

YLA Mentorship Matching Request for Applications

Questions and Answers

Questions	Responses
Has this program been executed before or is this a new initiative?	A similar version of this program was implemented in 2020 when the entire YLA Fellowship was conducted virtually due to COVID-19. We have not implemented Mentor Matching since then.
If this is a recurring program, how many mentors were there in the past program?	In 2020, all 280 Fellows were matched with a mentor. However, the subaward for that initiative was larger. For the current cycle, the available funding is lower and will likely support a smaller number of participants.
How many matches are expected?	The proposed number of participants is intentionally left to the discretion of the implementing partner, based on their budget, capacity, and overall program design. The program targets the 2025 YLA Alumni cohort, which includes 260 individuals, allowing for the potential of up to that many mentorship matches. IREX anticipates that alumni will apply and be selected to participate. This approach is intended to engage those most committed and best positioned to benefit from mentorship, resulting in stronger matches and more meaningful outcomes.
Would all YLA alumni qualify or just 2025 cohort members?	The Mentorship program is only intended for the 2025 YLA Alumni.
Will there be multiple awards or do you want just one partner that can service the full program?	Ideally, we are seeking to make a single award to one implementing partner.
What are the selection criteria for the alumni?	We would like the implementing partner to develop the selection criteria based on their expertise and understanding of implementing effective mentorship programming. The goal



	<p>is to ensure that participation is both engaging and beneficial for mentors and mentees. By selecting alumni who are motivated, well-prepared, and positioned to make the most of the opportunity, the program can create strong, meaningful matches that provide value on both sides and contribute to long-term professional growth and collaboration.</p>
<p>Is there flexibility in the start date of the mentorship? Why start in December?</p>	<p>We propose a December start to align with two other initiatives—Collaboration Grants and Fellowship Placements—that are active during that time. This alignment allows the implementing partner to integrate efforts and help facilitate connections between mentors and these concurrent opportunities. If a partner suggests another timeline, we will take that into consideration.</p>
<p>What is the cadence of the mentor meetings?</p>	<p>The implementing partner should determine the meeting cadence, as they will have the closest relationship with the mentors and best understand what is sustainable for them. The total mentoring period should span approximately four months. Our goal is for the cadence to be realistic with participants' schedules while ensuring the partnership is mutually beneficial and engaging for both mentors and mentees.</p>
<p>Does having a large regional presence give us an advantage, or are you all more interested in receiving applications from organizations/companies that expand across the entire US?</p>	<p>A broad regional footprint will not necessarily confer a competitive advantage in this selection process. IREX is prioritizing organizations with demonstrated experience implementing mentorship programs and the capacity to access a diverse and expansive network of qualified mentors. Preference will be given to applicants who can connect Fellows with a strong, varied pool of high-quality mentors representing a range of industries, ensuring alignment with each Fellow's unique professional goals.</p>



How does the Mentorship Matching Program differ from the [Cohort Ambassador](#) and [U.S. Network Builder](#) roles?

Mentorship Matching Program:

This is a separate subaward focused on designing and delivering a virtual mentorship experience specifically for *2025 YLAI alumni*, who did not have the opportunity to travel to the U.S. We're looking for an organization with demonstrated experience in running high-quality mentorship programs for business leaders or entrepreneurs. As outlined in the RFA (pages 3–4), responsibilities include:

- Sourcing and vetting mentors
- Designing and managing the mentee application, selection, and onboarding process
- Matching mentors with mentees
- Delivering orientation and coaching tools
- Supporting mentorship implementation
- Facilitating network expansion
- Conducting monitoring, learning, and evaluation

Cohort Ambassador:

This role is tied to the *2026 YLAI Fellows* and focuses on in-person engagement during their time in the U.S. It involves supporting Fellows in a specific host city—helping them build connections, navigate their experience, and access local opportunities.

U.S. Network Builder:

This subaward is broader in scope and more strategic. The U.S. Network Builder will systematically identify and leverage key networking opportunities to expand YLAI's *visibility and strengthen connections within entrepreneurial ecosystems nationwide*. The Network Builder will take stock of the



	<p>existing network of Fellowship Placement Organizations (FPOs), identify additional industry leaders and influential connectors, and organize both in-person and virtual events to facilitate introductions and knowledge-sharing among FPOs and members of the business community. This includes stakeholder mapping, supporting Fellowship Placement recruitment, co-designing fall and spring entrepreneurship events, and participating in Cohort Ambassador orientation.</p>
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