**USAID Youth Excel: Our Knowledge Leading Change Program Grant Competition**

**Using 'Research-to-Change' (Implementation Research)
to Strengthen Local, Youth-Led, Inclusive Solutions and Advocacy
for Advancing Peace and Security through Local-Level Social Cohesion
Around the Globe**

**Request for Applications (RFA) No. FY22-Youth Excel-Grant Competition-03
Deadline: June 6, 2022 by 23:59 GMT**

Youth Excel is pleased to announce a global grant competition in celebration of USAID's new Youth in Development Policy launch. USAID envisions a world in which young people have agency, rights, influence, and opportunities to pursue their life goals and contribute to the development of their communities. To realize this vision, Youth Excel partners with youth to lead global positive youth development programs.

In today's world of rising inequalities and tensions fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and other pressures, youth-led, inclusive approaches are essential for advancing peace and security. This grant competition seeks **solutions from local youth-led organizations to build cohesion across social groups and generations.** Grant competition winners will use data to strengthen their solutions and influence decision-makers. Youth Excel will award 5-8 small grants, at least 1 per region of the world, in the amount of $7,000-10,000 for 3-6 months. Please see full information in the following request for applications.

| Grant Competition Information | |
|---|---|
| **Request for Applications (RFA) Number** | FY22-Youth Excel-Grant Competition-03<br>Issued under USAID Youth Excel Cooperative Agreement Number 7200AA20CA00024 |
| **Website** | Access all grant competition information online at:<br>https://www.irex.org/program/seeking-local-youth-led-solutions-advance-peace-and-security-through-local-level-social |
| **Social Media** | Follow grant competition updates on social media at:<br>Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/youthexcelprogram<br>Twitter: https://twitter.com/excelyouth |
| **Email** | Sign up for grant competition updates by email at:<br>https://irexorg.formstack.com/forms/fy22_youth_excel_grant_competition_03_email_updates<br><br>Email the Youth Excel grant competition team at: excelyouth@irex.org<br>Subject line: "FY22-Youth Excel-Grant Competition-03" |
| **Information** | Submit questions online at the following link, or by social media or email:<br>https://irexorg.formstack.com/forms/fy22_youth_excel_grant_competition_03_questions<br><br>Youth Excel will publish a training on Youth Excel grant competition requirements and commonly asked questions. The training will be posted online and shared by social media and email by May 13, 2022. |

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| | Youth Excel will respond to questions on public social media daily and publish responses to all questions received by May 20, 2022. The responses will be posted online and shared by social media and email by May 23, 2022. |
| **Application** | Submit applications online at: [https://irexorg.formstack.com/forms/fy22_youth_excel_grant_competition_03_application](https://irexorg.formstack.com/forms/fy22_youth_excel_grant_competition_03_application) |
| **Grant Competition Timeframe** | |
| **Issue Date** | **May 6, 2022** |
| **Training Posted** | **May 13, 2022** |
| **Questions Due** | **May 20, 2022** |
| **Answers Posted** | **May 23, 2022** |
| **Close Date** | **June 6, 2022 at 23:59 GMT** |
| **Grant Start Date** | **August 2022** |

## Overview

**About Youth Excel:** The USAID-funded Youth Excel: Our Knowledge Leading Change program implemented by IREX and its consortium supports young leaders and youth-led and youth-serving organizations around the globe to conduct quality "research-to-change" (implementation research); use data and learnings to improve their own cross-sectoral, positive youth development programs; synthesize data and learning; and engage in intergenerational dialogue with adult decision-makers so that together youth and adults can shape and advance data-informed development policies, agendas, and programs.

**About the Grant Competition:** As a USAID New Partnerships Initiative award, Youth Excel conducts grant competitions to offer funding opportunities for local organizations to test and adapt contextualized solutions for a global, cross-sectoral problem through youth-led "research-to-change" (implementation research) approaches.[1] In alignment with the USAID Youth in Development Policy and Positive Youth Development Framework, and with support from the USAID Inclusive Development Hub, this grant competition will award small grants to local, youth-led organizations around the globe for inclusive solutions and advocacy to address the grant competition theme of advancing peace and security through local-level social cohesion. Grant competition winners will use data to strengthen their solutions and influence decision-makers through Youth Excel approaches for gender equality and social inclusion, implementation research, and knowledge mobilization.

Youth Excel will award funding for a new project, including activities combined with research and learning, or for a new research and learning component layered onto ongoing activities under an existing project that addresses the grant competition theme. See more guidance about activities in Section 2 and the research and learning component in Section 3.

- ☐ New Project, including Activities and Research and Learning: Your organization has a concept or model that advances peace and security through local-level social cohesion. Youth Excel funding will enable you to implement new project activities and conduct research and learning as you implement to make your program better.
- ☐ New Research and Learning Component for Existing Project with Ongoing Activities: Your organization is currently implementing a project that advances peace and security through local-level social cohesion. Youth Excel funding will enable you to add research and learning to your existing program to make the program better.

*Issuance of this request for applications does not constitute an award commitment on the part of Youth Excel, nor does it commit Youth Excel, IREX, or USAID 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.*

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[1] Please see examples of solutions funded under previous Youth Excel grant competitions in Latin America and the Caribbean and Eastern and Southern Africa.

## Definitions

- **Capacity development:** an approach for youth-led and youth-serving organizations to strengthen skills and leverage opportunities in different areas. (See Section 3.)

- **Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI):** an approach that helps us to understand the importance of equal rights and opportunities for all individuals regardless of their social identity. (See Section 3.)

- **International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX):** IREX is a global development and education organization. We strive for a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world—where individuals reach their full potential, governments serve their people, and communities thrive. IREX and its Our Knowledge, Leading Change consortium lead the Youth Excel program conducting this grant competition.

- **Intersectionality:** Interaction of an individual's identities (race, gender, disability status, age, and other aspects) in ways that can intensify the inclusion or exclusion they experience. Intersectionality is the understanding that a person may enjoy advantages, or suffer disadvantages, based on multiple identities rather than just one.

- **Knowledge Mobilization:** an approach to creating and disseminating knowledge from your research-to-change process. (See Section 3.)

- **Knowledge Product:** a product for sharing learning and enabling the audience to act based on that learning from the research-to-change process. (See Section 3.)

- **Learning Goal:** a goal for information that you need to make a decision in the near future. Learning goals help your team to identify learning needs that will guide your research-to-change plan. (See Section 3 and Table 1.)

- **Local Organization:** an organization that is legally organized under the laws of a country that is receiving assistance from USAID; has its principal place of business or operations in that country; is majority-owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of that country; and is managed by a governing body, the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents of that country. This definition comes from USAID's New Partnership Initiative and ADS 303.6. This grant competition is open to local organizations in eligible countries.

- **Marginalized groups:** Those who have traditionally been excluded from power and access to resources, and may include indigenous peoples, ethnicities, religious groups, LGBTQI+ populations, women and girls, youth, individuals with disabilities, or other groups.

- **Protection:** an approach that helps us understand and prepare for protection concerns for youth, which can be digital, physical and psychosocial. (See Section 3.)

- **Research-to-Change (Implementation Research):** an approach that allows organizations to gather data, take what they learn, and turn it into what they do in real-time. (See Section 3.)

- **United States Agency for International Development (USAID):** USAID leads international development and humanitarian efforts to save lives, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance and help people progress beyond assistance. USAID funds the Youth Excel program and this grant competition.

- **Youth:** Youth Excel defines youth as people between the ages of 10 and 35. USAID defines youth as people between the ages of 10-29. Youth Excel has expanded this definition to include youth leaders in countries where the definition of youth extends beyond age 29.

- **Youth Excel:** Youth Excel is a global program funded by USAID and implemented by IREX and its Our Knowledge, Leading Change consortium. Youth Excel empowers young people and youth organizations to use implementation research to strengthen local, national, and global development solutions. Youth Excel is conducting this grant competition.

- **Youth-Led Organization:** Youth Excel defines youth-led organizations as those whose Chief Executive Officer or other leaders are under the age of 35, and whose Board of Directors are predominantly under the age of 35. This grant competition is open to youth-led organizations.

## Contents

## 1.  What is the theme of the grant competition?

**Problem:** In 2015, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, which recognizes that 'young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.' It acknowledges that, in the majority of countries affected by conflict and crisis, young people often form the majority of the population. Its progress study, The Missing Peace, notes that "marginalized young people are strikingly creative in forging alternative places of belonging and meaning through which to express themselves." Globally, diverse youth face discrimination, marginalization, and inequities based on ethnic, religious, and other social identities and their intersectionalities with age and gender, along with sexual orientation, disability status, and more. These complex barriers impede diverse youth's access to education, health, employment, psychosocial and other services and their leadership in local systems. Moreover, the global COVID-19 pandemic, economic trends, environmental threats, other pressures and conflicts are deepening and multiplying divides, fueling gender and social disparities and tensions, eroding trust within and between communities and institutions, and undermining inclusive development and security in a vicious circle.

**References:**

- [UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security](#) (2015)
- [The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security](#) (2018)
- ['If I Disappear': Global Report on Protecting Young People in Civic Space](#) (2021)
- [U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security](#) (2019)
- [Youth Excel Global Gender and Social Inclusion Analysis](#) (2021)

## Theme: Advancing peace and security through local-level social cohesion

You must address the theme. You may, but are not required to, address one of the following subthemes.

**Optional Subthemes:**

- Shifting to the Digital World
- Countering Mis/Disinformation and Manipulative Information
- Combatting Gender-Based Violence
- Improving Psychosocial Support and Wellbeing

## 2. What types of solutions can you propose to address the theme?

Illustrative Solutions: Youth Excel can support local youth-led organizations' solutions to address the theme, as well as any relevant subtheme(s), from any technical sector. Solutions may include but are not limited to the following activities for cohesion and peace:

- Empowering marginalized and vulnerable youth with inclusive services and opportunities for education, workforce, and civic participation.
- Building leadership, including digital; skills, including violence prevention, conflict resolution, inclusion, advocacy, and others; and psychosocial support for diverse youth to act as peacebuilders.
- Facilitating intergenerational, intercultural dialogues and initiatives to strengthen relationships between groups and collaboratively address shared challenges.
- Using social and behavioral change communications and media literacy approaches to protect against mis/disinformation and foster trust.
- Strengthening inclusiveness and effectiveness of local institutions to support communities with monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
- Advocating for cohesion and peace.
- Other interventions that advance peace and security through local-level social cohesion.

Youth Excel cannot support political, partisan, or armed interventions.

Applicants should propose activities that are **feasible to implement and test within the 3-6 month timeframe, with time for learning and adaptation.** This may be a full program model or a specific, short element of one. You may do one longer activity with continuous learning and adaptations over time, or multiple, iterative cycles of a shorter activity with a pause for learning and adaptation in between. For example, for illustrative purposes, if you are implementing a 3-month peacebuilding training curriculum and learning about how to improve its delivery, you could choose to:

A. Implement one 3-month cycle and finetune your approach and materials throughout it as you learn.
B. Implement two 3-month cycles with a learning and adaptation workshop after the first round to inform adaptations to your approach and materials for the second round.

### 3. What Youth Excel tools and approaches for research and learning can you use to strengthen your solutions?

Along your solutions to address the theme, Youth Excel will support you to use data and learning to strengthen your solution and influence decision-makers. You will use the following Youth Excel technical approaches, adapted to your needs and priorities. Your budget will include time and resources allocated to research and learning (see Section 6.)

**Youth Excel's key technical areas of support for grantees include:**

- **Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI)** is an approach that helps us to understand the importance of equal rights and opportunities for all individuals regardless of their social identity. This concept addresses unequal power relations between different social groups that cause exclusion.

- **Protection** is an approach that helps us to understand and prepare for protection concerns related to Youth Excel, which can be digital, physical and psychosocial. Youth Excel partners take local protection measures to prevent, mitigate and respond to risks and threats that Youth Excel can unintentionally exacerbate (risks associated with programs, operations, and people). Youth Excel aims to understand the specific risks, but also the protection capacities, the available resources and the right to protection of participants.

- **Research-to-Change (implementation research):** Information is a powerful resource that can be used to help organizations grow and make their programs work better. "Research-to-Change" (implementation research) is a tool that allows organizations to gather data, take what they learn, and turn it into what they do in real-time. See following Table 1 for illustrative examples of **Learning Goals** developed under Youth Excel "Research-to-Change".

- **Knowledge mobilization** is Youth Excel's 'rebrand' of knowledge management and dissemination. It includes creating knowledge products that are easily accessible by users, making them openly available to the public for use, and sharing them in a strategic and dynamic way that promotes dialogue and two-way communication (including events and social media, for example).

  **Knowledge Products** share learning and enable the audience to act based on that learning from the Research-to-change process. Knowledge products can have different formats, such as manuals, best practices briefs, or data-based recommendations. Knowledge products can be created using different methodologies, like summaries, storytelling, and digital visualizations and take different forms, such as printed documents, podcasts, radio, videos, etc.

- **Capacity development** supports youth-led and youth-serving organizations to strengthen skills and leverage opportunities in the following areas: using implementation research to strengthen positive youth development programs; applying gender, inclusion, and protection so that programs are more inclusive of diverse youth groups; strengthening opportunities for meaningful youth engagement and intergenerational dialogue; synthesizing, disseminating, and using findings from research more effectively; and managing subawards, including planning, budgeting, reporting, and compliance.

**Table 1. Illustrative Learning Goals for Youth Excel Research-to-Change activities**:

- We need to know how government institutions in our community address cases of gender violence so that we can establish a comprehensive process of care, service provision, and ethical referral of cases.
- We need to know if parents in our community are supportive of girls and boys participating in our activities, so that we can engage all youth in productive activities and away from gang violence.
- We need to know when and to what extent youth can access the internet, so that we can plan our program to overcome access barriers.
- We need to know the opportunities, barriers, and challenges that young women face in civic participation spaces, so that we can respond to their specific needs.
- We need to know how life skills acquisition changes quality of life and mental health outcomes for LGBTQI+ youth, so that we can influence key stakeholders involved in mental health to better inform health policies and programs.

**You can plan to integrate research and learning tools into your activities using the following recommendations:**

<u>Month 1:</u> Onboarding and Planning for Gender, Inclusion, Protection, and Research-to-Change

In the first month of the project, you will conduct a rapid intersectional gender and protection analysis of the local context where your project works, building off of your previous assessments and experiences. You will draw from what you learn in your gender and protection analysis, decide on your learning goal, and create a research-to-change plan to collect data on your activities throughout the project. *In the application, you will share your contextual knowledge and what you would like to learn.*

In addition, you will set a measurable, attainable capacity development goal for your organization. *In the application, you will select an initial capacity development interest area from a list of areas that Youth Excel can support.*

<u>Months 2-5:</u> (length depends on duration of your activity): Implementation, Research, and Learning

In the second month of the project and beyond, you will implement your activities to build social cohesion. You will use and finetune strategies to ensure inclusion and protection of diverse youth, using your findings, plan, and budget resources. As you implement your activities, you will collect and analyze data following your research-to-change plan. You are encouraged to conduct learning workshops with your stakeholders, and use your findings to make decisions about your program and conduct outreach and advocacy.

You will access Youth Excel support for self-driven capacity strengthening in your chosen focus area and measure how your performance improves during the project.

<u>Final Month:</u> Knowledge Mobilization

In the final month of the project, you will create a 'data story' and package your learning into a knowledge product. You are encouraged to conduct dissemination workshops to share your knowledge product with local and global stakeholders to influence the development and learning agenda.

## 4. Who can apply to the grant competition?

The grant competition is open to **local, registered organizations led by youth under 35 years, including new recipients of USAID funding,** that meet the following minimum criteria and share Youth Excel objectives are eligible to apply. Organizations led by and serving youth from marginalized groups, which may include age, gender, disability, ethnicity, and other identities, are encouraged to apply. The grant competition is not restricted to certain technical sectors or to research organizations.

Each award will be made to a single recipient organization. An organization may not pass through award funding to other organizations, due to the small simplified nature of grant competition awards. (However, an organization may (and is encouraged to) collaborate with other organizations through the implementation of their activity and research.)

> **If you would like to apply, but your organization is not registered:** Young leaders and groups who would like to apply for grant competition funding are encouraged to identify an eligible organization to administer the award from Youth Excel. Young leaders and groups may form memoranda of understanding with the eligible organization to ensure their inclusion in project governance and fund management structures. Youth implementing the activity and research may sign individual compensation agreements with the eligible organization to receive funding from the award.

| Eligible | Not Eligible |
|---|---|
| ✓ Legally registered, local organization in the country of activity implementation: <br> • Is legally organized under the laws of [country of activity implementation]; <br> • Has its principal place of business or operations in [country of activity implementation]; <br> • Is majority-owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of [country of activity implementation]; <br> • Is managed by a governing body, the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents of [country of activity implementation]. | ✗ Unregistered organization, group, or individual <br> ✗ International organization <br> ✗ Consortium of multiple organizations |
| ✓ Non-governmental or private organization of any legal type | ✗ Government institutions or political parties |

✓ Youth-led organization whose Chief Executive Officer or other leaders are under the age of 35, and whose Board of Directors are predominantly under the age of 35.

✓ Eligible to accept and receive USAID funding:
- Able to sign ADS 303mav Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient

✗ Not eligible due to appearance on certain watchlists or exclusions from receiving U.S. Government funding:
- Appears on Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control list
- Has active exclusions in the System for Award Management
- Appears on United Nations Security Designation list
- Appears on U.S. Government suspended or debarred list

✗ Has conflict of interest

## 5. What type of grants are available?

- **Purpose:** using "research-to-change" (implementation research) to strengthen local, youth-led, inclusive solutions and advocacy for advancing peace and security through local-level social cohesion
- **Location:** countries where USAID has presence around the globe, *subject to mission concurrence.* At least 1 award is anticipated in each of 5 global regions as follows:
  - **Africa:** Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
  - **Asia:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Laos, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan, Vietnam.
  - **Europe and Eurasia:** Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine.
  - **Latin America and the Caribbean:** Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Eastern and Southern Caribbean, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru.
  - **Middle East and North Africa:** Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, West Bank and Gaza.

- **Number:** 5-8. *Subject to the availability of funds, Youth Excel reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.*
- **Type:** Fixed amount subaward. Payments set based on the negotiated budget will be made upon successful completion of project milestones. *ADS Reference 303mat Mandatory Standard Provisions for Fixed Amount Awards to Non-Governmental Organizations apply.*
- **Amount:** USD $7,000 - $10,000. Applicants can propose the amount required for project implementation within this range. A total funding pool of USD $50,000 - $55,000 is allocated for this grant competition. *Cost share is not required.*
- **Start:** August 2022.
- **Length:** 3-6 months.

## 6. What types of costs can you request for grant competition funding?

You can cost your activities and research and learning using the following recommendations for the 3-6 month project timeframe and $7,000-10,000 funding range. IREX will assess and negotiate cost allowability, realism, and effectiveness in alignment with the workplan (See Sections 2 and 3).

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| **Youth leadership of overall project, activities, and research and learning:** Your organization is encouraged to identify 2 youth to serve as Project Lead/Manager and Research Lead/Manager coordinating the overall project, plus other administration, logistics, data, and communications support for your specific project needs. | |
| **Cost Recommendations:** compensation, supplies, communications and transportation costs for youth leading the project. Compensation for the time of youth leading the project may be salaries/benefits, consulting fees, internship or other stipends. | |

| **Month 1: Onboarding and Planning for Gender, Inclusion, Protection, and Research-to-Change** | |
|---|---|
| **Rapid intersectional gender and protection analysis** of the local context where your project works. This is a youth-led, desk-based research activity, with light data collection to fill gaps and contextualize data. Your organization is encouraged to identify 2 youth to serve as researchers, who could be your research and project leads/managers or other youth recruited to do the assessment with support from your research lead/manager. | **Cost recommendations:** compensation, phone/internet data, other supplies, 2-3 local travel days depending on context, and 2-3 internal meetings for 2 youth researchers. |
| A **learning goal** and **research-to-change plan** linked to your activities. | **Cost recommendations:** compensation for time of the project and research leads/managers |

| **Months 2 through 5: (length depends on duration of your activity): Implementation, Research, and Learning** | |
|---|---|
| **Activities to build social cohesion.** You may plan new activities that Youth Excel will fund or describe ongoing activities that are already funded by another donor. | **Cost recommendations:** <br>• Support for participants to engage in activities, which may include communications and transportation reimbursements and supplies. <br>• Compensation for activity facilitators, who could be your project lead/manager or others. |
| **Inclusion and protection strategies** for diverse youth participating in the project. | **Cost recommendations:** <br>• Compensation for protection focal point, who could be your project or research lead/manager or another team member, for approximately 1 day per week dedicated to protection. <br>• Flexible funding pool of up to $500 for inclusion and protection needs and capacity building. |
| **Data collection for research-to-change and learning** throughout your activities. | **Cost recommendations:** <br>• Compensation, phone/internet data, and 2-3 local travel days per month depending on context, data collection supplies, for your research lead/manager and others. <br>• 2-3 sessions with project team and participants for learning and adaptation. |
| **Capacity strengthening** in identified priority area through self-led approaches and Youth Excel support. | **Cost recommendations:** <br>• Compensation for team members. <br>• You may budget for capacity strengthening resources related to your priority area. IREX will review with you what type of financial support and/or direct technical support and other resources that Youth Excel can provide. |

| **Final Month: Knowledge Mobilization** | |
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| **Knowledge product** and **knowledge mobilization efforts** | **Cost recommendations:** <br>• Compensation for the time of the project and research leads/managers and communications support. <br>• Material development depending on type of knowledge product. <br>• Learning and dissemination workshop with local stakeholders. |

**Cost Restrictions: the grant competition <u>cannot fund</u> the following types of costs:**

- ✘ International travel
- ✘ Subawards to other organizations
- ✘ Organizational costs, such as executive and administrative salaries, rent and utilities, and bank fees. However, you may request 10% of the budget as Youth Excel's contribution to your organizational costs. *All organizations are eligible for the standard 10% de minimis indirect cost rate of modified total direct costs per 2 CFR 200.414(f), or may provide a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the U.S. Government.*
- ✘ Profits and fees
- ✘ Limitations on equipment/supplies
  - o Items with a unit cost of $5,000 or more and a useful lifespan of 1 year or more are defined as **"equipment"** and **will not be funded** by this grant competition.
  - o Other items may be classified as **"supplies"** and **may be funded up to a total of $2,000** by this grant competition. Computing devices may be included as supplies.
  - o *Ineligible and restricted commodities listed below, including motor vehicles, will not be funded by this grant competition, regardless of their cost and classification as supplies or equipment.*
- ✘ Other cost restrictions and prohibitions in accordance with ADS Reference 303mat Mandatory Standard Provisions for Fixed Amount Awards to Non-Governmental Organizations and other applicable regulations.
  - o Ineligible commodities: military equipment, surveillance equipment, commodities or equipment for the support of police or other law enforcement activities, abortion equipment and services, luxury goods, gambling equipment, weather modification equipment.
  - o Restricted commodities: agricultural commodities, motor vehicles, pharmaceuticals, contraceptives and condoms, pesticides, used equipment, fertilizer.
  - o Unallowable costs per 2 CFR 200 Subpart E: including, but not limited to, alcoholic beverages, bad debts, contributions and donations, fines and penalties, fundraising, lobbying, and other costs that are not allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the project.

## 7. How can you apply to the grant competition?

Provide responses in English to the application questions in Annex I and Attachments I. Planning and Costing Tool using the template provided (Excel); II. Signed Letter of Support for your organization from a local partner or stakeholder; and III. Registration Certificate.

Submit application online by **June 6, 2022 at 23:59 GMT** here:
https://irexorg.formstack.com/forms/fy22_youth_excel_grant_competition_03_application

*IREX reserves the right to accept late and incomplete applications when it is in the best interest of Youth Excel objectives; otherwise, late and incomplete applications will be automatically disqualified.*

## 8. How will grant competition winners be selected to receive funding?

**Selection Criteria:** applications will be holistically reviewed and scored on the following 5 equally weighted factors:

1. **Responsiveness:** approach and value for youth priorities related to the grant competition theme and region.
2. **Feasibility:** understanding of requirements and proven capacity to successfully implement.
3. **Impact:** potential to advance positive youth development outcomes and learning.
4. **Protection:** awareness of potential risks for participating youth and consideration of mitigation strategies.
5. **Inclusion:** commitment to diversity and inclusion, especially regarding work with and/or support to vulnerable or marginalized groups such as girls and women, youth with disabilities, youth from ethnic or religious minorities, and other identities.

Please refer to the rubric that guides the assessment of the questions on the application in Annex 1.

**Selection Process:** applications will be reviewed by Youth Excel members, include youth from around the world, with diverse perspectives and a range of regional, technical, and grant expertise. In addition, applicants can opt into a participatory selection process to receive peer feedback and influence decision-making. Youth Excel will take measures to respect confidentiality of applicants' intellectual property and prevent conflict of interest[2] and other biases[3] in the selection process.

1. **Eligibility screening:** An IREX grants team will conduct an initial review of the applications, based on the following eligibility requirements, and disqualify applications that are not eligible for consideration.
   - Does application satisfy the basic parameters of the grant competition? [Section 3]
   - Does application fulfill the eligibility criteria? [Section 4]
   - Is application complete and submitted on time? [Refer to Section 5]

2. **Shortlisting:**
   a. **Shortlisting:** An IREX technical team will conduct merit review of all eligible applications, based on the selection criteria.

   b. **Participatory selection:** Simultaneously, eligible applicants will be invited to an optional peer review process and provide constructive feedback on each other's applications, based on the selection criteria.

   The purpose of Youth Excel's participatory selection approach is to include those people who are most impacted in decision-making to strengthen both the processes

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[2] Real or apparent conflicts of interests of reviewers with organizations whose applications are under review are defined as "if the reviewer, or that person's spouse, partner, child, relative, or close friend works for, or is applying to work for, or has a financial interest, including being an unpaid member of a Board of Directors, in any applicant organization under review." Members of the committee shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value.

[3] Youth Excel uses anti-bias materials from Chicago Beyond: https://www.leverforchange.org/library/resource-library/recognizing-bias-unleash-impact/

and outcomes, and to build the foundation for open collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst partners and stakeholders from the outset of the grant competition.

All applicants will still receive full, independent consideration from the shortlisting team and be eligible to advance, with no negative impact from opting out of the participatory selection process or receiving unfavorable participatory selection feedback.

c. **Adjustment of shortlist using participatory selection feedback:** After completing full, independent review of all eligible applications, the shortlisting team will review participatory selection feedback and adjust the shortlist to ensure inclusion of applications most highly rated by applicants.

3. **Finalist Selection:** The Youth Excel review panel, comprised of IREX and partner staff, Global Youth Advisory Council members and other youth representatives, and USAID staff will use the selection criteria to select finalist(s) from each of five global regions.

*Notifications to all applicants will be made to the point of contact who submitted the application. The selection of an application in accordance with these established criteria and processes does not guarantee an award. Awards are contingent on successful workplan-budget negotiations, risk assessment, and IREX and USAID approval.*

## Annex 1. Application Template

A complete application includes responses to the following questions in English and required attachments. An asterick (*) indicates that a response is mandatory; others are optional.

Required attachments include:

1. Planning and costing tool using the template provided. (Attachment 1, Excel)
2. Signed Letter of support for your organization from a local partner or stakeholder.
3. Your organization's local registration certificate.

You may draft responses in a Word document or directly in the online form, which enables you to save and resume your work as you go. You must submit your responses and attachments online here: https://irexorg.formstack.com/forms/fy22_youth_excel_grant_competition_03_application

### A. Your Organization:

Please provide the following information about your organization:

1. What is your organization's name?* (Short answer)

2. Required: is your organization locally based in an eligible country?* Please select from the dropdown list.

3. Required: is your organization legally registered in your country?* This will be verified by your local registration certificate provided in Attachment 3.
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

4. Required: is your organization predominantly led by youth under the age of 35 years?*
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

5. Not required: has your organization ever received donor funding?* Please note that organizations who have or have not received donor funding are eligible.
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

   If yes:
   a. What is the approximate total amount of funding in USD that your organization has received in the past year? (Number)
   b. Not required: has your organization ever received USAID funding? Please note that organizations who have or have not received USAID funding are eligible.
      - ☐ Yes
      - ☐ No

6.  Please provide links to your organization's website and social media pages if available. (Short answer)

7.  Please provide a brief description of your organization in the style of a Tweet.* (280 characters)

    Optional: you may attach an image to accompany the brief description of your organization in the style of a Tweet. (JPG, GIF, or PNG up to 25 MB)

8.  What is/are the main youth demographic(s) that your organization focuses on?* Please choose all that apply.
    - ☐ Young Women
    - ☐ Young Men
    - ☐ Adolescent Girls
    - ☐ Adolescent Boys
    - ☐ Youth with Disabilities
    - ☐ Youth from Indigenous Populations
    - ☐ Youth from Marginalized Ethnic Group
    - ☐ Youth from Marginalized Religious Group
    - ☐ Youth Identifying as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI+)
    - ☐ Youth Affected by Crisis or Conflict
    - ☐ Youth Living with HIV/AIDS
    - ☐ Other: Please specify.

    Please specify the age range(s) and group(s).* (Short answer)

9.  What is the approximate total number of youth participants that your organization has supported in the past year, across all of your work?* (Number)

    Please provide breakdown by gender identity if available.
    - ☐ Female: (number)
    - ☐ Male: (number)
    - ☐ Non-binary: (number)
    - ☐ Choose not to disclose: (number)

10. What are the primary sectors that your organization currently focuses on?* Please choose all that apply. Please note that organizations working in any sector are eligible.
    - ☐ Youth economic opportunity/youth livelihoods/employment
    - ☐ Gender, inclusion, equity & girls/women's equality
    - ☐ Youth mental health & psychosocial support
    - ☐ Youth digital leadership, technology & innovation
    - ☐ Youth civic or political engagement & advocacy

![IREX] ![Afrika Youth Movement] ![Ashoka youth venture] ![Root Change] ![Search for Common Ground] ![abaad] ![The Big Nation] ![TechTribes] ![College of Education + Human Development University of Minnesota] ![UNOY Peacebuilders]

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- ☐ Youth peacebuilding
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Reproductive Health
- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Environment and Climate Change
- ☐ Other: Please specify.

11. How do youth, including members of marginalized groups, participate in the leadership of your organization and programming?* (500 characters)

12. Please describe the capacities and past experiences of your organization and its leaders and members in any of the following areas: supporting local-level social cohesion, including diverse youth in your activities in a safe way, and learning and advocating for change. Please mention specific projects, trainings, networks, and other initiatives that your organization and its leaders and members have been involved in.* (1500 characters)

13. Which 1-2 capacity development area(s) would your organization and its leaders and members like to prioritize for strengthening with Youth Excel technical assistance?* Please choose 1-2 areas..
    a. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion and Protection
    b. Research-to-Change
    c. Knowledge Mobilization
    d. Grant Management
    e. Other: Please specify.

    Please describe why the area(s) is/are important for your organization and project.* (500 characters)

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**Rubric of questions that reviewers will use to assess your leadership, capacities and experiences:**

- Does the applicant promote meaningful participation of diverse youth in the management and work of the organization?
- Does the applicant demonstrate capacities and specific experiences related to the theme and technical approaches?
- Does the applicant show how their relevant capacities and experiences will enable them to successfully implement the proposed project within the timeframe and funding amount?
- Do the identified capacity development area(s) link to the applicant's priorities and build off the applicant's current capacities in order to enhance their performance?

# B. Your Project

Please design your project using the RFA guidance and the planning and costing tool in the template provided (Attachment 1, Excel) and provide the following information:

1. What is the <u>title</u> of your project?*

2. Please provide a <u>brief description</u> of your project in the style of a Tweet.* (280 characters; optional image)

   Optional: you may attach an image to accompany the brief description of your project in the style of a Tweet. (JPG, GIF, or PNG up to 25 MB)

3. What is the <u>goal</u> of your project? How will it advance peace and security through local-level social cohesion?* (500 characters)

   Optional: does your project address any of the following subthemes?

   - ☐ Shifting to the Digital World
   - ☐ Countering Mis/Disinformation and Manipulative Information
   - ☐ Combatting Gender-Based Violence
   - ☐ Improving Psychosocial Support and Wellbeing
   - ☐ Other:

4. What is the total <u>timeframe</u> of your project between 3-6 months?* *Please remember to include 1 month at the beginning and 1 month at the end for research and learning tools and approaches, as described in Section 3. Your social cohesion activities and implementation research may last from 1-4 months. The total project may last 3-6 months (first month + 1-4 months of activitivies and implementation research+ final month). (Number)*

5. <u>Solution</u>: Please describe 1-3 main activities that you will do to advance peace and security through local-level social cohesion from your planning and costing tool.*

   a. Are you requesting Youth Excel funding for these activities, or do you have other existing funding for these activities?* *If you have existing funding, your Youth Excel budget will cover your research and learning activities.*

   b. For each activity: What is the activity and how will it help accomplish your goal?* (500 characters)

**Rubric of questions that reviewers will use to assess your <u>solution:</u>**

- Is the project goal linked to the theme?
- Is the project goal specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based?
- Do the project activities support the project goal?
- Is the approach responsive to youth priorities and valuable for positive youth development?
- Are the project activities feasible and aligned with the RFA guidance and the applicant's capacities and experiences?

6. <u>Inclusion and Protection</u>: Please describe the people who will participate in your project and the local context.
   a. Who are the youth, including members from marginalized groups, who will lead and participate in your project?* (500 characters)
   b. Where will your project work within your country? What are key power dynamics, norms, policies and laws in your project's context?* (500 characters)
   c. What are key risks to the physical, psychosocial, and digital wellbeing and safety of youth participants, based on their intersectional identities in your project's local context?* (500 characters)
   d. How will you ensure inclusion and protection of youth in your project's context?* (500 characters)
   e. Through Youth Excel's intersectional gender and protection analysis tools, what would you like to learn in order to strengthen inclusion and protection of youth in your project's context?* (100 characters)

**Rubric of questions that reviewers will use to assess your <u>inclusion and protection approach:</u>**

- Does the applicant promote meaningful participation of diverse youth in the project?
- Is the project inclusive and contextualized based on the assets, needs, interests and opportunities of diverse youth?
- Does applicant demonstrate understanding of the risks and mitigation measures to ensure the project does no more harm?
- Does applicant identify a learning interest about inclusion and protection that is relevant to the project?

7. <u>Research-to-Change and Learning:</u> Please describe the data and learning that you will do on your activities to improve your programming and advocacy.
   a. What is the learning goal that you propose for your project?* *Please refer to the examples in the Section 3 of the RFA guidance. Note that you will update and adapt this learning goal before starting your Research-to-Change.* (100 characters; fill in the blank)

      "We need to know _____ [information you want to learn]
      So that we can _____[decision you would like to make using this information]"

   b. How can you use your learning to strengthen the effectiveness and inclusiveness of your project activities?* (500 characters)
   c. What type of knowledge product would you like to create?* (250 characters)
   d. How can you use your knowledge product influence local decision-makers?* (250 characters)

8. Please provide the total funding amount in USD between $7,000 to $10,000 for the resources that you will need to do the project from your planning and costing tool.* (Number)

> **Rubric of questions that reviewers will use to assess your <u>research-to-change and learning approach</u>:**
>
> - Is the proposed learning goal clearly stated, linked to decision-making priorities for the program, and able to inform program approaches for better outcomes?
> - Is the proposed knowledge product clearly identified, linked to decision-making priorities for the target audience, and have potential to lead to stakeholder commitment and action?

## C. Attachments

1. Please upload your planning and costing tool using the template provided.* (Excel)
2. Please upload a signed letter of support for your organization from a local partner or stakeholder. *
3. Please upload your organization's local registration certificate.*

## D. Certifications

Optional: I authorize IREX to share application responses publicly for the purposes of the participatory selection process. Note: if your application contains any confidential or proprietary information or you do not wish to join the optional participatory selection process for any reason, you are not required to give consent. Consent is required for the participatory selection process. You may opt out of the participatory selection process at any time.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Required: As an authorized signatory of the applicant organization, I certify that the information provided is complete and accurate, to the best of my knowledge.  By signing this application, I authorize IREX to verify information. Any willful false statements in this application will be grounds for disqualification of application or termination of grant if issued.

Signature:
Your name (person submitting the application):
Your role with the applicant organization:
Your email: