



## **Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program**

A program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), with funding provided by the U.S. Government and administered by IREX

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR U.S. EMBASSIES AND FULBRIGHT COMMISSIONS**

#### **Program Recruitment and Outreach**

##### ***What are best practices for program outreach?***

In addition to listing the opportunity on the U.S. Embassy and/or Fulbright Commission website, partners have found the following outreach mechanisms effective in previous recruitment cycles:

- Direct recruitment trips to targeted regions;
- Discipline-specific email listservs for teachers, trainers, administrators, and librarians;
- Facebook; X; and other social networking tools (IREX will actively promote via social media);
- Outreach to the Ministry of Education;
- Coordination with EducationUSA Advising Centers;
- Distribution of program information at education conferences or fairs;
- Outreach through alumni of U.S. exchange programs;
- Advertisements in local media sources including newspapers, radio, and/or television;
- Distribution of program information to Peace Corps volunteers, Fulbright English Teaching Assistants, English Language Fellows, TEA, ILEP, Fulbright TEA, and Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Alumni, etc.;
- Alumni associations for Humphrey, Fulbright, and other USG-sponsored programs;
- National English Language Teachers Associations;
- University contacts, particularly those at Teacher Training colleges or in Departments of Education.

*\*With the reduced FY2026 budget and the corresponding reduction in the number of slots we are able to support for each country, we understand that posts and commissions may decide to pull back slightly on their recruitment efforts for the upcoming cycle in order to garner a more manageable number of applications to review.*

##### ***Is collaborating with the Regional English Language Officers (RELOs) encouraged in the recruitment process?***

Yes, Regional English Language Officers (RELOs) have been invited to participate in the recruitment process and support the Fulbright TEA program in identifying and nominating excellent Fulbright TEA candidates. RELOs may nominate up to three teachers per eligible country with the approval of the embassy's Public Diplomacy Section. U.S. Embassies or Fulbright Commissions and RELOs should determine how best to collaborate with each other in consideration of local conditions and needs. If the RELO nominates a candidate, the list sent to IREX should specify which candidate(s) the RELO nominated.

##### ***What is the profile of the ideal Fulbright TEA candidate?***

Successful Fulbright TEA candidates are current, full-time secondary school teachers of English, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), math, science, foreign language, social studies, journalism, communications, including special education teachers in those subjects, at institutions serving primarily a local population.

All candidates must have completed at least three years of full-time teaching minimum with a preference for those who have completed at least five years of full-time teaching. Pre-service practicum years should not be included in



the three-year minimum. Candidates should be planning to continue working in secondary education for at least five years after the conclusion of the program.

All candidates should be educators who demonstrate strong leadership potential and the ability to function well in an intensive and collaborative learning environment with teachers from around the world.

All candidates should be able to live and work closely with people from a variety of backgrounds and interact in a culturally sensitive way with students (minors) and colleagues in U.S. secondary schools. We encourage applications from educators who:

- Have had few or no opportunities to travel to the U.S.
- Have not previously received a Fulbright teacher grant.
- Have not had substantial recent experience in the U.S., including study, teaching, research, or employment for a period totaling more than 9 months during the past five years.

***Are candidates who have participated in other exchange programs or have previous international professional development experience eligible for the Fulbright TEA program?***

Yes, but please note that preference will be given to qualified candidates who have not previously received a Fulbright award or traveled abroad for study, teaching, research, or other employment. Candidates who have in the past eight years at the time of application traveled to the U.S. for degree programs or exchange programs such as Study of the United States Institutes (SUSI) or International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) or to other Western countries for professional development would need additional justification from Posts or nominating committees as to why they should be selected to go to the U.S. for the Fulbright TEA Program.

***What materials are provided to help U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions recruit teachers for Fulbright TEA?***

Along with this FAQs document, IREX provides:

- An ["About Fulbright TEA" PowerPoint](#) that can be used during informational presentations;
- A [program announcement flyer](#) for distribution to teachers, administrators, and partners;
- A [program information sheet](#) for distribution to teachers, administrators, and partners;
- All [application materials](#) (in writable PDF format; please note that IREX will accept handwritten applications if the writable PDF format is restrictive). An online application is also available, and the link to the application with instructions will be shared with the paper application materials.

**Nomination Target Numbers**

***How many nominations can U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions send to IREX?***

U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions are asked to submit up to approximately twice the number of anticipated spots allocated (between three and five nominations) in ranked order using the materials provided by IREX (see cable). This number allows us to draw from a pool of alternates should additional fellowships become available. Please send a rank-ordered listing of your nominees with accompanying materials to IREX no later than May 18, 2026. IREX will provide detailed instructions for this process.

***How many of the nominated candidates will be selected for participation?***

Fulbright TEA is a world-wide competition. All nominations will be reviewed by an independent panel of educational experts. The panel will recommend candidates to the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board (FFSB) based on the candidates' applications. Although U.S. Embassy and Fulbright Commission nominations are given serious consideration and we will try to adhere to your rankings, due to the competitive applicant pool, the total number of slots and the order of ranking by the Embassy and Commission selection committee are not guaranteed. By August 24, 2026, IREX will provide U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions with a list of nominees the committee recommended for selection and will invite Embassies/Commissions to confirm that the applicants' circumstances

and eligibility have not changed (i.e., still employed as a full-time teacher, not accepted into any similar programs by the Department of State or other international organizations, no major health or family concerns).

## **Candidate Travel to Embassies and Commissions**

### ***How many trips to the U.S. Embassy / Fulbright Commission will applicants need to make?***

ECA is prepared to cover the costs of one trip for semi-finalists and two trips for nominated candidates:

- ☐ Funding is available for the nominees of each country or territory (see cable) to travel to the Embassy/Commission for institutional TOEFL, IELTS, or other English language testing. Embassies and Commissions should determine whether it is better to gather the candidates together in the capital to take the TOEFL or IELTS or allow them to schedule their own tests at regional testing sites on an individual basis.
- ☐ Funding is also available for selected participants to travel to the Embassy/Commission for the visa interview/pre-departure orientation.

### ***How is funding provided for travel to the Embassy/Commission for the TOEFL testing and interviews?***

ECA (the Teacher Exchange Branch, ECA/A/S/X) will provide funds via a Miscellaneous Obligation document (MO) to posts or via the Payment Management System (PMS) to commissions to cover costs such as:

- Travel of candidates to the interview/English testing location plus per diem costs;
- Travel of participants to the visa interview/pre-departure orientation plus per diem costs;
- If requested by participants, ECA/A/S/X will reimburse the cost of medical exams for applicants selected to take part in the program.

Please contact Michael Kuban, ECA/A/S/X, at KubanMM@state.gov before **July 17, 2026**, if you plan to request funds for the expenses outlined above. Specifically address if a participant would like medical exam reimbursement.

In order for participants to receive funds, each post must submit a small budget listing the anticipated expenses and designate a Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN) for each individual. Please allow adequate time for ECA's budget office to process these requests.

## **English Language Testing / TOEFL Testing**

### ***What English language tests are required for participation in Fulbright TEA?***

All candidates nominated for the program are required to submit a TOEFL or another approved English test score as part of their applications. Per the cable, it is preferable for candidates to take the internet-based form of the English TOEFL test. If the internet-based TOEFL test is not available, an acceptable alternative would be the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). In order of preference, scores from the following tests will be accepted:

- internet-based TOEFL (iBT)
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
- U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions may propose alternatives to the tests above to their IREX contact for approval. If IREX, in consultation with ECA, approves the use of alternative tests, please provide official score reports as well as converted scores to reflect their TOEFL score value.

Where English testing entails considerable difficulty for technical or logistical reasons, IREX can offer additional evaluation options on a case-by-case basis.

Participation in the Fulbright TEA Program is open to teachers who are able to demonstrate English language proficiency by scoring the equivalent of 45 or above on the internet-based TOEFL).

- Note: A limited number of slots will be made available for well qualified participants with a TOEFL score of 35 - 44 or equivalent and the strong support of the nominating committee. These teachers will receive supplemental intensive English language instruction.

***How many applicants per country should take the TOEFL (or an equivalent English exam)?***

Testing should be administered to no more than approximately twice the number of anticipated nominations . U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions should determine whether it is best to gather the candidates together in the capital to take the TOEFL or allow them to schedule their own tests at regional testing sites on an individual basis.

***How is funding provided for TOEFL tests or equivalent English exams?***

- For the internet-based TOEFL (iBT): IREX will provide vouchers. Please request these vouchers from IREX no later than **February 20, 2026**. IREX will forward the voucher numbers to Posts via email within one to three weeks of receiving the request. Embassies/Commissions or Fulbright TEA candidates will then use the voucher numbers in place of payment when registering for the test.
- For IELTS exam or other equivalent English exam: ECA/A/S/X will provide funds via a Miscellaneous Obligation document (MO) to posts, or via the Payment Management System (PMS) to commissions, to cover associated costs. Please contact Michael Kuban, ECA/A/S/X, at KubanMM@state.gov by **July 17, 2026**, if you plan to request funds for the expenses outlined above.

***How should scheduling be arranged for the TOEFL examination?***

U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions are responsible for making all testing arrangements, including dates, locations, and times. Testing should be scheduled for dates that allow for all English test results to be received by IREX no later than **May 18, 2026**. Posts may identify iBT TOEFL dates on the ETS website: <https://www.ets.org/toefl/test-takers/ibt/schedule.html>

Once a test date has been selected, U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions should either send nominees the date so they may register themselves, or U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions should register on the nominees' behalf.

If necessary, IREX will accept unofficial copies of score reports until official score reports are available.

**Notification of Finalist Selection**

***When will Embassies and Commissions be notified of finalist selection?***

IREX will notify U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions of finalist selection by August 24, 2026. IREX will provide U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions with a list of participants whom the FFSB has selected for fellowships and ask U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions to confirm the selections and that the applicants' circumstances and eligibility have not changed.

IREX will also send award letters, terms and conditions documents, medical forms, and pre-program survey forms to U.S. Embassies and/or Fulbright Commissions for distribution to finalists in August 2026.

***If a Finalist from my country withdraws from the program, will an alternate candidate from my country automatically fill this slot?***

Not necessarily. When a Finalist withdraws from the program, the available slot will be filled from the global pool of alternates. It is important that withdrawal information is communicated to IREX in writing immediately. Any new Finalists would be selected based on factors such as their overall rank and TOEFL scores.

## **Travel Expenses, Approvals, and Grace Period of the J-1 Visa**

### ***Will the program cover all program-related travel expenses?***

Yes. IREX will provide all participants with an international airline ticket to/from their home country. IREX will also reimburse participants for round-trip travel expenses between their home city and the point of departure for the U.S.

Participants in good standing will be given the option of travelling after the end of their program during the thirty-day grace period allowed by the J-1 visa. Travel will be approved only if the following conditions are met: a.) participants arrange and pay for their travel and accommodations during this post-program period; b.) participants pay all applicable airline ticket change fees; and c.) participants provide IREX with proof of health insurance coverage for the additional time they will be in the U.S., a post-program itinerary that includes their contact information while traveling, and the return flight information to their home countries.

Please note that in the event of a local or national emergency in the United States or abroad, ECA and IREX may determine that personal travel is not feasible at the end of the Fulbright TEA Program, and we will ask participants to return home as quickly as possible.

### **Questions?**

IREX is happy to answer questions and provide further information at any time throughout the outreach and recruitment cycle. Please do not hesitate to email IREX at [FulbrightTEA@irex.org](mailto:FulbrightTEA@irex.org).

Thank you for your support of the Fulbright TEA Program!