughout the data analysis process. - Review and provide feedback on report drafts. - Support the development of findings and recommendations in collaboration with community partners and Reach Alliance staff. - Ensure that timelines are developed with the Bertha Centre Reach Coordinator, and adhered to. Note: Copy-editing, layout, and design are coordinated by the Reach Alliance.

Additional Information

For more information about the Reach Alliance at UCT, please contact Katusha de Villiers, Health Systems Innovation Lead, with the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship:

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Please send all applications directly to: Katusha.devilliers@uct.ac.za

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