COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS PROGRAM 2015 – 2016 APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 11:59 AM EDT, MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2014

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Community Solutions Program is a professional development program for the best and brightest global community leaders working in Transparency and Accountability; Tolerance and Conflict Resolution; Environmental Issues; and, Women and Gender Issues. Up to sixty-five eligible individuals will be selected to receive the 2015-2016 Community Solutions Program fellowship and will participate in:

- **A Four-month U.S. Fellowship**: Leaders are placed in U.S. community-based, non-profit or government offices across the U.S. where they work with American community leaders.
- **Community Leadership Institute (CLI)**: Leaders will develop practical leadership and organizational management skills through online and in-person training.
- **Follow-on Projects**: Leaders, in partnership with their U.S. host organizations, will develop follow-on community development projects or initiatives to be completed upon return to their home countries.

FINANCIAL PROVISIONS OF THE FELLOWSHIP

- J-1 visa support;
- Round-trip travel from participant’s home city to the U.S.;
- Accident and sickness insurance; and,
- Living allowance to cover housing, meals and incidentals.

TECHNICAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Candidates will be considered without respect to race, color, religion, national origin, or gender. Persons with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply. Competition for the Community Solutions Program is merit-based and open to community leaders, ages 25-38 at the time of application, who meet the following criteria:

- Is from a participating country (U.S. citizens, permanent residents of the U.S., and individuals who have applied for U.S. permanent residency in the past three years are not eligible for this program);
- Is currently living and working in his/her home country (Individuals participating in academic, training or research programs in the United States at the time of application and individuals residing or working outside their home countries at the time of application are not eligible for this program);
- Is currently working on a community project or initiative in his/her home country; and, has at least two years of community development experience at the time of application;
- Is able to begin the program in the United States in 2015, and is committed to returning to his/her home country for a period of two years after completion of the program;
- Is able to receive a U.S. J-1 visa (Individuals who have participated in an exchange visitor program sponsored or funded by the U.S. Government who have not fulfilled their two-year home residency requirement by the time of application are not eligible for this program); and,
- Is proficient in spoken and written English at the time of application.
Current IREX employees and consultants and their immediate family members (spouses, parents, children, and siblings) are not eligible to apply for any IREX-implemented grant programs, either as individuals or as the responsible party representing an institutional applicant.

The U.S. Department of State and IREX reserve the right to verify all of the information included in the application. In the event that there is a discrepancy, or information is found to be false, the application will immediately be declared invalid and the applicant ineligible.

Under the terms of the grant and the laws governing the J-1 visa required for participation in the Community Solutions Program, leaders must return to their home country upon completion of the program for a period of at least two years. Leaders are not eligible for visa extensions under any circumstances.

Applications not meeting the above technical eligibility requirements will not be forwarded to the selection committee.

**COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS PROGRAM TIMELINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 27, 2014</td>
<td>Community Solutions Program application deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td>November –December 2014</td>
<td>Applications reviewed by selection committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2015</td>
<td>Semifinalists interview and take the TOEFL exam as needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>February-March 2015</td>
<td>Finalists and alternates notified</td>
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<tr>
<td>May-June 2015</td>
<td>Pre-departure orientation and preparation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late July/Early August 2015</td>
<td>All participants depart their home countries for the U.S.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2015</td>
<td>Participants return to their home countries and begin follow-on projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>January-June 2016</td>
<td>Alumni complete follow-on projects in collaboration with U.S. hosts</td>
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**SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA**

The Community Solutions Program is conducted as a merit-based open competition. After the deadline, all eligible applications will be reviewed by a selection panel. Chosen semi-finalists will be interviewed by a panel and will take an English language exam or submit existing TOEFL or IELTS scores. All applicants will be notified of their status by spring 2015.

Selection panels will use the following criteria to evaluate applications (not in order of importance):

- Working/volunteering on substantive community projects for non-profits, government offices, or community-based organizations; preference will be given to applicants of local organizations.
- Knowledge of and experience in one or more of the four CSP fellowship themes (Women and Gender Issues, Transparency and Accountability, Tolerance and Conflict Resolution, and Environmental Issues);
- Leadership experience and potential;
- Professional and program goals;
- Follow-on project idea;
- Intercultural/English language skills;
- Preference will be given to individuals with four (4) months or more academic exchange or professional training experience in the United States.
GENERAL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

- Submit completed Community Solutions Program online application (paper applications will not be accepted), and all additional required documents (see below) by the stated deadline.
- Answer all questions on the application in English.
- Include your full, legal name, including family name (surname) and given (first) name as spelled on your international passport (if available). Do not translate name spellings.
- Include complete contact information (including index codes for all addresses and city/country codes for all phone and fax numbers). Do not translate street or city names into English, only into the English alphabet.
- Spaces marked with a red asterisk must be completed. If a required question does not apply to you, enter N/A (not applicable).

ADDITIONAL REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

In addition to the completed program application, applicants must submit the following documents through our online application system (all documents must be in English. Application materials submitted in any language other than English will not be accepted):

- Current resume or curriculum vitae
- One letter of recommendation from your employer, community organization, or professional peer in your field. Letter must be signed and on organizational letterhead (if available). Letters of recommendation written by the applicant himself/herself will not be accepted.

PROFESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP THEMES

Applicants must select ONE professional theme from the list below that he/she intends to focus on while in the U.S.

1) Transparency and Accountability
Illustrative topics within this professional theme include: civil society; grassroots democracy; good governance; anti-corruption; transparency; accountability; free and fair elections; technology and social media for transparency; and, volunteerism.

2) Tolerance and Conflict Resolution
Illustrative topics within this professional theme include: tolerance; multi-culturalism; discrimination; conflict resolution; negotiation; compromise; fair treatment of minority populations; civil rights and responsibilities; crisis response tools; complex emergencies and disasters; technology and social media for conflict resolution; and LGBT rights.

3) Environmental Issues
Illustrative topics within this professional theme include: food security; water and resource management; supporting food supply at local, regional and national levels; social entrepreneurship to leverage science and technology to address ecological and environmental issues; low-carbon technologies; natural resource management; pollution; sustainable energy; and climate change.

4) Women and Gender Issues
Illustrative topics within this professional theme include: women's empowerment, women’s education, women’s health; women’s entrepreneurship; gender equality; prevention of all forms of exploitation; domestic violence prevention; advancing political, economic and social empowerment of women; and, LGBT rights.
APPLICATION SUBMISSION GUIDELINES
The deadline for applications for the Community Solutions Program is 11:59 am EDT, MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2014. Applications may be submitted ONLINE ONLY at https://oas.irex.org/csp. Do not send applications to the IREX office in Washington, DC or any of IREX’s representative offices. Mailed, faxed or e-mailed applications will not be accepted.

IF SELECTED TO THE SEMIFINALIST ROUND, APPLICANTS MUST PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTATION TO IREX AT THE TIME OF THEIR INTERVIEW:

• A copy of applicant’s international passport (if available) or government-issued identification
• Copy of TOEFL or IELTS score report (if applicable)
• A signed letter of commitment from your employer indicating approval of four-month leave should you be selected to participate in the fellowship

If you have questions about the application process please email csp@irex.org.

The Community Solutions Program is a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, and implemented by IREX.