



## Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI) Fellowship Program Information Packet



Applications for the 2021 Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI)  
Fellowship Program are open January 21 – February 25, 2021: [YLAI.State.gov/Apply](https://ylai.state.gov/Apply)

*The YLAI Fellowship Program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its implementation by IREX.*

Contact: [apply.ylaifellowship@irex.org](mailto:apply.ylaifellowship@irex.org)

# Welcome to YLAI 2021!

## Fast Facts

### What?

The Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI) Fellowship Program, a fully funded six-week exchange program, is an opportunity for young entrepreneurs and emerging business leaders from Latin America, Canada, and the Caribbean to improve their leadership and entrepreneurial skills through hands-on experience, online coursework, and face-to-face training. YLAI offers a unique opportunity to join a network of business leaders across the Americas.

### When?

Applications for YLAI 2021 are open January 21 – February 25, 2021. If selected, YLAI Fellows will travel to Tempe, Arizona in October 2021 for orientation. From Tempe, YLAI Fellows will travel to cities across the United States where they will gain valuable professional development skills and experience at four-week professional placements at a U.S.-based host organization. At the end of their professional placement, YLAI Fellows will travel to Washington, D.C. for the YLAI Closing Forum.

### Who?

Current residents and citizens of the participating countries below who have a demonstrated track record of successfully growing their own business or social venture for at least two (2) years and will be between the ages of 25 and 35 at the start of the Fellowship. Women, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply.

#### *YLAI 2021 Participating Countries*

*Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Maarten, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela.*

### How you can get involved!

Ready to help YLAI recruit a diverse group of amazing entrepreneurs? Great! Here are ways you can help:

- Share the application link with your networks: [YLAI.State.gov/Apply](https://ylai.state.gov/apply)
- Post to social media about the YLAI 2021 Fellowship application using #YLAI2021Trailblazers and the social media graphics attached.
- Email the attached YLAI 2021 flyer to networks and organizations working with entrepreneurs or minority groups in your country.
- Print the attached YLAI 2021 flyer and post to community bulletin boards.
- Help us select the YLAI 2021 cohort by joining the YLAI 2021 Selection Committee! [Apply here.](#) Applications for the YLAI 2021 Selection Committee close on February 19, 2021.

## Social Media Information

Tweet, retweet, tag, and follow! Engage on social media with the following accounts:

### Facebook

@YLAINetwork  
@ExchangeProgramsAtState  
@irexinternational

### Instagram

@YLAINetwork

### Twitter

@YLAINetwork  
@ECAatState  
@IREXIntl

### Hashtags

#YLAI2021Trailblazers  
#ExchangeOurWorld

Looking to create your own social media posts? Check out YLAI Network on Canva: <https://bit.ly/35zBYEE> for sample graphics and see sample language below.

Sample social media post language:

Are you ready to take your business to the next level? Apply for the #YLAI2021Trailblazers Fellowship to connect with business leaders in the U.S. during a six-week fellowship. Apply at [YLAI.state.gov/apply](http://YLAI.state.gov/apply)!

**Thank you for your help in recruiting the YLAI 2021 Fellows!  
We can't wait to meet them!**



**Check out the rest of this packet for additional information on the Fellowship!**



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## About YLAI

YLAI builds linkages between young leaders across the hemisphere. YLAI addresses the opportunity gap for youth, especially women, by empowering business and social entrepreneurs with the training, tools, networks and resources they need to transform their societies and contribute more fully to economic development and prosperity, security, human rights and good governance in the hemisphere.

## YLAI Fellowship Program

The YLAI Fellowship Program is a six-week program for entrepreneurs, funded by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. YLAI brings 280 promising leaders from Latin America, Canada, and the Caribbean each year to the United States to expand their leadership and entrepreneurial skills and network through skills-building workshops and opportunities to learn from and exchange with U.S. counterparts. This program is open to young entrepreneurs 25-35 years of age, selected for participation via a competitive application process. More than 750 alumni of past YLAI Fellowship Programs maintain a cohesive network across Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada to support each other’s efforts to improve their own ventures, share best practices, and collaborate to reduce the opportunity gap and contribute to economic prosperity in their communities.

## YLAI Network

The YLAI Network is a vibrant community of young entrepreneurs and changemakers from Latin America, Canada, and the Caribbean who are committed fostering economic development and prosperity, security, human rights and good governance in the hemisphere. The YLAI Network is a signature part of the U.S. government’s efforts to increase partnerships with future leaders to help promote economic growth and strengthen civil society. Joining the network provides access to digital resources, training and networking opportunities, and the chance to connect with senior leaders in business and government as well as other young leaders working to create change in their communities.

## Application Information

The Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI) Fellowship Program supports and connects young entrepreneurs across the Western Hemisphere to take on leadership roles that benefit their communities

and strengthen their economies. The YLAI Fellowship Program develops their competencies and provides them with opportunities and networks that will amplify their ability to transform their communities and contribute to economic development in the region.

The YLAI Fellowship Program brings 280 young entrepreneurs from Latin America, Canada, and the Caribbean to the United States for six weeks to build their entrepreneurial leadership skills and network with each other and American business and social entrepreneurial professionals. This program is open to entrepreneurs 25-35 years of age who are looking to take their entrepreneurial leadership to the next level.

Across the Western Hemisphere, over 750 YLAI Alumni are part of a network that supports each member's efforts to build their businesses, share best practices, and collaborate for economic development and more opportunities in their communities.

Due to intensive nature of the YLAI Fellowship Program, successful applicants must be fully focused on their professional development and program activities during the entirety of the six-week U.S. fellowship. Therefore, the YLAI Fellowship Program is an unaccompanied program and no additional guests may join any YLAI Fellow during the Fellowship and all program activities must be completed in their entirety by each Fellow.

The YLAI Fellowship includes:

- **Four-week Placement:** In cities across the United States, YLAI Fellows gain valuable professional development skills and experience at U.S. entrepreneurial organizations from the Fellow's business sector. Fellows will collaborate with their fellowship host on their Entrepreneurial Leadership Action Plan (E-LAP) which the Fellows will implement upon return to their home countries.
- **YLAI Entrepreneurial Leadership Curriculum:** The YLAI Fellowship Program includes online and in-person coursework, developed by IREX and ASU, that combines technical entrepreneurship training and leadership development. Using the E-LAP, Fellows will set and achieve their entrepreneurial leadership goals.
- **U.S. Orientation and YLAI Closing Forum in the United States:** YLAI Fellows participate in the U.S. Orientation in Tempe, Arizona and YLAI Closing Forum in Washington, D.C., as well as networking events with business and social entrepreneurial leaders, and U.S. government representatives.
- **Post-Fellowship Sustained Engagement:** After successful completion of the U.S. Fellowship and the entrepreneurial leadership curriculum, YLAI Fellows continue their collaboration with U.S. partners and have access to ongoing professional development opportunities, small grants, mentorships, networking, and alumni activities. YLAI Fellows will have the chance to welcome a Fellowship host to their country through the Outbound Program, sharing their expertise on the entrepreneurship climate in their country.

\* Please note that if safe travel is not possible at the time of the YLAI Fellowship, this program will be conducted virtually.

## YLAI Program Timeline

January 21, 2021	Application opens
February 25, 2021	Application deadline
March 2021	Applications reviewed by selection committee
Late March 2021	Applicants notified if selected as a semifinalist
March - April 2021	Semifinalists complete interviews with U.S. Embassy Staff or Selection Committee Members.
April 2021	Semifinalist interviews reviewed by selection committee
Early May 2021	Applicants notified if selected as a finalist or alternate
September 2021	Pre-Departure Orientation for Fellows (virtual)
October 2021	Travel to the U.S. and U.S. Orientation in Tempe, AZ
October- November 2021	Four-week professional placement at a U.S.-based host organization
November 2021	YLAI Closing Forum in Washington, DC
November 2021	Participants travel home to implement their E-LAP

## Financial Provisions of the YLAI Fellowship Program

There is no fee to apply to become a YLAI Fellow. If selected for the YLAI Fellowship Program, the U.S. Government will cover all program costs.

Financial provisions provided by the U.S. Government will include:

- J-1 visa support, no visa support will be offered to dependents as this is an unaccompanied program;
- Round-trip travel from Fellow's home country to the United States and domestic U.S. travel as required by the program;
- YLAI Entrepreneurial Leadership Curriculum coursework and mentoring;
- U.S. Orientation in Tempe, Arizona and YLAI Closing Forum in Washington, D.C.;
- Four-week professional placement with host organization;
- A limited accident and sickness benefit plan; and
- Housing and meal stipend during the program.

## Who is eligible to apply?

Applicants with disabilities are encouraged to apply for the YLAI Fellowship Program. The YLAI Fellowship Program is open to young entrepreneurs who meet the following criteria:

- Are between the ages of 25 and 35 at the start of the fellowship.
- Are a current resident and citizen of one of the participating countries\*: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Maarten, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela. *\*In the specific cases of residency in Aruba, Curacao and St. Maarten, citizenship in the Netherlands is accepted. Citizens of Venezuela may be residents of another eligible country.*
- Are eligible to receive a U.S. J-1 visa.
- Have a demonstrated track record of successfully growing their own business or social venture for at least two (2) years.

- Are not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident of the United States.
- Are not a U.S. government employee.
- Are proficient in reading, writing, and speaking English.
- Are available to travel to the United States from October 11 to November 19.

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

Applications not meeting the above technical eligibility requirements will not be forwarded to the Selection Committee. If you do not meet the technical eligibility requirements for this program, we invite you to visit [exchanges.state.gov](https://exchanges.state.gov) for information on other U.S. Department of State exchange opportunities.

### What are the criteria for selection?

An independent selection committee of regional and technical experts reviews all eligible applications. Those applicants selected to be semifinalists will be contacted to schedule an interview in March 2021. All applicants will be notified of their status by May 2021.

The YLAI Fellowship Program Selection Committee will use the following criteria to evaluate applications and interviews:

- Demonstrated professional entrepreneurial experience and knowledge.
- Commitment to community or public service, mentorship, or volunteerism in your home country and to applying entrepreneurial and leadership skills, experience and knowledge to benefit your community and country.
- Demonstrated understanding of how your personal and professional goals align with program objectives.
- Demonstrated leadership, commitment to your organization's or business's success, positive attitude, initiative, and perseverance.

### How you can get involved!

Ready to help YLAI recruit a diverse group of amazing entrepreneurs? Great! Here are ways you can help:

- Post to social media about the YLAI Fellowship application using the #YLAI2021Trailblazers and the attached social media graphics.
- Email the attached YLAI 2021 flyer to networks – personal and professional – and organizations working with entrepreneurs or minority groups in your country.
- Print the attached YLAI 2021 flyer and post to community bulletin boards and events.
- Send program information to local radio, television, and print media contacts to help us reach rural communities;
- Create a WhatsApp group and encourage your contacts to share information about YLAI with their networks, especially those with limited internet access; and
- Apply for the YLAI 2021 Selection Committee and encourage business professionals in your network to apply as well! [Apply here](#) by February 19.

## Recruitment and Selection Timeline

<b>Thursday, January 21, 2021</b>	YLAI 2021 Fellowship Application Opens
<b>Thursday, February 25, 2021</b>	YLAI 2021 Fellowship Application Closes at 11:00 am EST
<b>March 2021 – April 2021</b>	Semi-finalists interviews
<b>May 2021</b>	All semi-finalist notified of their status as finalists, alternates, or not selected.

**Thank you for your help in recruiting and selecting the YLAI Fellows!  
We can hardly wait to meet them!**