



FLEX Program FAQs

What is the FLEX program?

Created in 1992, the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program provides scholarships for high school students (ages 15-17) from many former Soviet Union countries and Eastern Europe to spend an academic year in the United States, living with a family and attending an American high school. Learn more on the FLEX website (www.discoverflex.org) or visit www.exchange.state.gov.

What is the goal of the FLEX program?

The FLEX program's primary goals are to improve mutual understanding between the people of United States and Eurasia countries and to allow young citizens of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to have the opportunity to observe and experience American civil society. FLEX students will:

- Gain an understanding of American society, people, values, culture, diversity, and respect for others with differing views.
- Interact with Americans and generate enduring ties.
- Teach Americans about their home countries and cultures.
- Explore and acquire an understanding of the key elements of U.S. civil society.
- Share and apply experiences and knowledge in their home countries as alumni.

Who administers FLEX?

The FLEX program is administered in partnership with the U.S. Department of State by a consortium of non-profit organizations led by American Councils for International Education, which is also responsible for the recruitment of FLEX students. PAX has been a member of this consortium since the inception of the FLEX program.

How are FLEX participants selected?

FLEX students undergo a rigorous, multi-step, merit-based selection process. Efforts are also made to recruit students from diverse geographical areas, socio-economic backgrounds, and ethnic groups to ensure a diverse candidate pool. Students with disabilities are also actively recruited.

Academic performance, English language competence, and personal qualities are important factors in the selection process. Applicants take tests in English speaking, writing, and comprehension, are interviewed individually and in groups, and must have the academic equivalent of a "B" average. Approximately 20 percent of applicants advance to the final round, and their applications are sent to Washington D.C., where trained volunteers make their final selections. On average, one in 40 applicants is selected to participate.

What are FLEX students' English-language skills?

FLEX students have studied English a minimum of three years and come with very strong academic records. Students usually arrive with above-average written and oral English proficiency, which can still vary greatly depending on the student's nationality and socio-economic background. It is important to remember that FLEX is also an English-learning scholarship program, with tutoring available for students with weaker English skills.

What sets FLEX students apart from other exchange students?

The U.S. Department of State holds its scholarship students to the highest standards and considers them to be youth ambassadors. While in the United States, scholarship students are required to pursue the following activities:

- International Education Week (IEW): Each November, all FLEX students make presentations about their home countries in their schools, at community gatherings, religious congregations, and businesses.

- All FLEX students participate at least in two enhancement activities per quarter and learn about American culture and diversity; government and democracy; entrepreneurship and free market economy; and leadership.
- All FLEX students complete at least 20 hours of service and participate in Global Youth Service Day in April.
- All FLEX students are encouraged to participate in workshop opportunities in Washington D.C. each spring. Through an essay competition, American Councils selects FLEX students to take part in these leadership workshops sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

Why and how can you become involved?

U.S. citizen engagement in the FLEX program is vital to its success. When American host families welcome FLEX students into their homes and host schools receive FLEX students for an academic year, everyone benefits. Everyone involved has the unique opportunity to learn about each other based on personal, direct interaction and sharing. Your family, school, or community can learn about a different part of the world and help a FLEX student learn about our country. You will be a citizen diplomat by creating positive impressions about America and Americans, breaking stereotypes, and fostering mutual understanding and respect.

What is the impact of FLEX on participants?

While in the U.S., FLEX students—likely future leaders of their home countries—learn about concepts such as civic duty, the individual's capacity to effect change, and personal empowerment. Students also see important elements of civil society in action, including volunteerism and the notion that citizens can be proactive in dealing with societal problems. Upon return, as they share what they have learned, students make positive contributions to their communities by initiating activities that build on acquired skills and experiences gained during their stay in the U.S.

What do I need to know about hosting a FLEX student?

For general information about hosting with PAX, please visit pax.org/faq (for families) or pax.org/schools. Answers to common questions that pertain specifically to the FLEX program can be found below.

When do FLEX students arrive in the U.S. and in their host community?

FLEX students arrive in groups from their home countries from late July to early September. They overnight in Washington, D.C., before flying to their host communities.

When do FLEX students depart their host communities at the end of the program?

FLEX students leave between early May and mid-June. They first fly to Washington, D.C., where they spend a night before leaving for their home countries the following day. Some FLEX students may need to return to their home countries for required university entrance exams before their U.S. school year is complete.

Do FLEX students receive an allowance?

The scholarship provides for a monthly "stipend" (\$125) for items such as phone bills, snacks, toiletries, movies, etc., and a reimbursement fund for incidentals (\$300), such as winter clothing and school supplies. In addition, PAX can reimburse for required school fees, immunizations, and sports physicals.

Do FLEX students have health insurance?

All FLEX students arrive at their host family's home with a PAX ID card on which is written the policy number and phone number for the student's health insurance provider. Upon arrival to the host family's home—or shortly after—students will receive an insurance packet with an insurance card found at the top of the form in addition to a claim form and a description of their insurance coverage.