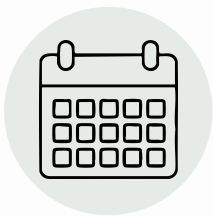


MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

A HerStory initiative

Empowering young Afghan women to pursue post-secondary education through university-level peer support.



| 2026 Program Plan

Program Manager: Lauren Maharaj

Program Overview



In response to growing educational barriers faced by Afghan women and girls, HerStory launched the **ROYA Mentorship Program** in 2025 to support female Afghan students who arrived in Canada following the political events of August 2021.

Through **personalized, one-on-one** mentorship and peer support, participants receive guidance throughout the university application process, including support with academic planning, application writing, scholarship applications, and funding. By connecting students with mentors who have first-hand experience with navigating higher education in Canada, the ROYA Program equips young Afghan women and girls with the knowledge, resources, and support they may need to succeed in their academic journeys.

What does ROYA mean?

In Farsi, ‘roya’ means dream.

When the Taliban returned to power in 2021, millions of women and girls in Afghanistan lost their rights to education and fled the country.

The ROYA Mentorship program was designed to **Raise Opportunities for Young Afghans** to pursue their educational goals in Canada.



Program Goals



1. Expand Access to Higher Education

Help students matriculate at top Canadian universities through personalized mentorship and support, especially for those facing barriers and lacking resources.



2. Support & Network-Building

Strengthen the personal and financial readiness of mentees to succeed in Canadian post-secondary education through supportive network-building.



3. Capacity Building

Equip mentees with the tools, skills, and confidence they need to navigate university through sustained mentorship and support.



4. Financial Support

Contingent upon us receiving funding from KidsRights Foundation, this year we are hoping to subsidize the cost of university applications and provide small scholarships to our mentees. We also provide DuoLingo English exams.

Program Success

In 2025, our ROYA participants received acceptances from top Canadian universities, including:

- University of British Columbia
- University of Toronto
- York University
- Simon Fraser University
- Toronto Metropolitan University



Program Structure



Mentor Recruitment: Eligible mentors in Canada will be recruited through university networks. Applicants will be asked to submit an application form (with their CV) before attending a short interview.



Mentee Selection: Eligible mentees will be identified through NGO networks and encouraged to apply to the program.



Training & Orientation: Mentors will receive resources and training. Both mentors and mentees will attend orientation to discuss the program, its policies, expectations, and requirements.



Pairing: Mentors and mentees will be matched according to their time zones, expertise, language proficiency, and academic interest.



Application Period: Mentors will work closely with mentees to assist with:

- School and program selection
- Developing application timelines and strategies
- Writing and reviewing essays/personal statements
- Scholarship research and application writing
- Interview preparation



Award: Successful mentees will be eligible for a small scholarship from ROYA, up to \$1,500 CAD.

Program Eligibility



Mentor Requirements:

- **Basic Requirements:** University student or recent graduate
- **Expertise:** Experienced in applying to university programs and scholarships in Canada
- **Availability:** Available ~2-5 hours per week starting September 2026
- **Language:** Fluent in English, strong written communication skills
- **Attitude:** Ideal mentors should demonstrate leadership, initiative, and dedication to the success of their mentees and the program

Mentee Requirements:

- **Basic Requirements:** Female-identifying Afghan refugee who arrived in Canada after August 2021 and currently holds protected person, permanent resident, or Canadian citizen status
- **Education:** Must either:
 - Hold a high school diploma from Afghanistan, earned in 2017 or later
 - Hold a high school diploma from a Canadian high school
 - Be on track to complete Canadian high school by Spring 2027
- **University Application Fees:** There is currently no funding available at HerStory to help mentees with their application fees for Canadian schools. However, HerStory will be working with the schools that mentees are applying to in order to secure application fee waivers for eligible applicants. Mentees should assume and be prepared to cover the application fees themselves in case a waiver is not granted.
- **Language:** Verbal and written English language proficiency demonstrated through a minimum TOEFL score of 90 or a Duolingo English Test score of 130, suitable for admission to a first-year undergraduate liberal arts or science program. Applicants who have been studying in a Canadian high school for over 2 years may be exempted from this requirement on a case-by-case basis.
- **Access:** Has access to stable WIFI, email, and video-conferencing technology
- **Attitude:** Highly motivated and academically oriented, with a desire to pursue post-secondary education in Fall 2027

Program Timeline



Phase	Timeline	Activities
1 Planning & Development	May – June 2026	June 15: Mentorship applications open
2 Recruitment & Training	July – August 2026	Mentors will be contacted for interviews and recruitment. Mentees will be scouted and selected based on academic merit. Late August: Training and Orientation sessions
3 Program Launch	September 2026	Mentors and mentees will meet their pairings and schedule weekly meetings. Together, they will set application goals and timelines and begin application writing.
4 University Application Period	September – January 2026	Mentors will work closely with mentees throughout the university application process, providing regular review periods, encouragement, and ongoing support. January: Canadian university applications close
5 Scholarship Application Period	January – May 2027	Mentors will assist mentees with researching and applying to scholarship and funding opportunities. End of May: Program concludes for Summer 2027