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## Department of State

# Professional Exchange Programs

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Professional exchange programs are central to furthering U.S. diplomacy goals at home and abroad. Participants span a variety of sectors and range from rising to established leaders and professionals in their home countries, but all have one characteristic in common: the power to incite change. Professional exchanges are important because they simultaneously strengthen mutual understanding among American and international professionals and advance U.S. diplomacy efforts abroad.

Professional exchange programs facilitate unparalleled networking opportunities, allowing both American and international participants to forge important people-to-people relationships. These working relationships often extend beyond the exchange itself: for example, more than 75 per cent of journalists participating in the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) reported that they maintain professional contact with those they met during the program, describing those relationships as “extremely valuable and mutually beneficial.”<sup>1</sup>

Professional exchanges also enhance foreign participants’ understanding of American culture, government, and economy. For example, 97 per cent of IVLP alumni – key business, political, and civil society leaders from around the world – agree that the program develops friendly and peaceful relations between the U.S. and other countries.<sup>2</sup> Foreign professionals gain a better understanding of the U.S., its culture, and its people.

Professional exchanges have an impressive multiplier effect. After participating in the IVLP, 98 per cent of foreign participants communicated more accurate information about the U.S. to others in their home countries.<sup>3</sup> Since participants are rising and respected professionals in their countries, their knowledge and perspectives about the U.S. will, over time, reach – and potentially influence – a large audience. Similarly, professional exchange programs “help bring about a more prosperous future” for both the host and sending countries, as Secretary of State John Kerry [highlighted](#) in regards to the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI).

### **DETAILS ON DEPARTMENT OF STATE PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS:**

#### *Professional Exchange programs*

- The [International Visitor Leadership Program \(IVLP\)](#) has brought more than 200,000 key business, political, and civil society leaders from around the world to meet with counterparts and citizens across the United States. IVLP alumni include Indian Prime

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<sup>1</sup> Department of State Evaluations (<http://exchanges.state.gov/programevaluations/completed.html>)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Minister Manmohan Singh, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, and more than 395 other current and former chiefs of state.

- The [\*\*Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals \(CBYX\)\*\*](#) is a fellowship funded by the German Bundestag and U.S. Congress, that annually provides 75 American and 75 German Young Professionals the opportunity to spend one year in each others' countries, studying, interning, and living with hosts on a cultural immersion program.
- The [\*\*Young African Leaders Initiative \(YALI\)\*\*](#) brings dynamic young leaders, ages 25-35, from across sub-Saharan Africa to the United States for six weeks of leadership training and mentoring at 20 U.S. universities and colleges in three subject areas: business and entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and public administration. YALI invests in the next generation of African leaders, to help equip them to spur growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance, and enhance peace and security across Africa.
- The [\*\*Young Professionals in Southeast Asia Initiative \(YSEALI\) Professional Fellows Program\*\*](#) is a professional development exchange program for the best and brightest community leaders from ASEAN, working in the fields of civic engagement, NGO management, economic empowerment, governance, legislative process, and environmental and natural resources management. The YSEALI Professional Fellows Program provides participants a month-long fellowship at U.S.-based non-profit or other organization, government office or legislative body. Fellows will work with community leaders to enhance their practical expertise, leadership skills, and professional contacts to address issues in their home communities.
- The [\*\*Young Leaders of the Americas \(YLAI\)\*\*](#) program is in its inaugural year, focused on the developing of entrepreneurial skills and enhancing of economic opportunities for young professionals, emerging entrepreneurs, and civil society activists from Latin America and the Caribbean. The YLAI program pilot year will highlight projects that contribute to entrepreneurship and innovation in areas including technology for social change, appropriate technology for development, mobile application technology, renewable energy technology, and public health technology.
- The [\*\*Professional Fellows Program \(PFP\)\*\*](#) provides opportunities annually for more than 200 mid-level professionals to participate in substantive development and cultural activities in the U.S. while working closely with U.S. counterparts. PFP has three overarching components each year, such as **Legislative Fellows**, **Environmental Fellows**, and **Women's Issues Fellows**. Reciprocal components allow American hosts a venue to increase their understanding of the Fellows' host countries, cultures, and work settings through travel abroad.

- The [Community Solutions Program \(CSP\)](#) identifies grassroots community leaders in more than 45 countries for leadership training and development of partnerships with American community leaders on initiatives related to conflict resolution, environmental and gender issues, and transparency and accountability. Examples of their work include: development of job skills for former child soldiers in Uganda, advocating for persons with disabilities in Nepal, and working for girls' safety and empowerment in Zimbabwe.
- The portfolio of [Global Undergraduate Exchange Programs \(Global UGRAD\)](#) provides semester and one-year U.S. study opportunities for young leaders from underserved populations in Eurasia, Near East, Tunisia, Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, and the Western hemisphere, advancing leadership skills critical to their future professions and fostering a positive outlook on the U.S.

