



Frequently Asked Hosting Questions 2017

1. Is a “leader” the same thing as an “intern”?
 2. What are the programming requirements for hosting a leader?
 3. Why do leaders only work 35 hours/week?
 4. What is the Online Community Leadership Institute (CLI)?
 5. What exactly are the responsibilities of the host organization?
 7. Is the host responsible for securing housing for the leader?
 8. How much professional experience do leaders have?
 9. Do leaders speak English?
 10. Can a host choose where their leader comes from?
 11. Can an organization host more than one leader?
 12. Will it cost the organization anything?
 13. How are leaders selected for the program?
 14. Are host organizations involved in the selection process?
 15. What is the timeline for hosting a leader?
 16. What is the difference between a host supervisor and community mentor? And can the same individual take on both of these roles?
 17. Does the community mentor need to work for the host organization?
 18. Can host supervisors and community mentors participate in the online CLI courses as well?
 19. Should my organization host a leader?
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1. Is a “leader” the same thing as an “intern”?

No, a Community Solutions leader is a community development professional with at least two years of experience, and Community Solutions leaders have an average of six years of experience. They are seasoned professionals who are ready and able to take on projects and roles that go beyond the capacity of an intern. Past leaders have worked on such projects as: writing an organization’s strategic plan, developing new programming, leading existing projects and programs, working on personnel management plans, and developing a social media presence and framework, among others.

2. What are the programming requirements for hosting a leader?

Host organizations must be U.S.-based organizations that are actively engaged in community development projects, preferably domestically and in the following thematic areas: 1) Transparency & Accountability; 2) Tolerance & Conflict Resolution; 3) Environmental Issues; and, 4) Women & Gender Issues. Organization types can include community-based non-profit or other grassroots organizations, government offices or legislative bodies, among others.

Host organizations must be willing and able to host, mentor and guide Community Solutions Program leaders for the entire four months that they are placed at the organization. Host organizations will be asked to provide:

- a 35 hour/week workload; a host supervisor within the organization who regularly meets with the leader, oversees his/her workload, and mentors the leader in career development, and shares best practices in his/her area of expertise ;
- a community mentor who can provide cross-cultural support, guidance on housing and introductions to community members, sites and groups outside of the office;
- experiential learning and networking opportunities; a work space with computer and internet access; and
- collaboration and follow-on community development project design support .

3. Why do leaders only work 35 hours/week?

While leaders are working with their host organizations, they are also participating in intensive online training in organizational management and leadership skills, through the Online Community Leadership Institute (CLI). Because of the intensive nature of these courses, IREX requires host organizations to set aside five hours per week when leaders can participate in live lectures, group assignments, and other requirements of the Online CLI.

4. What is the Online Community Leadership Institute (CLI)?

The Online CLI is an innovative online platform developed and run by IREX in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State that provides up to 500 hours of online instruction in core leadership areas: personal leadership planning and styles, strategic planning, ethical leadership, communications and networking, motivational leadership, conflict management, and cross-cultural communication. IREX recruits experts in each of these fields to lead weekly courses that include outside reading, a live lecture, and a course assignment. The online CLI is an intensive program in leadership and organizational management that requires significant effort on the part of the Community Solutions leader. IREX also invites host supervisors to contribute to leaders' learning on the online CLI by leading guest lectures and/or discussions on topics of their expertise.

5. What exactly are the responsibilities of the host organization?

Host organizations play a crucial role in the success of the Community Solutions Program. Host organizations are where leaders observe organizational leadership in action on a daily basis, and where they put into practice what they learn through the Online Community Leadership Institute. Below is further information about what is required of host organizations that are selected to host Community Solutions Program leaders.

JUNE – AUGUST: PREPARATION

Background Information: After signing the terms & conditions agreement, the host supervisor will send the leader important background documents about the host organization, including but not limited to: policy or human resource manuals, relevant program documents, and any documents deemed important for adjusting to the host organization and to develop necessary background knowledge on assigned projects.

Host Orientation: Before the leaders arrive in the U.S., all host supervisors and community mentors are required to participate in a virtual host orientation and cross-cultural training. This will ensure that everyone starts the fellowship with the same expectations and understanding of the process.

Scope of Work: IREX will provide all host supervisors with guiding questions to start the conversation with the leader around his/her scope of work and expectations during the fellowship period. IREX strongly encourages hosts to conduct these conversations via Skype or over the phone, to ensure that the process is collaborative. A draft scope of work will be due to IREX prior to the leader's arrival to the U.S.

AUGUST – DECEMBER: U.S.-BASED FELLOWSHIP

Logistics: Host organizations will provide office space (including a computer with internet, and access to telephone, fax, printer and other office supplies that are standard within the organization), a supervisor within the organization, and a community mentor who can give guidance on finding housing and introduce the leader to life in the wider community.

Work Plan: Upon arriving at the host organization, the host supervisor and the leader work together to create a detailed work plan that includes activities mentioned in the scope of work, as well as incorporating the leader's professional goals and time to develop and review the follow-on project. It is important that any deliverables and deadlines are specifically laid out in the work plan, including interim deadlines on larger projects. The work plan should be submitted to IREX for feedback, recommendations and final approval.

Training Opportunities: Host organization representatives may also be invited to lead or participate in training sessions and discussions throughout the program.

JANUARY – JUNE 2018: FOLLOW-ON PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Follow-on Projects: In addition to the framework described above, host organizations will assist leaders in further developing and refining the follow-on community development projects proposed in their program applications. After leaders depart for their home countries, host organizations will continue to provide mentorship and expertise while leaders are implementing their follow-on projects in their home countries; IREX does not require that host organizations contribute financially to the leader's follow-on project. Host organization representatives will also have the opportunity to apply for the *Partnering for Stronger Communities Travel Grants Program*, in which a member of the host organization will travel to his/her leader's home community for two weeks to assist in the implementation of the leader's follow-on project.

6. Is the host responsible for securing housing for the leader?

While it is ultimately the responsibility of the Community Solutions leader to secure their own housing, leaders will need substantial guidance and support in this process. It is the responsibility of the host appointed community mentor to assist the leader in his/her search for suitable, safe, accessible and cost effective housing. IREX encourages host organizations and community mentors to help the leader to start the search before they arrive. In some cases community mentors may spend several hours during the first week visiting potential apartments in the area with the leader.

7. How much professional experience do leaders have?

All Community Solutions Program leaders have a minimum of two years of professional experience in their fields; for the past two years, Community Solutions leaders averaged six years of experience. Many leaders already hold leadership positions in their organizations and will be in a position to substantially contribute to, as well as learn from, the host organization.

8. Do leaders speak English?

Yes, all application materials are written in English, and all interviews are conducted in English. Also, all applicants take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or an equivalent exam, to ensure their English proficiency allows for contributing to a U.S. work environment.

9. Can a host choose where their leader comes from?

Host organizations have the opportunity to state their regional and country preferences on their [Partner Interest Form](#), but ultimately Community Solutions leaders are matched with host organizations that most closely match their background and interests and can provide the necessary expertise and guidance for the leader's follow-on project.

10. Can an organization host more than one leader?

Yes. If an organization has the interest and capacity to effectively support and engage multiple leaders, IREX will consider placing two leaders at that organization. To be considered for multiple leader placements, the host organization must be ready to provide a unique host supervisor and community mentor for each leader, and have specific and separate projects and scopes of work in mind for each.

11. Will it cost the organization anything?

Community Solutions leaders are fully sponsored through the Community Solutions Program, a program of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and implemented by IREX. Travel costs to and from the fellows' home countries to their host organizations in the U.S. are fully covered and fellows are provided with funds to cover room, board and incidentals. Leaders are also covered under the U.S. Department of State's accident and sickness program.

Host organizations are asked to provide office space (including a computer with internet, and access to telephone, fax, printer and other office supplies that are standard within the organization) for leaders, a supervisor within the organization, and a community mentor who can give guidance on finding housing and living and working in their community. Host organizations will also provide mentoring to the leader while they implement their follow-on community development project from January – June 2018.

12. How are leaders selected for the program?

Competition for the program is merit-based and open to community leaders, ages 25-38, who currently engage in community projects in their home countries and have a minimum of two years of professional experience. For the 2017 program, over 2500 eligible applications were read and scored by an independent panel of judges, from which over 200 semi-finalists were passed to an outside interview panel and tested for English proficiency. IREX verifies that all applicants are eligible and conducts reference checks for finalists and alternates, ensuring that all participants are professional, talented and driven community leaders.

13. Are host organizations involved in the selection process?

Host organizations are not involved in the selection process of program finalists and alternates. Host organizations will be provided with a profile, resume and application materials of their proposed leader and are encouraged to conduct at least one Skype-based interview with the leader

prior to signing a Terms and Conditions Agreement with IREX to ensure that the host is receiving a fellow that is the right match for their organization.

14. What is the timeline for hosting a leader?

Leaders will arrive in Washington, DC in mid-August 2017 and will attend a four-day orientation. Leaders will then travel to their host organizations, where they will work for four months before returning to DC for a close of program workshop and then returning to their home countries. The program timeline is as follows (includes approximate dates only):

August, 2017 – Leaders arrive at host organizations

August – December, 2017 – Leaders work at host organizations

December, 2017 – Leaders depart host organizations for closing workshop in DC

December, 2017 – Leaders return to their home countries

January – June, 2018 – Leaders work on follow-on projects with mentoring from host organizations

15. What is the difference between a host supervisor and community mentor? And can the same individual take on both of these roles?

Host organizations assign two separate individuals to fulfill the roles of host supervisor and community mentor. A host supervisor should be an employee of the host organization who will introduce the leader to the organization (staff, policies, general background knowledge, etc.), and oversee the work of the leader during his/her four months at the host organization. He/she also must have the flexibility to work closely with the leader throughout this time period, providing regular check-in meetings, general work-related support, guidance and mentorship as needed. The community mentor, on the other hand, is a person who will provide general cultural and logistical support that the leader will need outside of the workplace. A community mentor may also be affiliated with the host organization, but can be an individual outside the organization, as well. Examples of community mentor activities include helping the leader find housing, setting up a U.S. bank account, learning the public transportation system, and discovering important landmarks, like local supermarkets, libraries, museums, etc.

16. Does the community mentor need to work for the host organization?

No. Community mentors can be any individual within the host organization or larger community who can fulfill the responsibilities, including: helping the leader find housing, learning the public transportation system, discovering important landmarks, like local supermarkets, libraries, museums, etc., and finding opportunities for cross-cultural exchange. Community mentors in the past have included: peers within the host organization, volunteers with the host organization, partners of the host organization, outside volunteers who are interested in cross-cultural exchange.

17. Can host supervisors and community mentors participate in the online CLI courses as well?

For the 2017 Community Solutions Program, IREX will open up certain parts of the Community Leadership Institute for general participation. Host supervisors and community mentors will be able to view the leaders' courses and course materials, while participation in live sessions and assignments will be limited to the 2017 leaders.