



YES and FLEX Program Country Talking Points

The U.S. Department of State's Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program is an innovative high school student exchange program that builds bridges and deepens trust between Americans and people from countries of strategic importance to the United States. The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Established as part of the FREEDOM Support Act in 1992, the academic year-long program was formed by former Senator Bill Bradley's hopeful vision for future U.S. relations with the countries of Eastern Europe and Eurasia. YES and FLEX students live with volunteer American host families and attend local schools. These programs are funded by the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and are implemented by partner organizations, including AFS.

Selection process: Applicants who compete to participate in one of these programs undergo a very rigorous, merit-based selection process.

Cultural background: These students tend to be very open to sharing about their cultures and are eager to learn about the U.S. YES and FLEX students typically come from a very different cultural background than the communities where they are hosted, which enhances the exchange experience and opportunities for intercultural learning. The students also participate in various orientations before and during the experience to facilitate their adjustment.

Sponsor Programs vs. Core: At the community level, the "Sponsored Programs" students' experience is much like that of any other AFS student. The goals of their programs are primarily met by living with their host family and attending school. They participate in local orientations, meet with their liaisons once a month, and their support issues go through the same local channels.

Clusters and Enrichment Activities: "Sponsored Program" students are grouped into "clusters", preferably with a minimum of three students, to logistically facilitate the mandatory Enrichment activities that are organized for them throughout the program by dedicated volunteers: 6 activities for the YES and FLEX Year Program students and 3 Semester students.

Volunteer hours: "Sponsored Program" participants are required to volunteer for a minimum of 25 hours (15 for the semester program) during their time in the US and many go above and beyond to complete 100 hours. The students continue to do structured Community Service work upon their return home.

Stipends: YES and FLEX participants receive monthly stipends to help them engage in their host communities.

Academic motivation: The "Sponsored Programs" students who participate in the program are generally very well prepared academically and tend to take high level courses with excellent results.

YES Countries:

- Albania
- Bahrain
- Bangladesh
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- Cameroon
- Egypt
- Gaza
- Ghana
- India
- Indonesia
- Israel (Arab Communities)
- Jordan
- Kenya
- Kosovo
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Liberia
- Libya
- Malaysia
- Mali
- Morocco
- Mozambique
- Nigeria
- North Macedonia
- Pakistan
- Philippines
- Saudi Arabia
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- South Africa
- Suriname
- Tanzania
- Thailand
- Tunisia
- Turkey
- West Bank
- Yemen

FLEX Countries:

- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Czechia
- Estonia
- Georgia
- Greece
- Hungary
- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Moldova
- Mongolia
- Montenegro
- Poland
- Romania
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Tajikistan
- Turkmenistan
- Ukraine



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