**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

**Issue Date: June 1, 2022**

**Proposal Due Date: June 24, 2022, at 11:59 PM EDT**

**Anticipated Award Date: August 1, 2022**

**Award Ceiling: up to $28,000**

**What is YLAI?**

[The Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative](https://ylai.state.gov/fellowship/) (YLAI) is the U.S. Department of State’s flagship entrepreneurship program for emerging business leaders and entrepreneurs from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada. YLAI is a competitive fellowship program structured as an international exchange funded by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and implemented by [IREX](http://irex.org), a non-profit based in Washington D.C. As such, IREX is requesting applications from those interested in serving as a YLAI Cohort Ambassador for the FY21 YLAI Fellowship cohort. The FY21 YLAI Fellowship will be a hybrid program, consisting of virtual and in-person programming. Fellows will engage with the online curriculum before traveling to the U.S. to complete in-person fellowship components from **January 13 – February 18, 2023**.

**Who are YLAI Fellows?**

YLAI Fellows are mid-career entrepreneurs competitively selected from over 2,000 business leaders and social entrepreneurs from 37 countries across the Americas. They are 25 to 35 years old and have at least 2 years leading a business across 15 business sectors including agriculture, e-commerce, education, healthcare, and more. The YLAI cohort demographics average 50% in gender share, 44% from federal capitals, 62% traditional business, 38% social enterprises, and 100% committed to promoting economic development and prosperity in the western hemisphere.

During their fellowship, fellows will complete a professional placement with a U.S.-based organization, complete an online entrepreneurship and leadership curriculum, and participate in a cohort-wide business solution pitch competition. During their stay in the United States, they will focus on enhancing skills and fostering new connections to help scale their businesses and grow their entrepreneurial networks.

**Who are Cohort Ambassadors?**

Cohort Ambassadors are a selection of organizations based in 20 target cities across the United States who serve as local partners for facilitating a cohesive cohort and fostering cross-cultural understanding through local cultural and professional engagements. The Cohort Ambassador role has traditionally been held by centers for citizen diplomacy but has evolved to include centers for innovation, university departments, and venture capital funds. We welcome applications from a wide range of organizations that demonstrate a strong network across different business sectors in their city, as well as the ability to foster meaningful experiences of local U.S. culture and entrepreneurship.

**Cohort Ambassador Involvements**

1. Support IREX through the Host Placement Process
2. Participate in a virtual Cohort Ambassador Orientation, including by leading introductory city network breakout group sessions.
3. Curate a four-week agenda of cultural and professional immersion in your city
4. Facilitate a virtual meet and greet with your cohort during the YLAI Opening Orientation
5. Facilitate an airport pick-up for fellows arriving on the same day (hours will vary)
6. Conduct a City Cultural Orientation for YLAI Fellows the day after fellows arrive.
7. Participate in the in-person YLAI Closing Forum in Washington D.C.
8. Optional, collaborate with IREX to secure fellow housing. Participant housing costs will come from IREX’s budget.

*Support IREX Through the Host Placement Process*

Prior to the in-person component of the fellowship, Cohort Ambassadors will support the IREX team during the process of securing high-quality, tailored host placements for a cohort of approximately 14 YLAI Fellows. IREX is ultimately responsible for matching fellows to U.S. organizations and supporting fellows and host organizations during the fellowship, but Cohort Ambassadors play an active role in identifying and onboarding potential host organizations.

*Participate in a virtual Cohort Ambassador Orientation*

The Cohort Ambassador Orientation is a two-day, virtual event to build upon Cohort Ambassadors’ existing foundation of knowledge regarding how to be successful in their role. IREX will facilitate a series of sessions to foster knowledge sharing, peer-to-peer networking, community building, and goal setting. To this end, the Cohort Ambassador Orientation will deliver a tailored, interactive virtual training to build the capacity of Cohort Ambassadors to deliver meaningful, inclusive, and culturally sensitive experiences to fellows.

*Curate a four-week agenda of cultural and professional immersion in your city*

Prior to the fellowship, Cohort Ambassadors will submit drafts of their agenda of experiential cultural and entrepreneurial activities and incorporate IREX feedback. Every Friday is reserved for Cohort Ambassador programming designed to be interactive and fun. They may include activities such as site visits to local businesses or government offices; volunteer opportunities; guest lectures; holiday celebrations; dinners with local families; and other applied learning and cultural exchange experiences. Cohort Ambassadors should dedicate some time during the first two Friday sessions to help prepare fellows for the pitch competition by participating in a pitch workshop and practicing their pitches. Cohort Ambassadors are welcome to involve guest speakers for this purpose.

*Facilitate a virtual meet and greet for your cohort during the YLAI Opening Orientation*

Cohort Ambassadors will have an allotted time during the YLAI Opening Orientation to facilitate a meet and greet with their cohort of fellows. Cohort Ambassadors are encouraged to provide a very brief introduction of their organization, city, and a preliminary overview of anticipated activities. This session is also intended to be a chance for fellows to meet each other through icebreaker activities.

*Facilitate an airport pick-up for* *fellows arriving on the same day*  
Cohort Ambassadors will be required to welcome fellows at the airport and deliver welcome packages containing stipends and phones and collect signatures confirming receipt of items. The Cohort Ambassador will also be expected to arrange transportation from the airport to their housing. Flights will be arranged by IREX and are intended to include morning and afternoon arrival times.

*Conduct a City Cultural Orientation for YLAI Fellows the day after fellows arrive*  
Cohort Ambassadors will welcome fellows to their city and provide a more in-depth introduction to their organization, team, city, and agenda. Orientation activities should include, but are not limited to:

* Logistics**:** Local transport options, locations of emergency and medical centers, personal safety tips and best practices, and recommendations for grocery stores and restaurants.
* Culture**:** At least one unique and engaging cultural activity to help fellows feel welcome and learn more about their host city.
* Peer networking**:** Icebreaker activities that help YLAI Fellows and local host organizations get to know each other and begin to build group cohesion.

An extensive welcome booklet is not required, but a one-pager outlining key resources for safety, health, and contacts for support is encouraged.

*Participate in the in-person YLAI Closing Forum*

Cohort Ambassadors will help conclude the program alongside IREX staff at the in-person Closing Forum Event. IREX will arrange and cover any costs of travel and lodging for one representative of each Cohort Ambassador. Cohort Ambassadors will be expected to attend sessions on the main agenda and participate in feedback sessions for IREX’s learning and evaluation.

**Cohort Ambassador Responsibilities & Timeline**

Below is a timeline of required activities for selected Cohort Ambassadors

Throughout all in-person activities, Cohort Ambassadors will be expected to:

* Integrate considerations of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This includes highlighting diverse perspectives and backgrounds through guest speaker selection and cohort activities and considering diverse needs in scheduling and logistical arrangements.
* Arrange and facilitate transportation logistics to and from in-person group events.
* Provide meals and snacks at group events as appropriate.
* Facilitate logistical support in host cities for fellows with physical disabilities, as needed. IREX will support costs of all disability accommodations as needed. Disability accommodation costs will not be paid from this subaward.

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| **Dates** | **Activity** | **Location** | **Details** |
| August 2022 | Cohort Ambassador Welcome Meeting | Virtual | IREX will host a meeting to welcome all Cohort Ambassadors, review roles & responsibilities, and provide space for group networking. |
| August – December 2022 | Host Placement Involvement | Virtual | See details below |
| November 2022 | *Participate in a virtual Cohort Ambassador Orientation* | Washington, DC | One Cohort Ambassador staff member will participate in a two-day virtual Cohort Ambassador Orientation. |
| Early December 2022 | Facilitate a Host Organization Networking Event | Your city | Following the Cohort Ambassador Orientation, Cohort Ambassadors conduct a networking event for local YLAI host organizations to foster community and demonstrate the value of being part of the YLAI Community. |
| Early December 2022 | Facilitate a virtual meet and greet for your cohort during the YLAI Opening Orientation | Virtual | Cohort Ambassadors will help welcome fellows to the program by leading a virtual *Meet & Greet* session. IREX staff will support the session and coordinate logistics as needed. |
| January 12, 2022 | Facilitate an airport pick-up for fellows arriving on the same day | Your city | Welcome fellows at the airport, deliver items sent by IREX, and complete related paperwork to confirm receipt. |
| January 13, 2023 | Conduct a City Cultural Orientation for YLAI Fellows | Your city | Welcome fellows to your city and introduce them to its unique local culture. Orientation activities should include, but are not limited to:   * **Logistics:** Local transport options, locations of emergency and medical centers, personal safety tips and best practices, and recommendations for grocery stores and restaurants. * **Culture:** At least one unique and engaging cultural activity to help fellows feel welcome and learn more about their host city. * **Peer networking:** Icebreaker activities that help YLAI Fellows and local host organizations get to know each other and begin to build group cohesion. |
| January 20, 2023 | First Friday Session | Your city | This session includes about 2 hours dedicated to pitch competition preparation. |
| January 27, 2023 | Second Friday Session | Your city | This session includes about 2 hours dedicated to pitch competition preparation. |
| February 3, 2023 | Third Friday Session | Your city |  |
| February 10, 2023 | Fourth Friday Session | Your city |  |
| February 13, 2023 | ***YLAI Fellows & Cohort Ambassadors depart your city and fly to Washington, DC*** | | |
| February 14 – 17, 2023 | Participate in the in-person Closing Forum | Washington, DC | Cohort Ambassadors will help conclude the program alongside IREX staff at the in-person Closing Forum Event. **IREX will arrange and cover any costs of travel and lodging for one CA representative.** |
| February 18, 2023 | ***YLAI Fellows depart the United States*** | | |

**Host Placement Process**

IREX is tasked with securing unique host placements for 280 YLAI Fellows in target cities across the U.S. Host Placements are designed to be meaningful collaborations between YLAI Fellows and U.S. based organizations to exchange expertise, expand each other’s networks, share best practices, and set the foundation for a potentially long term mutually beneficial partnership. IREX will launch the FY21 Host Placement Process in July 2022, at the conclusion of the FY20 Cohort.

Cohort Ambassadors will support IREX in securing host placements for a specific cohort of approximately 14 fellows in their city. They will collaborate virtually with the IREX team during this process with the goal of securing the cohort’s host placements as early as possible.

New considerations:

* Fellows will only be introduced to their official host organization once placement is finalized.
* Fellows will have a period of free-floating placements before finalizing city assignments.

Details about the Cohort Ambassador's involvement in the host placement process are below.

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| **Dates** | **Activity** | **Details** |
| July 2022 | Submit a Host Placement Preferences Form to IREX | Complete a form indicating strong business sectors and potential host organizations within your network. |
| August 2022 | Free-floating placements before city assignments. | We want Cohort Ambassadors to use this time to leverage their networks and identify all willing and eligible host organizations and match them with the right fellow from the full cohort on a first come first serve basis. |
| Late August | IREX uses the Host Placement Preferences Form to curate city assignments. | IREX will share a preliminary city assignment and provide a month for pivots to take place. |
| September 30, 2022 | City Assignments are finalized and can no longer make pivots. | Cohort details will include a CV, bio, and pre-recorded introduction video for each fellow. |
| September – December 2022 | Collaborate with IREX point of contact to the place assigned fellows with host organizations | See additional details below. |
| December 2022 | Recommend “Host Champions” to IREX | Collaborate with the IREX team to determine Host Champions, who will support Cohort Ambassador and act as peer mentors to other host organizations in your city. |
| January 2022 | Submit a host placement report to IREX | The report should list the dates, names, contacts, and associated fellows for each email introduction. |

From July through December 2022, the requirements for host placement collaboration with IREX are:

* IREX will provide information about the FY21 fellows. Learn about each fellow’s host placement needs by reviewing the pre-recorded introduction video, bio, and CV for each fellow.
* Facilitate email introductions to a **minimum of 25** promising potential Host Organizations in your city between August - December 2022, first with access to the entire consortium of fellows as you work to build your city cohort of fellows, and later with the goal of placing the remainder of your city cohort. Before connecting to IREX, prospective Host Organizations must have at least a general understanding of the program mission and have expressed interest in hosting a YLAI Fellow.
* Collaborate with one main point of contact on the IREX team to facilitate promising host organization connections. Meet with your IREX point of contact as needed to discuss placement progress, but we recommend and anticipate bi-weekly meetings.
* Monitor updates on the host placement process by accessing a visual dashboard which will be updated daily by the IREX team during the host placement period.

**Reporting Requirements**

Cohort Ambassadors will be required to submit the following reports to IREX. IREX will provide templates for each of these reports.

* Host placement outreach report prior to the fellowship
* Four brief weekly reports during the in-person fellowship
* Final report following the fellowship

**Fellowship Structure**

Please note that if the fellowship cannot take place in person due to updated public health guidance, the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) reserves the right to determine whether the fellowship will take place virtually for the safety of partners and participants. If ECA determines that the fellowship will be virtual, Cohort Ambassadors will be asked to modify their activities to adapt to a virtual fellowship model. No funds will be removed from Cohort Ambassadors’ subawards should it be implemented as a virtual fellowship.

**Application Submission Requirements**

Organizations and individuals interested in providing this service must submit an application that includes the following materials, preferably in the form of PDF documents:

1. ***Application Narrative (no more than 2 pages, single-spaced)***

Please explain why you would like to partner with IREX as a YLAI Cohort Ambassador, touching on previous experiences and resources that you plan to leverage to successfully fulfill this role. In the narrative, please include the following details and any additional relevant information.

* A written confirmation that you would like to partner with IREX in the role of a Cohort Ambassador under the partnership responsibilities outlined in this document. Include brief details about willingness to flexibly collaborate with IREX and shift to a virtual program if needed.
* Evidence of capacity to provide a high level of support and personalized attention to YLAI Fellows during the program.
* Evidence and examples of an approach to develop professional networks and group cohesion among professionals, especially entrepreneurs. Applications may include references to similar work or experience fostering these relationships.
* Evidence and examples of an approach to fostering cross-cultural experiences between U.S. citizens and international professionals, especially those from Latin America, the Caribbean, and/or Canada.
* Details related to integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations throughout program activities.
* A brief summary of strong business sectors or industries within your city and networks that you aim to leverage for YLAI host placements.
* If available, evidence and examples of previous work placing professionals with host organizations doing similar work for mutually beneficial learning, cultural exchanges, and/or internships.

Please also include the following **attachments** to the application narrative, in the order listed below:

1. A list of all staff members who will be contributing to the Cohort Ambassador role or engaging with YLAI Fellows.
2. An updated CV for each staff member.
3. A sample list of local entrepreneurial networks you plan to engage during the host placement process.
4. A list of names and contact information for at least three past performance references.
5. ***Sample Draft Agenda***

Using the template provided by IREX, submit a detailed sample draft agenda describing specific proposed activities for your city cohorts. The agenda should include:

* Sample topics and activities for city cultural orientation and four Friday sessions. Proposed times for sessions, site visits, and activities should be specified. Approximately two hours should be set aside for pitch competition preparation activities on the first and second Friday sessions.
* Names and brief bios of proposed guest speakers, as applicable
* Integration of cross-cultural exchange experiences throughout the agenda
* Integration of diverse perspectives and representation throughout the agenda that resonates with a Latin American, Caribbean, and Canadian audience.
* Brief notes of potential modifications to activities in the event that the fellowship is virtual, with a focus on fostering productive networking relationships in a virtual environment.

The Draft Agenda Template can be found [here](https://irexorg.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/IREXPublicFiles/EeMR2JsQVt1Lv-OhakkuWeQBrFLgXdW6DIBrjxIx-YqwjQ?e=lO7wCi). Please download a copy to make your edits on.

1. ***Budget Estimate***

Using the template provided by IREX, submit a simple, major line item budget estimate detailing all costs associated with the subaward. Please include any notes as appropriate.

The Budget Estimate Template can be found [here](https://irexorg.sharepoint.com/:x:/s/IREXPublicFiles/EajqCfUPZ79MlWzyYMDeGkoBqeCQXIasU033Yq_t04P12A?e=NlBEHr&isSPOFile=1&params=eyJBcHBOYW1lIjoiVGVhbXMtRGVza3RvcCIsIkFwcFZlcnNpb24iOiIyNy8yMjA1MDEwMTAwOSJ9). Please download a copy to make your edits on.

**Submission Instructions**

If you are interested in furnishing this service, please send an email with your application materials attached to Sadie Traylor at straylor@irex.org. Applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on the closing date indicated above. Questions may also be directed to Diego Sandoval in advance of the application submission deadline.

**Application Evaluation**

The criteria are listed in descending order starting with the most important factors to be evaluated.

1. Ability to provide a high level of tailored support and personalized attention to a diverse group of fellows. (25%)
2. Demonstrated ability to foster meaningful professional networking connections. (20%)
3. Ability to flexibly collaborate with IREX and adapt to program changes as needed (15%)
4. Demonstrated connections with local businesses and organizations that may serve as host placement organizations. (15%)
5. Demonstrated interest or experience working with international professionals, especially those from Latin America, the Caribbean, and/or Canada (10%)
6. Quality, details, and specificity of sample agenda and budget estimate (10%)
7. Past performance references (5%)

Evaluation and ranking of applications will be completed by IREX in Washington, DC. IREX may at its discretion ask for additional information.

**Contract Awarding**

IREX does not guarantee that any contract will be awarded under this request for information. There is a ceiling of $28,000 total for the full responsibilities of this award, including securing housing by collaborating with IREX. IREX anticipates granting approximately 20 subawards for this role. The anticipated subaward will be a fixed amount award.

After Cohort Ambassadors have been selected, individual subawards will be signed. No payments under the terms of this award are guaranteed until awards have been signed.

**Contact Information**

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