

About the Breaking Barriers Fellowship

The Breaking Barriers Fellowship is a one-year, full-time program that places exceptional young professionals within the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) and its leading national institutions. Fellows work at the heart of India's disability rights ecosystem – supporting policy research, program implementation and citizen engagement to strengthen rights-based governance.

At its core, the fellowship aims to strengthen state capacity for inclusion and accelerate the realisation of India's commitments under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 by embedding skilled professionals within government systems. It also seeks to build a cadre of young leaders motivated to advance disability rights and inclusion through sustained engagement with public policy.

Launched by Young Leaders for Active Citizenship (YLAC) and the Nipman Foundation, and supported by the India Autism Center, this fellowship represents a first-of-its-kind effort to connect governance with grassroots leadership. It is both an opportunity for fellows to contribute meaningfully to public policy and a step towards making accessibility a lived reality for every Indian. The fellowship is backed by the United Nations in India, with UNICEF-YuWaah, UNFPA and UNV as the technical leads.

Placement Institutions

Delhi:

- Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)
- Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities (PDUNIPPD)
- Office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)
- The National Trust
- Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)

Dehradun:

- National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD)

Mumbai:

- Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Speech & Hearing Disabilities (AYJNISHD)

Secunderabad:

- National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID)

Fellowship Overview

Key Responsibilities

As a full-time Breaking Barriers Fellow (January 2026 – December 2026), you will be embedded within your placement institute, working closely with teams to advance the inclusion agenda through research, program support, and stakeholder engagement.

Your responsibilities will include:

- Supporting policy and program design, monitoring, and evaluation as per the placement institute's priorities.
- Liaising with government officials, NGOs, practitioners, and community groups to strengthen implementation.
- Drafting reports, briefs, and communication material for internal and external stakeholders.
- Assisting in awareness and sensitisation initiatives.
- Contributing to peer learnings, recommendations, and pathways for disability-inclusive policies.

Eligibility Criteria

- Minimum qualification: a Bachelor's degree (graduates and above are eligible).
- Must be an Indian citizen, and less than 40 years of age.
- Available for full-time, year-long placement in the allocated institute (preferences will be sought during selection).
- Desirable:
 - Persons with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply.
 - Prior work/ volunteer experience or strong interest in social impact, policy, governance, disability, law, education, psychology, or related sectors.
 - Specific expertise in areas of focus/ work of the DEPwD and allied host institutions.

Compensation & Perks

- Receive a monthly stipend of ₹25,000, along with structured mentorship and dedicated support throughout the fellowship year.
- Work full-time within national-level government institutions, contributing directly to the design, implementation, and monitoring of disability inclusion policies and programs.
- Gain access to curated workshops, expert-led sessions, and peer learning forums and develop a strong foundation in disability inclusion, the purple economy, and universal design.
- Engage closely with senior policymakers, civil society leaders, and disability rights advocates, guided by departmental mentors – opening pathways to future careers in public policy, law, development, and governance.

FAQs

1. Is this a full-time commitment? Can I pursue other work/ studies during the fellowship?

This is a full-time fellowship (Jan 2026 – Dec 2026). Fellows cannot take up part-time work or academic programs during the fellowship period. Fellows are also required to attend mandatory in-person events in Delhi, including orientation, mid-year check-ins, and the closing event.

2. How will placement institutes be allocated?

We will seek your preferences before allocating placement institutes; however, specific placements cannot be guaranteed. Fellows residing in the same city as a placement institute will be given priority for placement there. Placements will also take into account the specific skill requirements of the role at the host institute.

3. Is accommodation or housing provided as part of the fellowship? What other expenses are covered if I am placed outside Delhi?

Unfortunately, we are unable to provide support for housing or local travel. Fellows are expected to arrange their own accommodation in the city of their placement. However, fellows placed outside Delhi will receive support for travel and accommodation to attend mandatory in-person events held in Delhi (such as the orientation, mid-year, and closing workshops).

4. In case I have a disability, will reasonable accommodations be provided?

Yes, a reasonable accommodations fund has been set up to support candidates with disabilities. Depending on the specific circumstances and the nature of the accommodations required, the organizing committee will make case-by-case decisions to extend support to selected candidates. If you require any accommodations, please feel free to inform us during the interview process. We are committed to being an equal-opportunity employer and welcome applications from individuals of all backgrounds, including persons with disabilities.

5. Will I receive a certificate or letter of engagement upon completing the fellowship?

Yes, fellows who successfully complete the fellowship will be awarded a letter recognizing their engagement with the host institutes.

Application Process

The application process includes a submission detailing academic and professional achievements, short essays, and references. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis, and shortlisted candidates will be invited for an interview and/or a written task. Final selections will be based on the candidate's academic and professional background, demonstrated commitment to disability rights, and alignment with the needs of the host institution.

The application process includes filling out a form. [Link here:](#)

<https://theylacproject.com/applications-breaking-barriers/>

For an accessible (word doc) version of the form, you can use the link below to download the file. Please email us the filled document at office@theylacproject.com and we'll be happy to fill the website form on your behalf.

Link to word document with the application questions:

tinyurl.com/breakingbarriersappform

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this form, please write to us on the following email address: office@theylacproject.com