Carnegie Young Leaders for Civic Preparedness

FAQ

Eligibility & Participation

- **Can I be on more than one team?**

  o   Fellows can only be on one team. Only one application per team/project is allowed and if accepted, only one project per team will receive funding. The team lead will receive a $2,500 stipend, and each team member gets $1,000. There's also up to $1,000 available to help make your project happen.

- **I'm an educator — can I build a team of students from a club I run?**

  o   If you're between 14–24, you can apply! But this program is really about young people leading the way. So it's best if your students form the team and choose the team lead among them. You can still be an awesome support or community mentor for them! If there are young people you think should apply, you can share them here!

- **Can teams apply if they're already part of a youth organization or project?**

  o   Totally! If you're part of a youth-led group already doing great work, you can apply. Just make sure your project brings something new to the table—e.g. a new idea, a broader reach, or a fresh approach to the problem you're working on.

- **Can international or undocumented students be part of a team?**

  o   Unfortunately, international students are not eligible for the program. Undocumented students can absolutely participate and are represented in our current class of fellows.

- **When should I expect to hear back about my submitted application?**

  o   Applications submitted by our March 30, 2026, priority deadline will receive an update by April 15, 2026.

  o   Applications submitted by May 4, 2026, will receive an update by June 1, 2026.

o   All selected teams should be prepared to complete onboarding forms during the month of June 2026.

Project Information

- **What makes a standout project? What do you mean by sustainability?**

  o   We are seeking projects that will provide opportunities to engage in productive discussions, use credible evidence for the problem you are addressing, and collaborate to solve problems. Standout projects have a clear plan for what you envision achieving during the fellowship and the beginning of a plan for how to keep the work going even after it ends. It doesn't have to last forever, but you should show how the work can live on in your community, through your team or others.

- **Can we enhance or change our projects as we go through the program?**

  o   Yes, of course! We expect projects to grow and shift as you learn more. As long as your overall goal stays the same, it's okay to tweak your plans. You'll have regular check-ins during the year, so there will be chances to share updates and get support as your project evolves.

- **Can a project be in partnership with another person or small business?**

  o   Yes! You don't have to partner with anyone, but teaming up with a local business or community leader can help strengthen your project and expand your impact. A community organization might give you advice, connect you with local people or resources, offer a space to meet, or just back your ideas to help make your project stronger and more sustainable.

- **What projects are considered civically-based?**

  o   If your project helps your community, it's civic! Whether you're tackling criminal justice reform, food insecurity, mental health, housing, health inequity, violence, a challenge faced by a specific racial or ethnic group in your community, or something else, it counts.

Team Structure

- **How are teams composed? What if I don't have a full team?**

  o   A full team should have 5 people—1 team lead and 4 team members. The team lead is your team's main point of contact and representative. You should

definitely work together and share leadership within your group, but for the program, we can only officially recognize one team lead. The team lead will receive a $2,500 stipend and each team member receives $1,000. There's also up to $1,000 available to help make your project happen.

  o   You'll need a team of 5 when you submit your application. If you're having trouble pulling your team together, consider recruiting new team members at school, a local community group or through your professional network. You can always reach out—we're here to help.

  o   Only **one** application should be submitted per team, and it should be submitted by your designated team lead.

- **What makes a strong team?**

  o   A strong team is made up of young people who really care about the issue they're working on and may have even experienced it first-hand. Good teams are ready to put in the effort to meet project milestones, divide up roles, communicate consistently, meet regularly with their CYL coach, and support each other throughout the project.

- **Do the Team Leads need to have any specific requirements?**

  o   Nope! It's totally up to your team to decide who should take the lead. A great team lead is someone who keeps things moving, helps organize tasks, and makes sure everyone stays in the loop.

- **What do we do if there is a problem with a member of the team? Can we switch them with someone else?**

  o   We hope everything goes smoothly, but if a problem does come up, let us know. We'll work with you to figure out the best solution—it's something we'll handle on a case-by-case basis.

Application

- **What makes a standout application in your eyes?**

  o   A strong application shows that your team really understands a problem in your community, and has a clear, realistic plan to do something about it. It should reflect your personal connection to the issue and show that your team

is ready to follow through. Each required element of the application including the project narrative and video and budget proposal must be complete.

- **Do we get assigned a community mentor, or do we choose one ourselves?**

  o You'll choose your own community mentor. If your team is selected, we'll ask that your team find someone local who can help guide and support your work. We'll assign you a coach, but your mentor is someone you find within your own community.

Program Expectations & Support

- **I would love to hear about current projects that fellows have done and how this program has helped contribute to their growth.**

  o Carnegie Young Leaders are leading powerful, youth-driven community projects that tackle real issues in their communities. Take a look at what the inaugural class of Carnegie Young Leaders are working on [Here](#)!

  o Carnegie Young Leaders helped fellows grow by giving them funding, structure, and resources to bring their ideas to life. Through coaching, workshops, and peer support, they are building confidence, leadership skills, and deeper connections—and they're turning passion into real change.

- **What happens if my project isn't going as planned?**

  o Things don't always go exactly as planned—and that's okay. Staying flexible helps you deal with real-life challenges that you will come across as you work on your project. They make your project stronger. Ask for and be open to feedback from your coach, teammates, and community. If something isn't working, it's totally fine to make changes. Keep open communication, and if you hit a bump in the road, treat it as a learning moment. What matters most is how you adapt and keep moving forward.

- **To what extent should project activities be non-partisan?**

  o Generally, projects should be non-partisan. While projects address civic and social issues that matter to you, they should not directly support or oppose any political party, legislation, candidate, or political views. The goal is to build civic awareness, leadership, and impact in ways that are inclusive and welcoming to people of all backgrounds and beliefs.

Convening Logistics (Team Leads Only)

- **Who attends the program kickoff? What does the travel stipend cover?**

  - Only the team lead attends the program kickoff. The travel stipend is meant to cover economy fares for your full round-trip travel to and from the convening. The stipend only covers the team lead or the team member who is attending as your team's representative.

- **What if the team lead can't attend the in-person program kickoff, if accepted?**

  - If your team lead can't make it, you should choose another team member to go instead. Just let us know ahead of time so we can work it out the details. Make sure the person attending can bring back what they learn to guide your team through the program.

- **Can more than one person from my team attend if we cover the cost on our own?**

  - We're so glad you're excited —but even if you cover your own costs, we can only accommodate one person per team due to space and logistics. Thanks for understanding!

Program Components, Stipend, & Follow-Up

- **What is the total amount of the project stipend?**

  - $7,500 is the total for the whole team. That breaks down to $2,500 for the team lead, $1,000 for each of the 4 team members, and up to $1,000 to help cover project expenses.

- **Will we get to interact with other teams?**

  - Yes! The program kicks off in person from July 28–30, 2026, for team leads only. After that, everything else—like check-ins, workshops, and the bi-monthly community meetings—will take place online through Zoom and Graduway.

  - All Fellows will have the chance to interact during our bi-monthly community sessions (Zoom), and we use a virtual platform called Graduway. It's a space where you can message other Fellows, see what topics they're working on, and find out who's nearby or doing similar work.

  - Note that meetings with your coach and community mentor are up to you to decide together what works best for your schedules and project needs!

- **What if we have more questions? Who can we contact?**

  o You can reach the Carnegie Young Leaders staff directly at civiceducation@cands.org. We regularly monitor the inbox and you'll generally hear back within 24 hours.