



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Issue Date: June 5th, 2023

Proposal Due Date: June 30th, 2023

Anticipated Award Date: August 10th, 2023

Award Ceiling: up to \$28,000

What is YLAI?

[The Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative](#) (YLAI) is the U.S. Department of State's flagship program to advance inclusive economic prosperity in the Western Hemisphere. This premiere Fellowship program supports emerging business leaders and entrepreneurs from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada. YLAI is a competitive Fellowship structured as an international professional exchange program funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and implemented by [IREX](#), a global education and development non-government organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. As such, IREX is requesting applications to serve as a YLAI Cohort Ambassador for the 2024 YLAI Fellowship cycle. Fellows will engage with the online Entrepreneurship-Leadership Curriculum before traveling to the U.S. to complete the in-person Fellowship component across host cities from **March 4th - April 10th, 2024**.

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 a minimum of 2 years' experience leading an organization across 15 diverse business sectors. 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 the YLAI 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 exchange in the United States, Fellows focus on enhancing leadership skills and fostering positive new connections to help scale their business impact, grow their entrepreneurial networks, and contribute to economic prosperity across the region. Combined, YLAI addresses the opportunity gap for young people, especially under-represented founders, equipping them to sustainably transform their communities.

Who are Cohort Ambassadors?

Cohort Ambassadors are a selection of organizations representing up to 20 target cities across the United States. This critical role serves as a local partner for facilitating a cohesive cohort and fostering cross-cultural understanding through local cultural and professional engagements. Cohort Ambassadors will be considered upon their ability to support a cohort for the duration of 2024 Fellowship Cycle (Fiscal Year 22). The Cohort Ambassador role has been held by centers for citizen diplomacy, 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 Responsibilities:



1. Participate in a Questions & Answers Session on Request for Applications Process
2. Support IREX by recruiting Fellowship Placement Organizations.
3. Participate in an in-person, Cohort Ambassador Orientation.
4. Facilitate an in-person Networking Event and coordinate site visits to Fellowship Placement Organizations.
5. Curate a four-week agenda of cultural and professional immersion in your city, specifically for four subsequent Friday sessions.
6. Facilitate a virtual meet-and-greet session with your cohort.
7. Review and provide concurrence on IREX-selected housing options.
8. Facilitate an airport pick-up for Fellows arriving on the same day (hours will vary).
9. Conduct a City Cultural Orientation for YLAI Fellows the day after Fellows arrive.
10. Participate in the in-person YLAI Closing Forum in Washington, D.C.

Support IREX by recruiting Fellowship Placement Organizations

Prior to the in-person component of the Fellowship, Cohort Ambassadors will support the IREX team during the process of securing high-quality, tailored professional placements for a cohort of approximately 14 YLAI Fellows. IREX is ultimately responsible for matching Fellows to U.S. organizations and supporting Fellows and Fellowship Placement Organizations during the Fellowship, but Cohort Ambassadors play an active role in identifying and onboarding prospective Fellowship Placement Organizations. IREX and Cohort Ambassador organizations will share the recruiting effort with Cohort Ambassadors with each party responsible for up to 50% of total placements. Cohort Ambassadors will aid in developing long-term relationships with Fellowship Placement Organizations to nurture a self-sustaining and collaborative network of YLAI partners.

Participate in the Cohort Ambassador Orientation

The Cohort Ambassador Orientation is a two-day, in-person event to build upon Cohort Ambassadors' existing foundation of knowledge to further their success 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 relevant, interactive training to build the capacity of Cohort Ambassadors to deliver meaningful, inclusive, and culturally sensitive experiences to Fellows as well as to augment the coordination, sustainability, and capacity of the professional placement process.

Facilitate a Networking Event and visits to -person Fellowship Placement Organization

Prior to Fellows' arrival, Cohort Ambassadors will convoke partners to coordinate a networking event for Fellowship Placement Organizations. This event will serve to greater familiarize partners with each other and the YLAI Fellowship as well as foment a sustainable city network model of collaboration, coordination and support during Fellow experience. During the Fellowship, Cohort Ambassadors will visit Fellowship Placement Organizations who are new to the YLAI Fellowship, ensuring alignment of the Fellow experience. Cohort Ambassadors will communicate any potential issues or situations to IREX.

Curate 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. Each Friday during the four week in-person fellowship is reserved for Cohort Ambassador programming, designed to be interactive and educational.



Activities may include 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 Solution Pitch Competition by participating in a pitch workshop and dedicating time to practicing their pitches. Cohort Ambassadors are welcome to involve guest speakers for this purpose.

Facilitate a virtual, cohort meet and greet

Cohort Ambassadors will allot a time to facilitate a virtual, community-building meet and greet with their cohort of Fellows before their arrival to the United States. Cohort Ambassadors are encouraged to provide a brief introduction to their organization, city, and a preliminary overview of anticipated activities.

Review and provide concurrence on selected housing options.

Cohort Ambassadors will review IREX-selected housing options prior to contracting and communicate potential issues by email prior to Fellows Arrival to provide concurrence. Cohort Ambassadors will provide recommendations as necessary. Cohort Ambassadors will support the resolution of housing issues before and upon Fellow Arrival. Participant housing will be coordinated and funded by IREX.

Facilitate an airport pick-up for Fellows, arriving on the same day

Cohort Ambassadors will be required to welcome Fellows at the airport. 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. Hours will vary between cities, with all Fellows arriving in the same city at the same time. Cohort Ambassadors will support in the Fellow housing check-in process, review selected housing amenities upon Fellow arrival, and communicate any housing or transportation issue to IREX.

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: Connection activities that help YLAI Fellows 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 YLAI Fellows' 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 Expectations & 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, inclusion, and belonging. This includes highlighting diverse perspectives and backgrounds through guest speaker selection and cohort activities while considering diverse accessibility 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 cohort cities for Fellows with physical disabilities, as needed. IREX will cover the costs of all disability accommodation as needed. Disability accommodation costs will not be paid from this subaward but funded by IREX.

2024 Cohort #1 March- April 2024			
Date	Activity	Location	Details
Week of August 28th, 2023	Cohort Ambassador Welcome Meeting	Virtual	IREX will host a meeting to welcome all Cohort Ambassadors, review roles & responsibilities, and provide space for group networking.
September 2024	Provide concurrence to IREX-selected housing options	Virtual	IREX will email Cohort Ambassadors housing options and Cohort Ambassadors will review and concur on housing. Cohort Ambassadors provide recommendations and support as necessary.
End of October 2023	Participate in an in-person Cohort Ambassador Orientation	Virtual	One Cohort Ambassador staff member will participate in a two-day Cohort Ambassador Orientation.
January 2024	Provide concurrence to IREX-selected housing options	Virtual	IREX will email Cohort Ambassadors housing options and Cohort Ambassadors will review and concur on housing. Cohort Ambassadors provide recommendations and support as necessary.
February 2024	Facilitate an in-person Fellowship Placement Organization Networking Event	Your city	Following the Cohort Ambassador Orientation, Cohort Ambassadors conduct a networking event for local YLAI Fellowship Placement Organizations to foster community and demonstrate the value of being part of the YLAI Community.
Late February 2024	Facilitate a virtual <i>City Meet and Greet</i> for their city cohort	Virtual	Cohort Ambassadors will help welcome Fellows to the program by leading a virtual <i>City Cohort Meet & Greet</i> session.



			IREX staff will support the session and coordinate logistics as needed.
Thursday, March 7, 2024	Facilitate an airport pick-up for Fellows arriving on the same day and time	Your city	Welcome Fellows at the airport, transport to housing and aid in housing check-in. Conduct review of Fellow housing amenities upon check-in.
Friday, March 8, 2024	Conduct a City Cultural Orientation for YLAI Fellows	Your city	<p>Welcome Fellows to the city and introduce them to its unique local culture. Orientation activities should include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 get to know each other and begin to build group cohesion.
Friday, March 15, 2024	First Friday Session	Your city	This session includes about 2 hours dedicated to Solution Pitch Competition preparation.
Friday, March 22, 2024	Second Friday Session	Your city	This session includes about 2 hours dedicated to Solution Pitch Competition preparation.
Friday, March 29, 2024	Third Friday Session	Your city	
Friday, April 5, 2024	Fourth Friday Session	Your city	
<i>YLAI Fellows & Cohort Ambassadors depart your city and fly to Washington, DC</i>			
April 8 – April 10, 2024	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 Cohort Ambassador representative.
April 11, 2024	<i>YLAI Fellows depart the United States</i>		

Fellow Placement Process

IREX is tasked with securing unique professional placements for one cohort of 280 YLAI Fellows in target



cities across the U.S. Professional placements are intended to be meaningful collaborations between YLAI Fellows and U.S.-based organizations (Fellowship Placement 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 Fellow Placement Process for the cohort of the 2024 Fellowship cycle in September 2023.

Cohort Ambassadors will support IREX in securing professional placements for an assigned cohort of approximately 14 Fellows in their city. Cohort Ambassadors will collaborate virtually with the IREX team during this process with the goal of securing high quality professional placements as early as possible. Though IREX will be ultimately responsible for professional placements, the recruiting effort will be the shared responsibility of IREX and Cohort Ambassadors. Outreach conducted by Cohort Ambassadors should result in up to 50% of total professional placements.

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

Cohort Dates	Activity	Details
August 2023	Submit a Placement Preferences Form to IREX	Complete a form indicating strong business sectors and potential Fellowship Placement Organizations within your network.
September 2023	IREX uses the Placement Preferences Form to curate city assignments.	IREX will share a preliminary city assignment and provide a month for pivots to take place.
September – February 2024	Collaborate with IREX point of contact to place assigned Fellows with Fellowship Placement Organizations	See additional details below.
February 28 th , 2024	Final date for 280 Professional Placements	
April 2024	Submit a Final Placement Report to IREX	The report should list the dates, names, contacts, and associated Fellows for each email introduction.

From September 2023 through February 2024, the requirements for professional placement collaboration with IREX include:

- Learn and understand each assigned Fellow’s placement needs by reviewing the pre-recorded introduction video, bio, and CV for each Fellow.
- Facilitate email introductions to a **minimum of 25** promising prospective Fellowship Placement Organizations in your city between September 2023 – February 2024. Before connecting to IREX, prospective Fellowship Placement 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 Fellowship Placement Organization introductions. Meet with your IREX point of contact as needed to discuss placement progress. Contribute to recruiting and outreach, resulting in successful identification



and confirmation of up to half of the placements needed per cohort with Fellowship Placement Organizations.

- Monitor updates on the placement process by accessing a visual dashboard which will be updated daily by the IREX team during the 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.

- Professional 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:

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

Please explain your intention to partner with IREX as a YLAI Cohort Ambassador, sharing 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.
- 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, inclusion, and belonging 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 professional placements.
- If available, evidence and examples of previous work placing professionals with well-aligned placement organizations for the intent of 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 professional placement process.
4. A list of names and contact information for at least three past performance references.

II. *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 Solution Pitch Competition preparation activities on the first and second Friday sessions.
- Names and brief bios of anticipated 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.

The Draft Agenda Template can be found [here](#). Please download a copy to make your edits on.

III. *Budget Estimate*

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

The Budget Estimate Template can be found [here](#). Please download a copy to make your edits on.

Submission Instructions

If you are interested in becoming a 2024 Cohort Ambassador, please email your application materials attached to Derrick Lewis at dlewis@irex.org. Applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on the closing date, June 30th, 2023. Questions may also be directed to Derrick Lewis in advance of the application submission deadline.

Questions & Answers Virtual Session on the Request for Applications Process

On June 22nd, 2023 IREX will host a virtual meeting to share details and answer questions from existing and potential CAs. Participants will be able to review roles and responsibilities, fellowship timeline, application submission requirements, application evaluation, and other subaward-related details.

Follow this link to access the [Zoom meeting](#), which will also be recorded and shared with interested



applicants upon request.

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 professional 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. 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 the awards have been signed.

Contact Information

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IREX