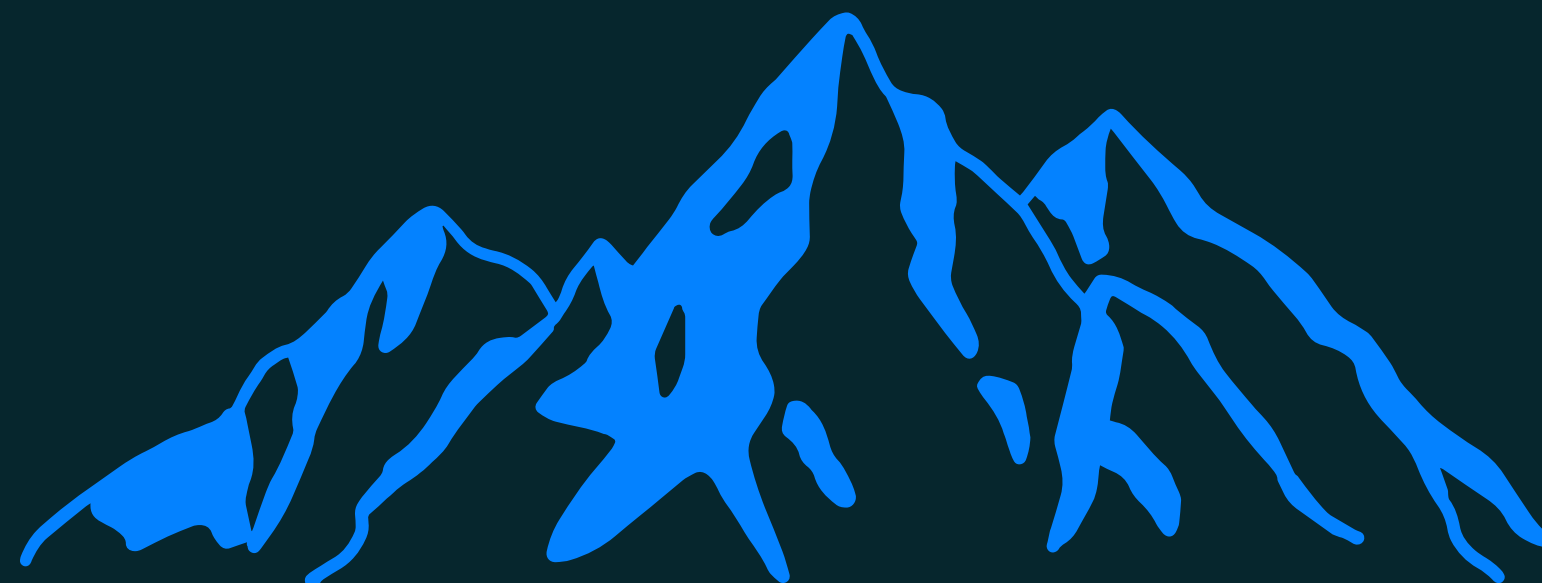


Acyberschool Advanced Cybersecurity Fellowship (AACF)



Executive Summary



The Acyberschool Advanced Cybersecurity Fellowship (AACF) is a transformative, year-long virtual program designed to address the growing need for skilled cybersecurity professionals in Africa, particularly for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). This fellowship equips cybersecurity graduates with hands-on, practical experience tailored to solving real-world cybersecurity challenges SMEs face. The program not only improves the cybersecurity posture of participating businesses but also provides fellows with essential leadership skills, preparing them for mid-level management roles.



Through a combination of case study-based learning, SME rotations, and strategic capstone projects, the AACF aims to fill the cybersecurity talent gap in Africa, while driving business resilience, economic growth, and the security of digital infrastructures across the continent.



Background



Africa is experiencing rapid digital transformation, with SMEs forming the backbone of many economies. However, the continent faces a significant shortage of skilled cybersecurity professionals, particularly for businesses that cannot afford expensive, full-time cybersecurity teams. Recognizing the need for targeted interventions, Acyberschool created the AACF program to bridge this gap. The fellowship provides cybersecurity graduates with practical, real-world experience, while simultaneously strengthening the cybersecurity resilience of SMEs, who often lack the resources to implement advanced security measures.



The AACF program aligns with broader efforts by Acyberschool and ACAIF to develop Africa's digital workforce and ensure that businesses of all sizes can thrive in a secure and resilient digital economy.



Activities



The AACF is a structured, 12-month program, divided into three distinct phases, each designed to provide fellows with progressively deeper exposure to cybersecurity challenges in SME environments. These phases include:



Months 1-4: Practical Preparation
Through Case Studies Fellows
engage in self-paced learning,
working on case studies that simulate
real-world cybersecurity scenarios.
They learn to conduct strategic
security audits, implement quick-win
security solutions, and develop long-
term security strategies.



Months 5-10: SME Rotations Fellows complete two rotations of three months each, where they are either matched with SMEs from Acyberschool's partner pool or onboard SMEs themselves. During these rotations, fellows apply their knowledge by performing security audits, implementing immediate fixes, and developing governance and incident response frameworks.



Months 11-12: Capstone Portfolio Development and Presentation In the final two months, fellows develop a comprehensive portfolio showcasing their contributions to the SMEs they supported. This includes security audit reports, governance frameworks, incident response plans, and ROI assessments of their cybersecurity interventions.



Impact



The AACF program has a multi-faceted impact across several dimensions, including business resilience, cybersecurity awareness, workforce development, and economic growth:



Impact on SMEs: Participating SMEs receive invaluable cybersecurity support, including comprehensive audits, the implementation of immediate security improvements (such as multi-factor authentication and encryption), and the development of long-term security strategies. These interventions reduce the risk of cyberattacks, improve business continuity, and help SMEs meet regulatory compliance. By strengthening their cybersecurity posture, SMEs are better positioned to scale and grow, contributing to the overall health of the economy.



Impact on Fellows: Fellows benefit from hands-on experience in real-world cybersecurity environments, developing practical skills that are essential for entry- to mid-level roles in the industry. They gain leadership experience by working closely with SME leadership to drive security improvements, and their capstone portfolios provide a valuable resource for future job applications. Fellows graduate from the program with the ability to step into mid-level cybersecurity roles immediately.



Impact on Higher Education and Industry: The program strengthens the link between academic institutions and industry by offering graduates practical pathways to employment. It also builds the capacity of higher education institutions to deliver real-world training experiences and facilitates collaboration between universities, businesses, and cybersecurity practitioners.



Impact on the Ecosystem: The AACF creates demand for cybersecurity talent by providing SMEs with a clear understanding of the importance of robust security measures and how cybersecurity investments translate into business continuity and growth. The program also contributes to the cybersecurity ecosystem by fostering a workforce capable of meeting the complex challenges posed by Africa's rapidly digitizing economies.



Beneficiaries



**The AACCF
program benefits
a wide range of
stakeholders,
including:**



Fellows: Cybersecurity graduates who gain practical, hands-on experience that enhances their employability and prepares them for leadership roles.



SMEs: Businesses that receive cybersecurity expertise and support, enabling them to protect their operations from cyber threats and ensure long-term resilience.



**Academic Institutions:
Universities and technical
institutions that strengthen
their cybersecurity
education programs
through partnerships with
Acyberschool.**



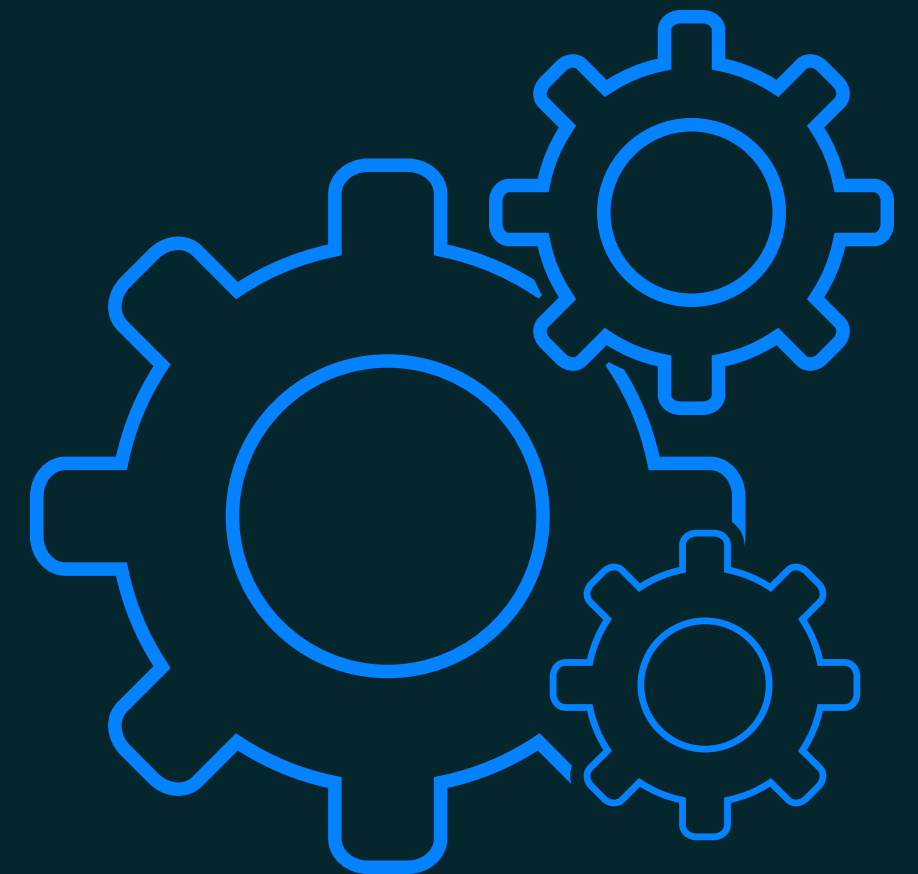
Cybersecurity Industry:
The broader cybersecurity industry benefits from a pipeline of highly trained, job-ready professionals capable of solving complex cybersecurity challenges.



African Economies: SMEs contribute significantly to Africa's economic growth, and by improving their cybersecurity posture, the AACF program ensures that these businesses can continue to operate securely in the digital economy.



Process



The AACF program follows a structured process to ensure that fellows are prepared to deliver meaningful results for the SMEs they work with:



Recruitment and Selection:
Fellows are recruited from a pool of recent cybersecurity graduates. The selection process is competitive and emphasizes technical proficiency, problem-solving skills, and a commitment to leadership in the field.



**Training and Case Study
Preparation:** In the first phase
of the program, fellows engage
in self-paced, case study-
based learning, focusing on
practical interventions that
can provide immediate
security wins for SMEs.



SME Matching and Onboarding:
Fellows are either matched with SMEs from Acyberschool's partner pool or identify SMEs themselves. Acyberschool facilitates the onboarding process, ensuring that both fellows and SMEs are aligned on expectations and deliverables.



SME Rotations: Fellows spend three months at each SME, conducting security audits, implementing quick-win solutions, and developing long-term governance and compliance frameworks.



Capstone Portfolio

Development: In the final two months, fellows compile a comprehensive portfolio of their work, demonstrating both the immediate and long-term impact of their cybersecurity interventions.



Presentation and Graduation:
Fellows present their capstone projects to a panel of cybersecurity experts and SME stakeholders. Successful fellows graduate with a prestigious portfolio and are equipped for leadership roles in the cybersecurity industry.



Stakeholders



Program implementor, providing training and supervision for fellows, Develops cybersecurity talent, strengthens its position as a leading cybersecurity education provider, and supports the growth of Africa's cybersecurity ecosystem.



Fellows:



Implement cybersecurity solutions and develop strategic security plans for SMEs to Gain practical skills, leadership experience, and career opportunities in cybersecurity.



Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs):



Participate in the program by allowing fellows to conduct security audits and implement cybersecurity measures to strengthen cybersecurity posture, improve business continuity, and reduce the risk of cyberattacks.



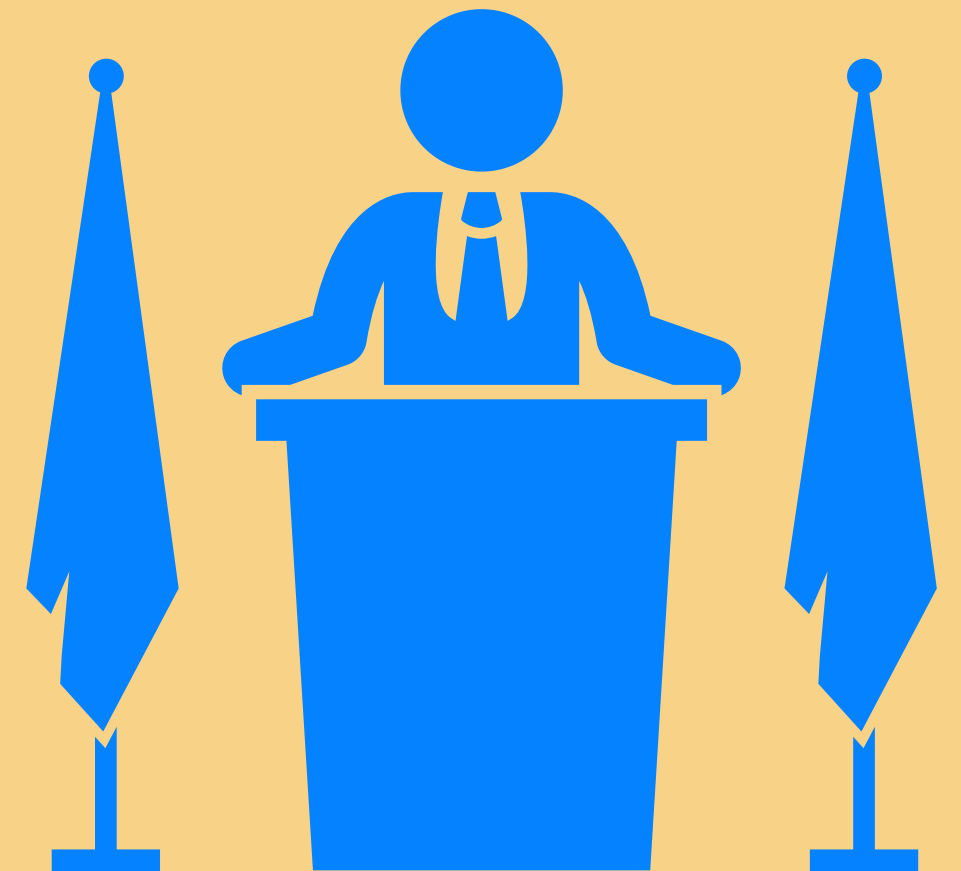
Academic Institutions:



Partner institutions that provide educational pathways for fellows before they join the AACF to Enhance their cybersecurity curriculum and strengthen ties with industry.



Government and Regulatory Bodies:



Provide regulatory frameworks and guidelines that fellows must adhere to during their rotations with SMEs to Ensure that SMEs comply with national cybersecurity regulations, fostering a more secure business environment.



Private Sector and Industry Partners:



Collaborate with Acyberschool by providing SME partnerships and contributing to the development of cybersecurity solutions to Foster innovation and provide employment opportunities for fellows post-graduation.



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