



Community Engagement Exchange (CEE) Program Frequently Asked Questions

1. *When are CEE Fellow applications due?*

CEE Fellow Applications are due May 22nd, 2025, at 11:59 pm Eastern Time.

2. *I am a 2025 CEE Fellow whose program participation was postponed to 2026. Do I need to apply again?*

2025 CEE Fellows will be asked to confirm their interest in participating in the 2026 Program through completing a supplemental application. You do not need to submit the main CEE application again. For questions regarding the supplemental application, please contact our team at apply.cee@irex.org

3. *I do not fall within the 21-27 age range requirement that the CEE Program has determined in the eligibility requirements. Am I able to apply?*

Unfortunately, not at this time. Given the program design around emerging civil society leaders, the CEE Program requires that all participants be between the ages of 21-27 (as of May 22, 2025). Should you have significant background and expertise in civil society and fall outside of this age range, we invite you to reach out to the CEE team to learn about ways to partner with CEE in the future.

4. *I am a University student, am I eligible to apply?*

Yes, as long as you are studying in your home country at the time of application. Since the CEE Program does not have a formal education requirement, applicants who are currently attending a university are eligible to apply. However, it is important to note that applicants must meet all other eligibility requirements, including age, English proficiency, and the ability to participate in a three-month practicum hosted at a U.S. civil society organization from March – June 2026. Participants must also commit to implementing a project in their community between July and December 2026 which could be done alongside coursework.

5. *Am I required to have professional experience or to be currently employed to apply for the CEE Fellowship?*

No. Professional Experience or current employment is not a requirement of the CEE Program. However, it is required that candidates have at least two years of experience in the civil society sector, either professional or volunteer. Yes, participation in a university-led initiative/internship can count!



6. *My country used to be eligible for CEE, but is not listed as an eligible country for the 2026 program. Am I still able to apply?*

Unfortunately, no. Each year, the U.S. Department of State updates the list of eligible countries based on a variety of factors. Only applicants from the current list of eligible countries will be considered for the CEE Program. We encourage you to stay updated on future editions of the CEE Program.

7. *I have not taken the Duolingo, TOEFL, or IELTS English Proficiency exam before the May 22, 2025 deadline. Am I eligible to apply?*

Yes. English proficiency scores are not required at the time of application. For participation in the program, IREX will arrange for finalists and alternates to complete the Duolingo English Test prior to their arrival in the United States. Candidates who have achieved sufficient scores on the TOEFL or IELTS within the past two years may submit those results instead of taking the Duolingo English Test.

Minimum required scores:

- Duolingo English Test: 100
- TOEFL: 520 (190 on the computer-based test / 68 on the internet-based test)
- IELTS: 6.0

8. *If I participate in the CEE Program, am I required to return to my home country for two years after the completion of the program?*

Yes. J-1 visa regulation mandates that applicants who have participated in an exchange program sponsored by the U.S. Government must fulfill a two-year home residency after the program has completed. Therefore, CEE Program finalists will be required to return to their home country for two years after the completion of the program. During this time, you will implement a six-month Community Engagement Project leveraging the skills and network you developed in the United States.

If you have previously participated in a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program in the past, you must have fulfilled the two-year home residency requirement by March 23, 2026 to be eligible to apply for the CEE Program.

9. *I have started my application and have reached the essay section. Should I complete all 8 essays?*

Yes. There is a word limit on each essay. Be sure to answer each question thoroughly to represent yourself to the best of your ability. These essays will be an essential part of the CEE Participant Selection Committee's review of your application. The Committee is committed to reviewing all components of the application to ensure a holistic review of your candidacy.



10. How should I approach the Supplemental Attachment: Essay Question 9? Is it optional?

The supplemental section offers you an opportunity to provide additional context to your application, showcase your creativity, and help reviewers gain a deeper understanding of you, your qualifications, and your motivation for applying. You can use this space to upload a material that best represents you, such as a photo, creative project, video, article, essay, or letter of recommendation. This section is completely optional, and you will not be penalized for choosing not to include anything.

11. Can I use AI tools to draft or refine my essay answers?

No, you are not permitted to use AI-generated responses when completing your application, including the use of AI to improve English language. Applications are reviewed based on authenticity of responses, and points are not deducted for unpolished English. The use of AI applications can be detected and will result in disqualification from the application process. We encourage all applicants to provide authentic and genuine responses to showcase their unique qualifications and experiences.

For additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact the CEE team at: Apply.Cee@IREX.org