Applications for the 2027 Community Solutions Program will be accepted on October 27th. Applications must be submitted online at https://csp.irex.org by the November 24th deadline at 11:59 p.m. Eastern (Washington, D.C.) time to be considered. Applications that are mailed, faxed, or emailed to IREX will not be accepted. Please direct questions after reading this document to apply.csp@irex.org

When completing the application, please note:

- Use one email address throughout the entire CSP application and selection process and monitor it regularly for program messages.
- Applications must be completed online; applications that are mailed, faxed or emailed to IREX will not be accepted.
- Questions that are marked with a red asterisk must be answered. If a required question does not apply to you, enter N/A (not applicable).
- Do not translate the spelling of names or locations into English, only into the English alphabet.
- Other than names and locations, write all answers in English. Applications that are not completed in English will be disqualified.
- Applications must be completed solely by the applicant.
- Applications must be submitted by the published deadline at 11:59 p.m. Eastern (Washington, D.C.) time to be considered.
- Applications must authentically communicate the applicant's own experience, judgment, results, and learning goals. Applicants may use artificial intelligence tools to strengthen or edit their responses, but they must disclose how they used AI. Applicants remain responsible for the accuracy and originality of every response. Personalized answers are strongly encouraged; responses that do not demonstrate the applicant's own experience may receive lower scores.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for the Community Solutions Program, applicants must meet the requirements listed below. Applications that do not meet these eligibility requirements will be disqualified and will not be reviewed by the selection committee. Please note that the U.S. Department of State and IREX reserve the right to verify all the information included in an individual's application. In the event that there is a discrepancy, or information is found to be false, the applicant will immediately be disqualified.

- You are between the ages of 27 and 39 at the time of application.
- You are a citizen of a country listed on the official application website.
- You are living and working in your country at the time of application and are not residing or working outside your country, including through an academic, training, or research program.
    - You meet the country-of-residence requirements described below

Application Deadline:
Tuesday, November 24th, 2026, by 11:59 P.M. EST

- You have at least five years of experience working on community issues and can demonstrate measurable benefits to local communities.
- You have a high level of proficiency in spoken and written English at the time of application
    - Semi-finalists who do not already possess a valid TOEFL score of 520, or 213 on the computer-based test, or higher will be required to take an Institutional TOEFL or a comparable English-language proficiency assessment approved for CSP.
- You are able to begin the CSP program in the United States in 2027 and participate in the approximately three- to four-month U.S.-based exchange. Current planning dates are Orientation August 2–5, practicum August 9–October 29, and End-of-Program Workshop November 1–4, 2027, subject to confirmation.
- You are **not** a citizen or permanent resident of the U.S. and have **not** applied for U.S. permanent residency within the past three years.
- You are eligible to receive a U.S. J-1 visa
    - Applicants who have participated in an exchange program sponsored by the U.S. Government must have fulfilled their two-year home residency requirement.
- You are committed to returning to your home country for a minimum of two years after completing the program and implementing a community-based SCALE-Up Project.
- You meet any additional eligibility criteria published in the final application materials.

ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES

Africa: Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda

East Asia and the Pacific: Cambodia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Tonga, Vanuatu

Europe: Albania, Belarus, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine

Middle East & North Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Tunisia

South and Central Asia: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan

Western Hemisphere: Bolivia, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, and Venezuela

PROGRAM FOCUS AND APPLICANT PROFILE

CSP focuses on practical, results-driven approaches to regional economic growth and community prosperity. Successful candidates should demonstrate a strong record of leading or supporting initiatives with

measurable benefits to local communities, an ability to work across sectors, and clear learning goals connected to a regional economic development challenge. Applicants will select one primary sector. Proposed sectors include culinary industries and farm-to-table; business and entrepreneurship; hospitality and tourism; technology and innovation; and other approved sectors.

Applicants will select one or more training tracks aligned with their learning goals. Tracks include coalition building and public-private partnerships; e-commerce and digital tools; project development and management; resource mobilization and development; transportation and infrastructure; workforce development and transformation; and youth engagement and retention.

Applicants will describe a regional economic development need they are working to address, the tangible results they have achieved, the institutions and stakeholders involved, and how CSP learning could strengthen their work.

Applicants are invited to upload a creative supplement demonstrating their commitment to regional economic development. Examples may include an op-ed, blog post, captioned photo, short video, report, journal article, or support letter from a community member.

SELECTION PROCESS

After the deadline, CSP staff will screen applications for completeness and eligibility. Eligible applications will be evaluated by a Selection Committee with relevant expertise using an evaluation form and scoring matrix reviewed and approved by ECA. Approximately three top candidates for every anticipated placement will be invited to complete an English-language interview, either virtually or in person. Interviewers will use an ECA-approved evaluation form to assess and rank candidates.

Semi-finalists without a qualifying valid TOEFL score will complete an Institutional TOEFL or comparable approved assessment. Participating U.S. embassy Public Diplomacy Sections will be invited to review applications, participate in interviews, and provide comments on semi-finalists.

Based on written applications, interviews, English-language proficiency results, and embassy comments, IREX will submit recommended finalists and alternates to ECA and participating embassies for approval. All finalists, alternates, and unsuccessful applicants will be informed of their status in writing.

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS PROGRAM TIMELINE

October 27, 2026	Application opens
November 24, 2026 by 11:59 p.m. Eastern	Application deadline
December 1, 2026	Reading Committee begins review
December 16, 2026	Reading Committee review deadline

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December 22, 2026	Semi-finalists notified to complete English-language interview and submit required materials
January 8, 2027	Semi-finalist interview deadline
January 13, 2027	Interview Committee begins review
January 29, 2027	Interview Committee review deadline
February 25, 2027	Applicants notified of finalist, alternate, or unsuccessful status
March–May 2027	Deadline to accept finalist or alternate status
March – April 2027	Alternate-upgrade deadline and final alternate notifications
April – May, 2027	English-language assessment and alternate-upgrade period, if required
June – July 2027	Virtual Pre-Departure Orientation
August 2–5, 2027	Participants travel to Washington, D.C. and participate in Orientation
August 9–October 29, 2027	Participants complete a 12-week practicum in approximately six U.S. host regions
November 1–4, 2027	Participants attend the End-of-Program Workshop in Washington, D.C. and return home
December – September, 2028	Participants develop and implement SCALE-Up Projects and continue collaboration with U.S. counterparts

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