



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

For Mentorship Matching for the FY24 Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative Fellowship Program

Issuance Date: 07/14/2025
Closing Date: 08/04/2025 (3 weeks after issuance date)
Closing Time: Midnight
Subject: Request for Applications (RFA) FY24 YLAI Fellowship Program
Reference: Issued under International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) project and DOS Cooperative Agreement/Grant No. SECAGD22CA0073

This Request for Applications outlines the information required from the applicant for the development and submission of a proposal for consideration. The potential applicant is expected to review, understand, and conform with specifications contained in this RFA. Failure to do so will be at the applicant's own risk.

All reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the subaward program and are in accordance with applicable cost standards (usually [2 CFR 200 Subpart E](#) Cost Principles), may be charged under the subaward.

For non-U.S. organizations the [Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions](#) and [2 CFR 200](#) Subpart A through E apply.

This RFA is being issued and consists of this cover letter, Schedule A, and Annexes.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of IREX nor does it commit IREX to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. The application is submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in FY24 YLAI Fellowship Program activities.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Fox
Project Director, Young Leaders of Americas Initiative
IREX



SCHEDULE A

SECTION I: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION:

[The Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative](#) (YLA) Fellowship is the U.S. Department of State's flagship program to advance economic prosperity in the Western Hemisphere. This premier fellowship supports emerging business leaders and entrepreneurs from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada. The YLA Fellowship is funded by U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and implemented by IREX.

The **YLA Mentorship Matching Program** is a competitive opportunity designed to connect 2025 YLA Alumni with U.S.-based business mentors through structured, high-impact mentoring relationships. This initiative seeks organizations with proven experience in sourcing, vetting, and training business leaders to deliver targeted, one-on-one coaching engagements that help mentees develop actionable plans and measurable outcomes. IREX is seeking partners with strong networks in the American business community, entrepreneurship training expertise, and a demonstrated ability to foster cross-cultural exchange. Entrepreneurship centers, innovation hubs, universities, professional associations, and organizations with prior engagement in the YLA community are encouraged to apply.

The Mentorship Matching Program will strengthen professional ties between 2025 YLA Alumni and U.S. business leaders, advancing both entrepreneurial growth and learning. Partners will design and deliver tailored mentorship engagements, establish pipelines for future collaboration that may lead to successful Collaboration Grants, and support the identification of new Fellowship Placement Organizations. Working closely with the YLA Team, the mentorship partner(s) will enhance the professional development of Alumni while expanding the reach and sustainability of YLA's entrepreneurial network.

Background

YLA Partner Audience: As a public diplomacy and exchange program spanning 37 countries across the Americas, YLA fosters meaningful connections among emerging entrepreneurs and key collaborators. The following are the critical relationships that will define and orient the Mentorship Matching role:

- **YLA Fellows** are business leaders and entrepreneurs from 37 countries across Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada. YLA Fellows' enterprises vary in size and scope, though all Fellows have been pursuing their entrepreneurial venture for at least two years. Professional sectors range from artisan products, food businesses, health services, tourism and hospitality, data and technology, education, etc.
- During the fellowship in the United States, YLA Fellows collaborate with **Fellowship Placement Organizations (FPOs)**. These organizations collaborate with a YLA Fellow in a four-week-long mutually beneficial professional placement, exchanging expertise and building relationships, while working on a collaborative project. The YLA partner network encompasses 965 organizations across 30 states and the District of Columbia since the program's inception in 2015.
- After program completion, YLA Fellows officially become **Fellowship Alumni**. YLA Alumni participate in networking and further skill-building sessions, as well as access to professional development grants and collaboration grants to work with US business partners to further advance the alumni's business venture. These activities drive innovation, develop leadership and regional influence and networks, and build skills and relationships. The 2025 YLA Fellows represent a unique cohort. Due to the cancellation of the in-person component of the Fellowship, they were only able to participate in the virtual portion of the program. As a result, they did not have the opportunity to travel to the United States to collaborate



directly with U.S. businesses and organizations.

- **Collaboration Grants** are a competitive opportunity for select alumni to travel to the United States and for an in-person collaboration with a U.S. partner. The grant will build fellows' entrepreneurial and leadership skills and allow alumni to network with U.S. businesses.

Program Objectives:

- **Strengthening Alumni Business Development through Targeted Mentoring**
 - The selected Mentorship Matching partner will design and implement a structured mentorship experience that enables selected YLAI Alumni to develop practical, actionable business plans. By pairing each Alumni participant with a vetted U.S.-based business mentor, the program will foster measurable growth through one-on-one mentoring. Mentors will guide participants in setting clear goals and support them in efforts such as refining business models, solving challenges, and expanding leadership capabilities. These efforts will contribute to the Alumni's continued professional development and long-term business sustainability.
- **Facilitating Cross-Sector Mentor-Mentee Connections**
 - The Mentorship Matching partner will recruit and onboard experienced U.S. entrepreneurs and professionals across a wide range of sectors. These individuals will be matched with YLAI Alumni based on shared industry interests and complementary business goals. This approach ensures relevant and high-impact mentorship while encouraging meaningful cross-cultural exchange. The partner will provide orientation, training, and coaching resources to both mentors and mentees to promote trust, accountability, and clarity of purpose across the three-month engagement.
- **Supporting Collaboration Grant and FPO Pipeline Development**
 - The Mentorship Matching partner will work closely with IREX to promote awareness of the Collaboration Grant opportunity and help identify potential U.S. partners who could serve as hosts. Through their regular interactions with mentors and other professional contacts, the partner will highlight how ongoing collaboration can benefit both parties and the wider YLAI network. This objective supports IREX's efforts to build a pipeline of qualified, committed organizations who may serve as future Fellowship Placement Organizations (FPOs), further anchoring YLAI's presence in the U.S. entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Key Mentorship Matching Activities and Responsibilities:

1. **Mentor Sourcing and Vetting:** Identify and recruit experienced U.S.-based business professionals and entrepreneurs across sectors. Vet mentors to ensure commitment, professional credibility, and alignment with YLAI values.
2. **Alumni Mentee Application, Selection and Onboarding:** Collaborate with IREX to create the application and select YLAI Alumni who demonstrate leadership, initiative, and growth potential. Design an onboarding process that prepares mentees to engage effectively and set measurable goals.
3. **Matching and Orientation:** Match mentors and mentees based on industry alignment, business needs, and desired outcomes. Provide an orientation session to outline expectations, coaching structures, and communication best practices.
4. **Mentorship Delivery:** Facilitate a three-month mentorship engagement per pair, with structured one-on-one sessions at regular intervals. Sessions should support mentees in developing individualized goals and actionable business strategies.



5. **Training and Coaching Tools:** Provide mentors with a structured toolkit that includes best practices, session templates, and goal-setting frameworks.
6. **Professional Network Expansion:** Create opportunities for mentors and mentees to connect with a broader network (e.g., guest speakers, networking mixers, alumni spotlights). Share referral opportunities for future FPO participation or collaboration grants.
7. **Monitoring, Learning, and Evaluation:** Develop and implement a robust monitoring plan to track session frequency, satisfaction, outcomes, and longer-term collaborations. Submit mid-point and final reports including success stories, challenges, and data against key indicators. Participate in regular status update meetings with IREX.

Mentorship Matching Program Expectations & Timeline

Below is a timeline of required activities for the Mentorship Matching Program. Please note that all activities will be virtual.

Date	Activity	Details
Late September 2025	Mentorship Matching Kickoff Meeting	Subawardee participates in a kickoff meeting to review the program structure, roles, and deliverables. Communication and Monitoring Plans are shared, and alignment of strategic goals for the YLAI and partner audiences is established.
October 2025	Design and Publish Application	Subawardee designs and publishes the mentor-mentee application. IREX supports outreach and promotion to ensure broad visibility.
October-November 2025	Selection and Matching	Subawardee reviews applications, selects mentees and mentors, conducts final vetting, and communicates the match results to participants.
December 2025 – February 2026	Implement Mentorship Matching Program	Subawardee implements the mentorship program, facilitates ongoing engagement between matched pairs, and monitors progress through structured check-ins and data collection.
November 2025 – February 2026	Assist with identification of FPOs and Collaboration Grant Promotion	Subawardee promotes Collaboration Grant opportunities within the mentorship network and works with IREX to identify new potential Fellowship Placement Organizations (FPOs).
March 2026	Final Report	Subawardee submits a final narrative and financial report, including outcomes, challenges, success stories, and recommendations for future mentorship initiatives.

USG Regulations:

[Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions](#) and [2 CFR 200](#) Unified Administrative Requirements Subpart A through E apply.



SECTION II: AWARD INFORMATION:

Subject to the availability of program funds, IREX expects to award up to \$40,000 for the responsibilities of the award. After the organization(s) has been selected, depending upon the organizational scope(s), IREX anticipates granting one or more subawards to fulfill the responsibilities of the award. The expected period of performance is 07/14/2025 - 03/30/2026. IREX reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

SECTION III: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION:

The applicant/application must meet the following requirements:

- Be officially registered and working in compliance with all applicable civil and fiscal regulations, including, but not limited to pertinent local laws and status
- Be officially registered as a legal entity and working in compliance with all applicable local laws. An applicant can show proof of effort to secure registration
- Meet the projects objectives and principles
- Contain expected outcomes and results consistent with and linked to the project's objectives
- Applicant is not a debarred organization
- Received a U.S. government Unique Entity ID (UEI) from SAM.gov

Types of Eligible Subawardees:

- U.S Non-Governmental Organizations (U.S. NGOs)
- Non-US Nongovernment Organizations (Non-US NGOs)
- Community Based Organization (CBOs)
- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
- Private Enterprises
- Professional Associations
- Universities

SECTION IV: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

Any questions concerning this RFA should be submitted in writing not later than 7 days prior to the closing date shown above to Katie Kattula Program Officer, IREX; kkattula@irex.org. Applicants should retain for their records one copy of all enclosures which accompany their application.

The application must be received at the YLAI Fellowship Program's email indicated below no later than the closing date listed on the front page of this RFA. Pre-award costs are not allowable and will not be reimbursed. An application and modifications thereof shall be submitted in electronic format and/or hard copy to the following address:

YLAI Fellowship Program Katie Kattula, Program Officer, IREX 1350 I St NW, Suite #1100, Washington, DC 20005 kkattula@irex.org 202-942-9130

Application:



Please submit your complete application packet **in PDF format** with the required attachments.

A. Application Narrative with the following:

1. **UEI number**
2. **Organizational Background** (no more than 2 pages single-spaced) Please detail your organization's background as it relates to the Mentorship Matching role. Include your experience with cultivating mentorship programs, business and/or entrepreneurship program management in a local, regional, national, and/or international context. Include your experience with DOS-sponsored programs and your work advancing global entrepreneurship.
3. **Mentorship Matching Technical Approach** (no more than 6 pages, single-spaced). Please include a description of your proposed approach and vision of working alongside IREX and program partners to achieve the objectives.
 - i. Describe your proposed mentorship structure and how participants will be selected, trained, matched, and supported.
 - ii. Explain how the program will meet the varying needs of entrepreneurs across different sectors and geographies.
 - iii. List examples of business/entrepreneur networks you plan to engage including the industry. Please illustrate your access to businesses in a wide variety of industries.
 - iv. Provide a sample list of mentors you have worked with previously, including each mentor's name (or pseudonym), affiliated organization, city, and industry
 - v. Include a sample application template you would use to recruit and select mentees and/or mentors.
 - vi. Example Activities
 1. Sample session formats (e.g., kickoff calls, mid-point check-ins, wrap-up assessments).
 - vii. *(Optional)* Attach illustrative mentorship guides or sample mentoring tools you may use or adapt for this program.

B. Attachments & Annexes:

1. **Budget and budget narrative:** Using the template provided by IREX, submit a detailed budget estimating all costs associated with the subaward. The Budget Template can be found [here](#) and the Budget Notes can be found [here](#).
2. **Cost-share** [if applicable]
3. **Initial Work Plan** (*no more than 2 pages, single-spaced*) with:
 - i) Estimated dates and draft activities with initial strategy and potential ideas for potential asynchronous and synchronous activities and events of the Mentorship matching role. Narrative can reflect creative ideas, dynamic activities, and best practices.
4. **Monitoring Plan:** (*no more than 2 pages, single-spaced*) Applicants must describe how they will monitor and evaluate the success of their **proposed activities under this subaward**. The plan should outline how progress will be tracked, results measured, and risks managed.



Clear, realistic plans that show how data will be used to guide activity implementation and assess outcomes will be prioritized. Please include:

- i) **Results Framework:** Provide a simple results framework showing the link between proposed activities, outputs, outcomes, and the overall goal.
 - ii) **Key Indicator(s):** Identify at least one indicator per outcome, with definitions, units, and (if available) baseline and target values.
 - iii) **Monitoring Approach:** Briefly explain what data will be collected, how and when it will be gathered, and by whom. Mention tools or platforms used, and how data will inform learning or adjustments.
 - iv) **Documentation and Reporting:** Outline how progress will be reported (e.g., monitoring reports, photos, videos, checklists) and shared with program staff.
 - v) **Risk Monitoring:** Describe how potential risks to implementation will be tracked and addressed.
5. **Staff List:** A list of all staff members and/or other organizations who will be contributing to the Mentorship Matching or engaging with YLAI Partner Audience, with CV for each staff member.
6. **Past Performance References and Contacts:** A list of names and contact information for at least three past performance references.

Interviews: IREX may conduct virtual interviews with a shortlist of semifinalists as part of the selection process. Applicants will be contacted directly to schedule interviews if selected.

The selected Mentorship Matching subawardee will be asked to submit a Due Diligence questionnaire. For applicants' awareness, the recently updated template can be found [here](#). Note that as a part of the questionnaire, applicants will be asked to attach a financial statement audit or 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart F Audit (if applicable.)

Restrictions:

- Subaward funds provided under the terms of this RFA shall not be used to procure goods or services from suppliers that may be identified on the USG consolidated list of debarred, suspended or ineligible contractors at <http://www.sam.gov/>.
- Any purchases or activities deemed unnecessary to successfully complete the activity, including any subawardee headquarters' expenses that are not directly linked to the implementation of the proposed project.
- Previous obligations and/or bad debts.
- Fines and/or penalties.
- Other costs unallowable as referenced [2 CFR 200 Subpart E](#) Cost Principles.

Late Application



Late applications are marked as “late” and are ineligible for review or award; however, IREX reserves the right to accept and include late applications in the review and award process when it is considered within the best interest of IREX to do so and if applications that were received on time have not been opened and reviewed. Applications that are submitted late or incomplete run the risk of **not** being considered for review.

SECTION V: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION:

The application will be evaluated according to the evaluation criteria set out below. **Interviews will also be conducted with selected finalists as a part of the selection process.**

Evaluation Criteria:

Organizational Capacity and Network: 35 points

- Demonstrated experience in designing and managing mentorship or coaching programs that support business development and entrepreneurial growth.
- Proven ability to recruit, train, and support mentors from varying U.S. business sectors for virtual engagement.
- Strong existing network of professional contacts, entrepreneurship communities, and business leaders across the United States.
- Capacity to build and sustain relationships with mentors and Alumni across geographic regions and business sectors.

Technical Approach and Program Design: 35 points

- Quality and feasibility of the proposed mentorship matching model, including mechanisms for selection, onboarding, engagement, and wrap-up for both mentors and mentees.
- Clear structure for supporting mentees in developing measurable goals.
- Effective approach to tracking progress, gathering feedback, and incorporating learning into program implementation.
- Flexibility in collaborating with IREX and the YLAI Team.
- Inclusion of a plan to promote Collaboration Grants and recruitment of Fellowship Placement Organizations.

Cost Effectiveness: 20 points

- Realistic and well-justified budget that aligns with the scope of mentorship activities, including support for mentor recruitment, training, coordination, and participant engagement.
- Appropriate allocation of costs for virtual facilitation, digital tools, mentor incentives (if any), and staff support.
- Evaluation of cost-share, if applicable.

**Past Performance: 10 points**

- Demonstrated success in delivering high-quality, mentorship-focused or entrepreneurship programs with measurable impact.
- Relevant experience supporting international audiences or Alumni networks through professional development initiatives.
- Prior engagement with U.S. Department of State programs or similar international exchanges.
- Quality and relevance of past performance references.

Section VI: AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

The recommendation or selection of an application in accordance with established procedures does not guarantee an award. All applicants must demonstrate that they possess, or have the ability to obtain, the necessary management competence to practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided.

A successful applicant can expect to receive an Award Letter, signed by the program. The award letter will be addressed to the organization's point of contact as stated in the application. Applicants that were not successful can expect a letter explaining the reason for their unsuccessful application.

Following the Award Letter, final negotiations will take place before the signing of a subaward agreement.

Reporting Procedures:

A description of reporting requirements will be included in the Subaward Agreement. The types of reporting required, along with the schedule of reporting, will depend on the subaward agreement and project duration. Reporting forms will be provided to subaward recipients. Types of reporting will include the following:

- Program report to be submitted during project implementation according to a schedule described in the subaward agreement. This report will include a description of progress made during the period, problems in project implementation; actions taken to overcome them; and activities planned for the next period.
- Final program report will describe how the project objectives and goals were reached, results of the project, and problems and solutions during implementation.

SECTION VII - OTHER INFORMATION

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of IREX, nor does it commit IREX to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application.

IREX reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. Further, IREX reserves the right to make



no awards as a result of this RFA.

Annex 1: Standard Terms and Conditions

- U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions (<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Standard-Terms-and-Conditions-for-Federal-Awards-10.1.24-15.pdf>)
- 2 CFR 200 Uniformed Administrative Requirements Subpart A-through E ([eCFR :: 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E -- Cost Principles](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/cfr-part-200/subpart-A-through-E)).
- 2 CFR 600 The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-600>)
- 2 CFR 601 Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-601>)