



2020 MANDELA WASHINGTON FELLOWSHIP FOR YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 16:00/4:00PM GMT ON WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 9, 2019

We suggest printing these instructions to use as a reference while completing the application.

Thank you for your interest in the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders!

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders is the flagship program of the [Young African Leaders Initiative \(YALI\)](#). The Fellowship, begun in 2014, supports young African leaders as they spur growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance, and enhance peace and security across Africa. Please visit yali.state.gov for more information.

The Mandela Washington Fellowship will bring up to 700 young leaders to the United States in the summer of 2020 for a comprehensive executive-style program that is designed to build skills and empower Fellows to lead in their respective sectors and communities. The Mandela Washington Fellowship includes:

- **A six-week Leadership Institute:** Fellows are placed in groups of 25 at leading educational institutions across the United States, in both urban and rural areas, that represent the diversity of American higher education. Institutes, which will take place from mid-June to late July 2020, will focus on skills development in one of three themes: **Leadership in Business, Leadership in Civic Engagement, or Leadership in Public Management**. The intensive six-week model uses leadership development as the framework to create links between academic sessions, a strengths-based Common Leadership Curriculum, site visits, community service, and cultural activities. Fellows in all three themes will gain theoretical knowledge and practical skills that can be applied in or adapted to African contexts. Although all Institutes will include common components, each program agenda is unique and is based on the particular strengths and resources of the Institute Partner.
- **A Summit in Washington, D.C.:** At the conclusion of the Leadership Institutes, all Fellows will participate in a high-level Summit where they will participate in a variety of sessions. They will have the opportunity to network with each other and with U.S. leaders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors. The Summit will take place in late July or early August 2020.
- **An optional four-week Professional Development Experience:** As part of the Fellowship application, individuals may apply to participate in a Professional Development Experience (PDE) at an NGO, business, and government agency throughout the United States. The PDE is designed to give Fellows practical training and the opportunity to learn transferable skills, expand their professional networks, and apply concepts learned at their Institutes to real-world situations in the U.S. context. The placements will relate to each Fellow's professional sector but are typically not an exact match to

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their current position at home. Rather, it is an opportunity to introduce Fellows to new perspectives in their fields, to deepen their awareness and understanding of issues present in both their home countries and the United States, and to learn best practices that can be applied to their work at home. Professional Development Experiences will be intensive and demanding, and selected Fellows will be placed independently at organizations across the United States. Up to 70 Fellows will be competitively selected for the Professional Development Experience. Selected Fellows must be available to be in the United States for a total of approximately 11 weeks (the Leadership Institute, the Summit, and the placement with a U.S.-based organization).

- **Activities in Africa:** Fellows will have access to networking opportunities, ongoing professional development, and volunteer opportunities upon their return home after the Fellowship.

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FINANCIAL PROVISIONS OF THE FELLOWSHIP

There is no fee to apply to the Mandela Washington Fellowship. If you are selected for the Fellowship, the U.S. Government will cover all program costs.

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

- J-1 visa support;
- Round-trip travel from Fellow's home city to the United States and domestic U.S. travel as required by the program (Fellows must fly out of their home country within Africa to the United States.);
- A six-week Leadership Institute;
- A concluding Summit in Washington, D.C.;
- A limited accident and sickness benefit plan;
- Housing and meals during the program; and
- An optional four-week Professional Development Experience (for up to 70 Fellows).

Please note that the U.S. Department of State, IREX, Institutes, and/or PDE hosts will not provide funds to cover Fellow salaries while they are away from work or funds for personal purchases, such as to support Fellows' home organizations or gifts for family.

Fellows will be housed in university dorms or similar accommodations and may share a bedroom with another Fellow of the same gender and a bathroom with one or more Fellows of the same gender. Most meals will be provided at campus cafeterias or restaurants, though Fellows may have access to a kitchen to cook some meals. Please note that campus cafeterias will not offer the same types and varieties of foods that Fellows have in their home countries, so it is important to be aware of and comfortable with these arrangements. Care will be taken, to the extent possible, to ensure that any special requirements regarding housing, diet, and other personal activities like religious observance are satisfied. However, Fellows should understand that the environment will likely be very different from what they are used to at home and they should be open to new experiences.

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TECHNICAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants will not be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Mandela Washington Fellowship is open to young African leaders who meet the following criteria¹:

- Are between the ages of 25 and 35 on or before the application deadline, although exceptional applicants ages 21-24 will be considered;
- Are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the United States;
- Are eligible to receive a United States J-1 visa;
- Are not employees or immediate family members of employees of the U.S. Government (including a U.S. embassy or consulate, USAID, and other U.S. Government entities)²;
- Are proficient in reading, writing, and speaking English (applicants who are deaf should refer to the English Language instructions below);
- Are citizens of one of the following countries: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, or Zimbabwe.
- Are residents of one of the above countries; and
- Are not Alumni of the Mandela Washington Fellowship.

Please note that Fellows are not allowed to have dependents, including spouses and children, accompany them during the Fellowship.

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

Applicants 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 the [Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs website](#) for information on other U.S. Department of State exchange opportunities.

¹ 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.

² You are not eligible to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship if you, or if any member of your immediate family or household, is employed by the U.S. Government. If you are not eligible to apply, we encourage you to explore other exchange program opportunities offered by the U.S. Department of State's [Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs](#) or other resources available through the [YALI Network](#).

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MANDELA WASHINGTON FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION PROCESS TIMELINE

September 12, 2019	Application opens
October 9, 2019	Application deadline
December 2019 – February 2020	Semifinalists interviewed by local U.S. embassies and consulates
Late March 2020	Applicants are notified of their status
May 2020	Visa processing and Pre-Departure Orientations for finalists ³
Mid-June 2020	Fellowship begins in the United States

SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

The Mandela Washington Fellowship selection process is a merit-based open competition. After the deadline, all eligible applications will be reviewed by independent readers. Following this review, chosen semi-finalists will be interviewed by the U.S. embassies or consulates in their home countries. Selected semi-finalists will be required to participate in these in-person interviews in their home country within Africa. If advanced to the semi-finalist round, applicants must provide a copy of their international passport (if available) or other government-issued photo identification at the time of the interview. Selected finalists are required to attend the mandatory Pre-Departure Orientation in their home country within Africa.

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

- A proven record of leadership and accomplishment in business, civic engagement, or public service;
- A demonstrated commitment to public or community service, volunteerism, or mentorship;
- The ability to work cooperatively in diverse groups and to respect the opinions of others;
- Strong social and communication skills;
- An energetic, positive attitude;
- A demonstrated knowledge of, interest in, and professional experience in the preferred sector/track; and
- A commitment to return to Africa and apply leadership skills and training to benefit the applicant's country and/or community after they return home.

GENERAL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS AND TIPS

- The Mandela Washington Fellowship uses an online application system. You will need access to a computer or mobile device and the internet to apply.
- You do not have to finish your application in one session. You may save your work and return to complete your application as many times as necessary. Once you have submitted your application, however, you can no longer add any additional information or make any changes. All information and documents must be uploaded prior to your final submission. Be sure to carefully check your entire application and confirm that any supplemental documents uploaded correctly. You must submit your completed application through the online application system by the deadline.
- Answer all questions on the application in English. If you have supplemental documents in another language, you must also include a full English translation.
- All fields marked with a red asterisk (*) must be completed.
- All answers in the application, including written responses to essays and optional internship questions, must be your own original work. Using language copied from other Fellowship applications (including other applicants', your own submissions from previous years, or those of Fellowship Alumni) or from other sources (including websites) is considered plagiarism and will result in the application being disqualified.

³ The Pre-Departure Orientations are mandatory. Selected finalists are required to attend the Pre-Departure Orientation in their home country within Africa.

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- You may wish to review the application and its questions before filling out the application. Some applicants find it helpful to draft their responses offline (for example, in a separate Word document) and then paste their responses into the appropriate sections of the application.
- This is the official application for the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders of the U.S. Department of State. Only those applicants who complete this application using the online application system will be considered. Applications and information submitted through email or other means will not be considered.

ONLINE APPLICATION SECTIONS

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Provide your full legal name as spelled on your passport or national identification card.
- Provide your date of birth using the “month, day, year” format. You will be required to provide documentation verifying age and for eligibility at the interview stage if you are selected as a semi-finalist.
- Provide your country of citizenship and your country of residence. You will be required to provide documentation verifying citizenship at the interview stage if you are selected as a semi-finalist.
- Provide your place of birth (city or town and country).
- Indicate if you live in a national capital city, major city, other city or town, or rural area. A national capital city is the seat of your federal or national government (example: Abuja, Nigeria or Dakar, Senegal). A major city is defined an urban area with a large population of about 100,000+ people (Example: Cape Town, South Africa). A town is roughly defined as a semi-urban area with a population between 2,500 – 100,000 people (Example: Lamu, Kenya). A rural area is defined as any area with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants and that is distinctively not in an urban area (Example: Chachani, Tanzania).
- Indicate if you have a disability and provide details if applicable. *Your application will not be affected in any way if you disclose a disability.*
- Indicate if you currently have a passport and, if so, provide the expiration date. If you indicate that you have a passport, you will be required to present it at the interview stage if you are selected as a semi-finalist. If you indicate that you do not have a passport, you will be required to obtain a passport if you are selected as a finalist.
- Indicate your marital status (single or married).
- If applicable, provide the citizenship of your spouse.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The contact information you provide will be used to reach you during the application and selection process. Please provide accurate addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses that you use and check on a regular basis.

INSTITUTE TRACKS: DEFINITIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS

You must rank in order of preference the three tracks in order of preference according to what most closely aligns with your daily work, education, or community involvement. The three tracks are Leadership in Business, Leadership in Civic Engagement, and Leadership in Public Management.

Overall, the Institutes are designed to provide Fellows with background on U.S. practices and to help Fellows expand their networks to include Americans with whom they may find opportunities to collaborate in the future. **The Fellowship is not designed to help Fellows identify specific funding for projects or organizations.**

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Fellows should be prepared to examine U.S. case studies and approaches to challenges and then relate them to the African context. The Mandela Washington Fellowship does not encourage Institute Partners to teach African models to Fellows, so Institute speakers may not be specialists on African subjects. As leaders, Fellows should be prepared to think about what elements of the U.S. approach or strategy might be useful in their own contexts.

While Institutes focus on specific tracks and themes, not all sessions will directly relate to each Fellow's current work. Sessions are designed to help Fellows broaden their understanding on a variety of topics to prepare them for leadership outside of their current role or focus area. Fellows are encouraged to build their own networks and connections by reaching out directly to Americans in their host communities during unstructured time. The Fellowship Terms and Conditions require all Fellows to attend and fully participate in all required sessions and program activities scheduled by their Institute.

Institute Tracks:

- **Leadership in Business:** The Leadership in Business Institutes will provide Fellows with an overview of U.S. entrepreneurial strategies, including those that are employed to address social issues. Business Institutes will focus on developing skills in business and entrepreneurship, while examining the development, history, challenges, and successes of U.S. enterprises and social enterprises, in the United States and globally, with specific relevance to the African continent. The Institutes will encourage Fellows to elaborate innovative and practical plans to expand their engagement in business and/or entrepreneurship in their communities and to engage with others in this area. Fellows should not anticipate identifying funding or investment opportunities during the Institutes or the Summit.
- **Leadership in Civic Engagement:** The Leadership in Civic Engagement Institutes will provide Fellows with an overview of how citizens, both as individuals and groups, have shaped U.S. history, government, and society, including discussion of similarities and contrasts with experiences and opportunities on the African continent. The academic program will define civic engagement, examine its development in the United States, and build skills in topics such as citizenship, community building, economic development, grass-roots activism, political organizing and leadership, volunteerism, and the use of information and communications technology in advancing civic causes. The Institutes will encourage Fellows to develop innovative and practical plans to expand their engagement as citizens in their own communities and to work with others in this area. Fellows should not anticipate identifying funding opportunities during the Institutes or the Summit.
- **Leadership in Public Management:** The Leadership in Public Management Institutes will provide Fellows with an overview of public management and leadership, including: regional economic and workforce development; financial management in public and non-profit organizations; planning and the global knowledge economy; and domestic and foreign development policies. Within the broader frame of the public policy process, Fellows will be exposed to specific public management questions on topics such as public finance, rule of law, education, public health, environment, public sector transparency and accountability, and foreign policy. The Institutes will encourage Fellows to create innovative and practical plans to expand their engagement in public management in their communities and to work with others in this area. Fellows should not anticipate identifying funding or investment opportunities during the Institutes or the Summit.

Instructions:

- Rank the track in order from 1st choice through 3rd choice based on the track that most closely aligns with your daily work, education, or community involvement. **Please note that if selected for the**

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Mandela Washington Fellowship you may not be placed in your first-choice track, but you may be placed in a different track that, based on your application materials, fits your profile.

CURRENT PROFESSIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

- This section asks for information about where you are currently working or studying.
- This section also asks you to select up to five sectors in which you have expertise and/or interest to help us better understand your professional areas of focus. Please note that this will not factor into your selection, but it may be used to help place finalists at their Leadership Institute. This may also be used by the YALI Network (if you have opted in) to provide you with tailored opportunities.

U.S. GOVERNMENT PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

- This section asks you for information related to any past experience you had on a U.S. Government-sponsored program.

PREVIOUS U.S. EXPERIENCE

- Please provide complete and accurate information regarding your travel to the United States, including prior travel and/or upcoming travel. As noted in the application, include all past experience in the United States such as work, trainings, degree programs, study abroad experience, or extended stays or residencies. Previous experience in the United States does not disqualify you from the Mandela Washington Fellowship.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

- English language proficiency is required for participation in the Fellowship. All activities including academic sessions, discussions, meetings, cultural activities, and social interactions will be in English. Please fill in the chart evaluating your language skills as accurately as possible.
- Applicants who are deaf, please note that interpretation in the United States may only be available in American Sign Language (ASL), and Fellows should be proficient in, or be prepared to learn, ASL prior to arrival in the United States. Prior to the start of the Fellowship, selected Fellows who require sign language interpretation during their Institute will have the opportunity to learn ASL through a Pre-Institute training at Gallaudet University, the world's only liberal arts university for the Deaf. Gallaudet University also offers free resources for learning ASL [here](#). Please fill in the chart indicating your proficiency in Reading and Writing in standard English and your proficiency in Speaking and Listening Comprehension in American Sign Language.

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

- This section includes four short-response questions and two long-response questions that must be completed. Your responses will give the selection committee an opportunity to better understand you as a leader and your desire to participate in the program.
- Each response has a space limitation for writing, and a word limit is indicated on the application. Please use specific, concrete examples that support your statements. It's important that you provide some background information since the reader may not be familiar with the situation in your community/country, but you should focus primarily on your experience and examples.
- The questions are:
 1. Please give a brief description of your professional background and current work, including any specific professional accomplishments within the last year. Why have you chosen this work? (150 words)

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2. Nelson Mandela said, “It is in your hands, to make a better world for all who live in it.” What role do you want to play in your community/country in 5-10 years? What steps are you taking now to achieve this? (150 words)
3. What do you consider to be your most significant achievement as a leader or most innovative idea? Explain the accomplishment or innovation, why it was important, and what obstacles you overcame to achieve it. (150 words)
4. Learning from mistakes is a part of professional development, and strong leaders are able to effectively handle challenges. Describe a specific instance when you made a mistake or encountered a setback that helped you grow as a leader. What did you do and how are you applying those lessons learned in your current work?
5. Nelson Mandela was awarded the Nobel Peace prize for working with leaders of the South African government to agree on a peaceful transition to multiparty rule and an end to Apartheid. Leaders are able to achieve progress despite differing views or identities. Please explain a situation where you have worked with people from different backgrounds, identities or perspectives of your own and had to use your leadership skills to resolve a conflict or disagreement with others. What actions did you take and how did you encourage respectful discussion? (250 words)
6. Based on your understanding of your preferred track, what skills and knowledge do you hope to gain from the Fellowship that you would not be able to develop through other education or training? How will you use those skills and that knowledge to adapt your activities in your home country within the next 3 – 5 years? (250 words)

OPTIONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

- As described above, the Professional Development Experience (PDE) component of the program is optional and competitive. You do not have to apply for the PDE component in order to be considered for the Mandela Washington Fellowship.
- To apply for the optional Professional Development Experience, you will be required to answer the following additional questions:
 - What are your goals for the Professional Development Experience? How would you apply an experience working in a U.S. organization to your work after returning to your home country? (250 words)

CV/RÉSUMÉ

- In this section, you will provide information about your past education, work experience, volunteer experience, and any awards you have earned. **You do not need to upload a separate CV/résumé document.**

OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENTS

- In this section, you may upload up to three documents that you feel will strengthen your application. These materials are entirely optional and must be in English (materials not in English must include a full English translation). Documents can be attached in .DOC or .PDF format and must be no larger than 25mbs each. Recommendation letters and writing samples are examples of supplemental documents.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

- The question in this section is optional and asks for information about how you learned about the Mandela Washington Fellowship.

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APPLICATION SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The deadline for applications for the Mandela Washington Fellowship is 16:00/4:00PM GMT on Wednesday, October 9, 2019. Applications must be submitted using the [online application system](#).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

APPLICATION

Q: Can I access the application from my phone or tablet?

A: Yes! You can access the application from any device that is connected to the internet. The application is mobile-friendly, so it is easy to apply from your phone or tablet.

Q: How do I enter my name into the application?

A: You should type your name exactly as it appears on your passport or other official government identification documents. For example, John's passport says: Ngozi for his surname and John Michael for his given name. He should type John Michael in the Given Name field and Ngozi in the Surname (Family Name) field of the application.

Q: I am unable to move past the General Information section. How do I apply?

A: Please review the eligibility requirements. The application will not let you proceed unless you meet general requirements and have fully completed the section.

Q: I signed up for email updates from the YALI Network and cannot get into the Mandela Washington Fellowship online application system. What do I do?

A: Signing up for YALI Network email updates does not create an account for you in the online application system. You must create a separate account at yaliapp.irex.org to apply through the Mandela Washington Fellowship online application system.

Q: How can I log in to the application system and see my information from last year?

A: All previous applications have been cleared. You will need to register again at yaliapp.irex.org in order to complete the 2020 application.

Q: Can I submit a paper copy of the Mandela Washington Fellowship application?

A: No, you must submit your application through the Mandela Washington Fellowship online application system (yaliapp.irex.org). Paper applications or applications by email attachment will not be accepted.

Q: Can I submit more than one application for the Mandela Washington Fellowship?

A: No, you may submit only one application. Submitting additional applications will disqualify you. If you do apply more than once, all of your applications will be rejected.

Q: I have multiple email addresses, including some for personal use and some for my work. Which one should I use for the Mandela Washington Fellowship application?

A: You should use the one email address that you access most frequently and that can be accessed from any Internet connection. Work email addresses that cannot be accessed outside your office, or that you will not be able to access if you change jobs, are not recommended. Please use only one email address to ensure that you receive all correspondence regarding the application process.

Q: I cannot afford to pay an application fee. How should I apply?

A: There is no fee to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship.

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Q: The application instructions say all answers must be my “own, original work.” What does that mean?

A: All answers must be in your own words and be your own ideas. Be certain not to plagiarize. Plagiarism is taking someone else’s work or ideas and presenting them as your own. If you use another person’s writing, ideas, words, or materials you need to credit the source. Do not cut and paste ideas from the internet or other sources. Plagiarism is strictly forbidden at many organizations and academic institutions in the United States, and those who plagiarize their application materials will be disqualified. This also includes using the wording from another applicant or Fellowship Alumni in your application. The U.S. Department of State and IREX will be checking all applications for plagiarism. For more information, please visit the [Plagiarism.org website](http://Plagiarism.org).

Q: After I complete and submit my application, can I go back in and make changes or add supplemental documents at a later date?

A: No, all submitted applications are final. Once you have submitted your application, you can no longer add any additional information or make any changes through the online system or via email. All information and documents must be uploaded prior to your final submission so be sure to carefully check everything before you submit. If you have any questions about or problems with your application, please contact mwfellowship@irex.org before you submit it.

Q: I’m not sure which track to list as my first choice. How should I choose how to rank them?

A: You should list the tracks according to what best aligns to your current work and/or long-term professional goals. All tracks will have a focus on leadership development and help Fellows strengthen skills that are transferable to a variety of industries, like strategic planning, communications and marketing, financial management, and organizational management. For more detailed information on each track, please review pages 5-6 above.

Q: My current work doesn’t seem to fit into any of the tracks (Leadership in Business, Leadership in Civic Engagement, Leadership in Public Management). Should I still apply?

A: Absolutely! Past Mandela Washington Fellows have come from many different backgrounds and work in a wide variety of fields. There are transferable skills learned in all three tracks, and the overarching topics are applicable to a variety of sectors, including but not limited to entrepreneurship, non-profit management, healthcare, journalism, public service, education, tourism, human rights, agriculture, and environmental protection. Check out the bios of past Mandela Washington Fellows in our [online directory](#) to get a better idea of the variety of industries that Fellows represent.

DISABILITY AND OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

Q: I have a physical disability or other special need and I need another person’s assistance to complete my application. Is this considered plagiarism?

A: Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship. Applicants with physical disabilities or special needs who require another person’s assistance to complete an application may use such assistance. However, the thoughts, ideas, and content of your application must be your own; you cannot collaborate with the person assisting you on the content of your application.

Q: Can applicants with disabilities apply? Why does the application ask if I have a disability?

A: Yes, applicants with disabilities can absolutely apply and are encouraged to do so. The Mandela Washington Fellowship does not discriminate against applicants because of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, or any other protected characteristic as established by U.S. law. The application includes a question about disability so that we are aware of what kinds of accommodations might be needed if you are interviewed or selected. Your answer to the question regarding disabilities is voluntary and will not impact your chances of acceptance.

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Q: How are Fellows with disabilities supported during the Fellowship?

A: Each Fellow's needs are evaluated individually so that the Institute Partner and IREX can determine the reasonable accommodations needed to ensure full participation in program activities. Please click [here](#) for more information on what types of reasonable accommodations may be available during the Fellowship.

Q: How are pregnant Fellows supported during the Fellowship?

A: Applicants who are pregnant are encouraged to apply. The Mandela Washington Fellowship is committed to supporting positive learning and networking environments for all Fellows. The Fellowship is an intensive program, which includes long days and extended periods of time sitting in the classroom or walking on excursions and site visits. Airlines also have different policies for flying while pregnant and may restrict travel for individuals who are pregnant after a certain period in their pregnancy. If you are pregnant and are at less than 20 weeks by the start of the Fellowship in mid-June, you should be able to fully participate in the program. Please review additional frequently asked questions about pregnancy [here](#) and click [here](#) for more information on the support and resources available to pregnant Fellows during the Fellowship.

TECHNICAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

AGE

Q: I am currently 35 years old but will turn 36 before the Mandela Washington Fellowship application deadline closes. Am I eligible for the Mandela Washington Fellowship?

A: No, you are not eligible to apply for the Fellowship. Applicants must be between the ages of 25 and 35 on or before of the application deadline. If you are still 35 on October 9, 2019, you are eligible to apply. No exceptions will be made for candidates older than 35.

Q: I am younger than 25 years old. Am I eligible for the Mandela Washington Fellowship?

A: You may be eligible for the Fellowship. The target age range is 25 to 35, although exceptional candidates ages 21-24 will be considered. All applicants must be at least 21 at the time of the application deadline.

CITIZENSHIP

Q: I am not sure if people from my country are eligible for the Fellowship. Where can I find a list of eligible countries?

A: Please visit the [Mandela Washington Fellowship website](#) to view the list of countries eligible for the 2020 Mandela Washington Fellowship.

Q: I left my African home country as a refugee and am now a U.S. citizen. Am I eligible to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship?

A: No, you are not eligible to apply for the Fellowship. U.S. citizens, permanent residents, and green card holders are not eligible to apply for the Fellowship under any circumstances.

Q: I have dual citizenship in my African home country and the United Kingdom (or other eligible and non-eligible countries). Am I eligible to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship?

A: Maybe. If you live in one of the Sub-Saharan African countries eligible for the Fellowship and reside in another Sub-Saharan African country that is eligible, you are eligible to apply. If you are accepted as a Fellow, you must apply for your U.S. visa and enter the United States on your eligible country passport. If you live in any country outside of Africa, you are not eligible to apply for the Fellowship regardless of your citizenship. Please see the information on residency below for more details.

Q: I am an employee of the U.S. Government but am a citizen and resident of an eligible country. Am I eligible to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship?

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A: No, you are not eligible to apply for the Fellowship. Employees and immediate family members of employees of the U.S. Government are not eligible to apply for the Fellowship.

RESIDENCY

Q: What do you mean by country of residence?

A: Your country of residence is the country in which you currently live and have a physical address. You must live in one of the countries eligible for the Fellowship to apply.

Q: I am a citizen of Ghana currently living in South Africa. Am I eligible to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship? What option do I choose for my country?

A: Yes, you are eligible for the Fellowship. Applicants living outside their country of citizenship but in another eligible country may apply. Please be sure to select the correct country of citizenship and list your current permanent address in the legal residence section of the application.

Q: I am a resident of the United States, but I am originally from an African country. Am I eligible to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship?

A: No, you are not eligible for the Fellowship. Residents of the United States, or any non-eligible country, are not eligible for the Mandela Washington Fellowship under any circumstances, even those with temporary residency such as students.

Q: I am an African student studying in France (or another non-eligible country). Am I eligible to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship?

A: No, you are not eligible for the Fellowship. Residents of non-eligible countries are not eligible for the Fellowship under any circumstances, even those with temporary residency such as students. You may be eligible for a future Fellowship year once you permanently return to your home country, provided that you meet the other technical eligibility requirements.

Q: I previously resided in the United States for school or work but have returned and am now a resident in an eligible African country. Am I eligible to apply?

A: Yes, if you are currently both a citizen and a resident of an eligible African country, you are eligible to apply (provided that you meet the other technical eligibility requirements).

Q: I am a citizen of a non-eligible country but have lived all my life in Sub-Saharan Africa. Am I eligible to apply for the Mandela Washington Fellowship?

A: No, you must be both a citizen and a resident of an eligible country to apply for the Fellowship.

LANGUAGE

Q: I am not proficient in English. Can I participate in the Mandela Washington Fellowship using another language?

A: No. The Fellowship will be conducted entirely in English. English proficiency is required. Applicants who are deaf, please note that interpretation in the United States may only be available in American Sign Language (ASL), so if you are selected as a Fellow you should be proficient in, or be prepared to learn, ASL prior to arrival in the United States.

Q: How will language abilities be assessed?

A: Language abilities will be assessed through the online application and, if you are chosen for the next stage, during an interview at your local U.S. embassy or consulate. TOEFL scores are not required. You can practice and improve your English language skills for free through the [American English website](#) or through [Voice of America's Learning English website](#).

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Q: My native language is French. Can I submit my application documents in French?

A: No. All applications must be written in English. Any supplemental documents originally written in another language must be submitted with an English language translation.

MISCELLANEOUS

Q: Must I have attended university or have a university degree to apply?

A: No. Formal education plays a role in terms of what we are looking for in applicants, but you will not be disqualified if you do not have a formal diploma or degree.

Q: I am currently serving in my country's military, defense ministries, police, or other law enforcement. Am I eligible to apply?

A: Yes. Previous restrictions for this program have been lifted and we are able to consider applications from military, defense ministries, and police.

Q: Will I be able to apply for visa to another country while in the United States?

A: If you are selected as a Fellow and you are planning to pursue business, education, or other opportunities in a foreign country after the Fellowship, we encourage you to secure needed visas prior to travel to the United States. In most instances, it is impossible to apply for visas to travel to other countries while you are away from your home country.

Q: Will I be able to take time off during the Fellowship to attend to other matters?

A: No. Fellows are expected to be fully engaged during the Fellowship. This includes full attendance at and participation in all required activities, events, and sessions during the Institute, the Mandela Washington Fellowship Summit, and, if applicable, the Professional Development Experience.

Q: I have a family and would like to bring them with me to the United States if I am selected as a Fellow. Is this allowed?

A: No, you may not bring any members of your family with you to the United States. Program rules prohibit Fellows from bringing their dependents or other family members, and no dependent visas will be issued.

ABOUT THE BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State. ECA's mission is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange that assist in the development of peaceful relations. ECA does this through a wide range of international exchanges including the Mandela Washington Fellowship. ECA works in close cooperation with U.S. embassies overseas to promote personal, professional, and institutional ties between private citizens and organizations in the United States and abroad. For further information, please visit the [exchanges area of the ECA website](#).

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