

2026 Young Leaders Program Application

Please note that this PDF does not constitute the official application form. In order to apply for the 2026 Young Leaders cohort, you must [complete the form via Submittable](#).

Application deadline: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 11:59 PM ET

This application is for US-based candidates only — candidates based in France or Europe should apply to our sister Foundation in France at french-american.org.

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History of the Program

In 1976, the French-American Foundation was founded under the auspices of Presidents Ford and Giscard d'Estaing to improve the cross-Atlantic dialogue. Five years later, the Young Leaders Program was created, becoming the Foundation's flagship program. This program convenes a vibrant and highly selective group of French and American professionals whose common link is their demonstrated leadership and passion for forging transatlantic bonds.

The program's *raison d'être* is grounded in the belief that informed dialogue across cultures will lead to progress in solving the most pressing issues of our time, serving to give Young Leaders the tools to both protect the historic French-American relationship and to grow together as leaders in today's world.

The Young Leaders Program is a highly selective, two-year program. Once a Young Leader you are always a Young Leader and have earned your place among over 750 alumni around the globe. Membership to this influential alumni network comes with understanding that YLs contribute to the work of the French-American Foundation.

About the Young Leaders Program

Throughout the two-year program, Young Leaders will attend two 5-day seminars, one in France and one in the United States, held during late October each year. Each Seminar is uniquely planned by its host country.

The Young Leaders Program

- Builds a corps of citizen diplomats whose work and interests are as diverse as their backgrounds and experiences, and who cut through official channels to exchange ideas and create lasting, global ties
- Cultivates critical thinking and critical debate/dialogue skills about important topics of the day and the future for the transatlantic relationship
- Fosters growth as individuals and as a group to enhance knowledge, promote the exchange of ideas, and build mutual understanding
- Utilizes industry field trips and cultural experiences to increase understanding of transatlantic differences, uniqueness, and commonalities
- Invests in people who will help realize the Foundation's mission, growth, and shape its future

Your mission after completing the two-year program is for each Young Leader to carry forward what they have learned, in both their personal and professional life, to advance the Foundation's mission.

Application Process

Applications are open from January 12, 2026 through March 10, 2026 for the 2026 Class.

The 2026 Young Leaders seminar will be held in Philadelphia, PA from Tuesday, October 20 – Sunday, October 25, 2026.

Application Guidelines

Applicants must create a Submittable account to make an application. All application materials must be in English. (All application materials are confidential and for internal use only and will not be shared publicly.)

The Young Leaders application includes:

- The completed online form. Your contact information will be collected there and you will be asked to answer a number of short-answer questions.
- Personal statement (500 words)
- Resume

- An innovative way of introducing yourself. Examples: photo collages, PowerPoint presentations, videos (2-minutes maximum), and creative writings.
- 1-2 references

Eligibility

Interested candidates who meet the eligibility requirements are welcome to submit an application.

Applicants are eligible to apply if they:

- Are between 30 and 40 years old at the time of applying.
- Are living and working in the United States, with U.S. citizenship or U.S. residency established. (Candidates who live and work in France, or who are planning to do so, should apply to the [French-American Foundation–France’s Young Leaders Program](#).)
- Demonstrate an outstanding level of leadership in their field and a desire to meaningfully contribute to transatlantic dialogue.
- Commit to attending the full portion of the two annual seminars. Seminars are five days long and are held during the last two weeks of October; participants are asked to reserve these dates on their calendars.

Please note: Membership or participation in the French-American Foundation’s other programs does not influence a candidate’s application to the Young Leaders program.

Selection Process

Once the application deadline closes, a jury will evaluate each candidate based on their past leadership experience, their potential to attain the highest level of leadership in their career, and their ability to contribute to the enrichment of today’s world and the French-American Foundation.

The Jury

The jury aims to select Young Leaders with diverse experiences, enabling program participants to develop relationships with French and American leaders across a range of backgrounds and areas of expertise. Of equal importance are a candidate’s enthusiasm to participate in the program and their interest in being an active member of the Young Leaders Alumni Network.

Please note: A candidate's prior experience in, knowledge of, or connection to France or French culture will not be a defining factor in their evaluation. Given they demonstrate a genuine desire to contribute meaningfully to transatlantic dialogue and interest in cross-cultural leadership, candidates with strong ties to France and candidates with less exposure to the country both have potential to contribute to the program and will receive equal consideration.

Note on Application Status Communications

The Foundation will provide application status updates along the way. This includes confirmation that we received your application, interview selection notifications, and final selection as a member of the 2026 Young Leaders cohort. We appreciate your interest and dedication to this influential program but please understand that the Foundation is unable to respond to individual application status inquiries outside of this schedule.

The Application

Certification of Application Authenticity: Prohibiting the use of Artificial Intelligence in Application Materials

Before completing your application, please visit the following link to [download our Certification of Application Authenticity form](#).

Please read the agreement carefully before signing and dating at the bottom of the page. You may upload your signed form below.

Personal & Contact Information

First Name

Last Name

Date of Birth

Mobile Phone Number

Personal Email Address

Nationality

U.S. Residency Status

U.S. Citizen

Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR)

Non-Immigrant/Temporary Visa

Other (please explain below)

If you are a non-U.S. citizen, how many years have you resided in the U.S.?

Home Address:

Street Address

Apartment #

City/Town

State/Province/Region

Zip/Postal Code

Country

Have you applied to the Young Leaders program before? If so, which year(s), and why is now the right time for you to be selected as a Young Leader?

How did you hear about the program?

Word of mouth

Previous Young Leader (please specify)

French-American Foundation Board Member (please specify)

French-American Foundation newsletter

French-American Foundation website

Social media (LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.)

Other (please specify)

Professional Information

Professional Title

Employer/Organization

Professional Field

Academia or Think Tank

Arts/Culture

Banking/Finance

Business/Entrepreneurship

Communications

Consulting

Education

Foreign Affairs

Government

Nonprofit/Development/Philanthropy

Journalism/Media

Law

Medicine

Military/Defense

Science/Technology

Other (please specify below)

Work Phone Number (if applicable)

Work Address:

Street Address

Suite #

City/Town

State/Province/Region

Zip/Postal Code

Country

Contact Preferences

Preferred Email Address

Preferred Phone Number

Preferred Mailing Address

Home

Work

Short Response Questions

Please answer the following questions. Answers should be around a paragraph, or 5-7 sentences.

1. In a few sentences, please explain your role in your company/organization.
2. Give an example of demonstrated leadership in your profession.
3. How do you contribute to society?
4. Can you describe some of your long-term professional and leadership goals?
5. From your perspective, why is it important to leverage and fortify the French-American relationship in today's world?

Please note: A candidate's prior experience in, knowledge of, or connection to France or French culture will not be a defining factor in their evaluation. Given they demonstrate a genuine desire to contribute meaningfully to transatlantic dialogue and interest in cross-cultural leadership, candidates with strong ties to France and candidates with less exposure to the country both have potential to contribute to the program and will receive equal consideration.

6. After two years in the program, Young Leaders join an exceptional alumni network of leaders from all different backgrounds. Alumni give back in various ways. What would you hope to gain from being part of - and staying engaged with - the alumni community?
7. What is an interesting fact about you that most people might not know?

File Uploads & Reference Information

Please upload:

1. A brief personal statement of 500 words describing who you are and your motivation to join the program
2. Your resume
3. An innovative way of introducing yourself. For example, applicants have sent photo collages, power point presentations, videos (2-minutes maximum), and published materials. This is a chance for you to get creative and help us get to know you beyond your resume.

References

Please provide us with at least one reference (up to two) that we can contact. Your reference(s) should be a colleague, mentor, boss, etc., with whom you have worked closely and who knows you in a personal and professional capacity.

Reference 1

Reference 1 Name

Reference 1 Professional Title

Reference 1 Employer/Organization

Reference 1 Email Address

Is your Reference 1 a Young Leader?

Reference 2

Reference 2 Name

Reference 2 Professional Title

Reference 2 Employer/Organization

Reference 2 Email Address

Is your Reference 2 a Young Leader?