**Program Description:**

The Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellowship is an intensive short-term exchange program, created to foster relationships among young Europeans and Americans to build strong linkages and awareness of shared values.  The four- week program will enable students, ages 16-18, to explore U.S. foreign policy priorities such as youth engagement, support for democracy and civil society, and economic prosperity.  The program will consist of a series of lectures, seminar discussions and presentations, and a broad assortment of practical, faculty- and mentor-led workshops.  The coursework and classroom activities will be complemented by community service activities, site visits, social and cultural activities, and homestays with American families to deepen participants’ experience of U.S. society during their exchange.

During the program, participants also will have the opportunity to discuss other topics such as democratic practices, conflict resolution, problem solving, communication skills, critical thinking, tolerance and respect for diversity, youth leadership, team building, disinformation, and the media.  The program will explore how freedom of expression provides rights to and imposes responsibilities on citizens.  Upon their return home, participants will implement service projects in their communities and present an alumni project plan to a youth-serving or youth-centered organization in their home country.  These organizations may include U.S. Mission Youth Councils, American Spaces, and exchange alumni associations.

Program Funding:  Through the award given to Purdue University, ECA will cover costs for all U.S.-based activities of the exchange.

**CANDIDATE PROFILE**

**Candidates nominated for this Fellowship will:**

– be born between June 26, 2004, and June 26, 2006 (i.e., be 16, 17, or 18 years of age at the time of the program start).  
– be highly proficient in English, as demonstrated in a personal interview or the results of a standardized test;  
– be committed to enrolling in high school or university in their home countries in fall 2022, following completion of the program;  
– demonstrate strong leadership potential and interest in transatlantic relations and diplomacy;  
– indicate a serious interest in learning about the United States;  
– demonstrate a high level of academic achievement, as indicated by academic grades, awards, and teacher recommendations;  
– demonstrate a commitment to community and extracurricular activities;  
– have had little or no prior U.S. study or travel experience in the United States;  
– be mature, responsible, independent, confident, open-minded, tolerant, thoughtful and inquisitive;  
– be willing and able to fully participate in an intensive summer program, with community service and educational travel;  
– be comfortable with campus life, shared living accommodations, travel and interaction with a multinational, co-ed group of participants from across Europe and the United States;

– be comfortable engaging with the Americans they meet in the host communities; and

– be able to adjust to cultural and social practices different from those of their home countries.

Candidates must exhibit demonstrable interest in pursuing leadership opportunities in their home countries and convey a genuine desire to learn about the United States and its people, society, and institutions. They are expected to fully participate in the academic program and the follow-on activities in their home countries. They should attend all lectures and organized activities, complete assigned readings, and be ready to share their culture with Americans. They should be made aware that the program is very intensive and that there will be no time for personal pursuits unrelated to the program.

Participants will travel to the United States on J-1 visas, there should be no fees incurred for the J-1 visa application. Participants are not allowed to arrive in the U.S. prior to the start date of the program or to remain in the U.S. after its end date. Violations of program rules, host institution rules, or local, state, or federal laws can be grounds for immediate dismissal from the program.

Since many participants will be minors and will be traveling from their home country alone, the U.S. host institutions will provide adult chaperones who will accompany participants on flights between one or two European airports to the United States and back.

Frequently Asked Questions:

**What degree of English proficiency should a nominee have?**  All participants must be highly proficient in English; throughout the program they will need to fully understand lectures, actively participate in discussions, and read and write assignments in English.

**How much free time will a participant have during the program?**  There will be some limited free time during the program.  However, nominees **MUST** understand that this is an intensive academic program and they are expected to fully participate in all lectures, activities, site visits, and scheduled events.

**If a nominee has relatives in the U.S., would they have time to see them?**  Participants will **NOT** be allowed to leave the program to visit relatives or friends.

**Can a participant arrive early/late or stay after the program?**  No.  Participants who choose to travel to the United States on a Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellowship are required to abide by the J-1 visa rules.  Participants may **NOT** arrive in the United States before the program start date or remain in the country after the close of the program.

**Can a participant miss one part or component of the program?**  No.  All participants are expected to participate in all scheduled lectures, events, site visits, trips, and activities.

**How much money will participants need to bring for the program?**  ECA will cover all basic costs of an individual’s participation in the U.S.-based exchange.  Generally, the host institution will provide meals through a combination of a cafeteria meal plan and a pre-loaded debit card for use at local restaurants.  Information on housing and meal arrangements will be provided by the host institution prior to the start of the program.  Participants should not expect to receive any spending money from the program.  Participants should bring their own spending money if they wish to purchase souvenirs or other items during their time in the United States.

**One of our BFTF alumni has a sibling who would like to apply for the BFTF program. Can they apply?**  Priority will be given to nominees who are unrelated to past BFTF participants.

**Will applicants with disabilities be considered?**  Yes, the Youth Programs Division welcomes nominations for individuals with disabilities.  We are committed to working with Purdue University to arrange reasonable accommodations for all participants.  Notification of a disability will not negatively impact selection.  We ask that you identify disabilities during the nomination process so that we can begin working with Purdue University to ensure appropriate accommodations.

**What are the plans for BFTF if health and travel disruptions continue through the summer due to the global health pandemic?** Should ECA determine that conditions do not allow for an in-person U.S.-based exchange, ECA would work with the implementing partner, Purdue University, to transition the 2022 program to a virtual platform.

**Will COVID19 vaccinations be required to participate in the program?** Yes, COVID vaccinations will be required due to vaccination requirements in multiple cities that will host BFTF programming, including Washington DC, Chicago, and Philadelphia.  More information will follow regarding this requirement.