a program of the
U.S. Department of State

Kennedy-Lugar
YES
Youth Exchange and Study

Be a Cultural Ambassador
Represent Bangladesh

The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study Program

Academic Year 2018-2019

Preliminary Application Guidelines

iEARN-BD

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Program Website: **www.yesprograms.org** Dhaka Embassy Website: **bd.usembassy.gov**

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Edward M. Kennedy

Richard Lugar

The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program is a high school exchange program of U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The program enables Bangladeshi high school students to spend one academic year at an American high school. Students live with host families, attend classes, learn about American society and values, acquire leadership skills, participate in community service activities, and help Americans to learn about Bangladesh's culture. Throughout the year, K-L YES students develop relationships with their American peers.

The YES program was established in 2002. The program was named after Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Senator Richard Lugar because of their vision for building bridges between Americans and young people of other countries based on mutual interests and respect for one another as individuals, while dismissing assumptions and stereotypes based solely on an individual's nationality or ethnic origin.

Currently K-L YES program has more than 10,000 alumni from more than 40 countries. The program had started in Bangladesh in 2004, since then, 364 Bangladeshi students participated in YES program and over 340 of them are now affiliated with YES Alumni Bangladesh Association.

International Education and Resource Network - Bangladesh (iEARN-BD) implements the YES program in Bangladesh with the support of U.S. Embassy-Dhaka.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligible applicants must:

» Be Bangladeshi citizens and **not** dual citizens or permanent residents of the U.S., or any other country.

» Be 15-17 years old on 1 August 2018. Have a date of birth between August 1, 2001 and August, 1, 2003.

» Be currently enrolled in grade 8, 9, 10 or 11 in high schools and colleges of Bangladesh. Bangladeshi citizens studying in foreign countries are not eligible to apply.

» Have an equivalent of B-Grade average or better without failing grades in current and last two academic years.

» Demonstrate sufficient English language ability to speak and to study in English.

» Meet the U.S. visa eligibility requirements.

» Not have applied for U.S. immigration through family or relatives.

» Not have parents working in the U.S. Mission (U.S. Embassy, USAID) in Bangladesh.

In addition, students' health records will be reviewed by a U.S. medical team to ensure that they are sufficiently healthy to participate in the program.

SELECTION PROCESS

STEP: 1 PRELIMINARY APPLICATION

DEADLINE: 16 NOVEMBER 2017

Check if you meet the eligibility criteria.
» Apply for the program online. Go to www.iearnbd.org (recommended)
» Send the required documents by post to iEARN-BD office. OR

» Collect Preliminary Application Form from your school/college or iEARN-BD office or download from www.iearnbd.org.
» Submit the completed form with necessary documents by post or in-person to iEARN-BD office.

STEP: 2 PHONE INTERVIEW

Tentative Date: December 2017

» After the preliminary application screening, short listed candidates will be invited for a phone interview. The interview will be 3 minutes long and it is designed to test applicants on general knowledge. The details of the interview will be sent out only to the shortlisted applicants.

STEP: 3 ELTiS TEST & IN CLASS ESSAY

Tentative Date: December 2017

» Short listed candidates from essay submission will sit for ELTiS test & In Class Essay:

» About ELTiS test: ELTiS stands for English Language Test for International Students. There are two parts in the test; Reading (45 minutes) and Listening (25 minutes).

» About In-Class Essay: Students will have to write 3 essays during the test. They will get 20 minutes to complete each essay.

STEP: 4 FINAL APPLICATION & INTERVIEW

Tentative Date: January 2018

» Qualified students in the ELTiS test & In-Class Essay will submit the final application. Students will be informed about the final application process if they qualify.

» Students who will submit the final application will be called for interview. There are two parts in the interview; individual and group.

The selection process will be completed within January 2018.

After interview (Step-4), list of finalists and alternates will be announced from Washington D.C., USA. Selected students will be notified and will have to attend Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) and Travel Orientation before travelling to the USA.

SCHOLARS' STORIES

Some stories from our scholars of 2016-2017 Batch

Mehzabin Nahar Chowdhury - Thiensville, Wisconsin

Getting accepted for YES program was the best thing that has ever happened to me! Coming from a small town with limited resources and opportunities, my dreams were rather big. I grew up in a society where most girls were married off before they reached the age of 18! It neither could stop my academic aspirations nor my desires to explore and expand my horizon. Before YES, I would run to the rooftop just to catch a glimpse of airplanes flying by, but after I got selected for YES, I found myself in the middle of world's largest and busiest international airports, changing flights. YES gave wings to my dreams and now only sky is the limit!

Sharfuddin Shawon - The Colony, Texas

Before YES program, I was a shy person. I had a fear of public speaking. I would get nervous during my presentation. YES program has given me the confidence to be in public and lead from the front. I find it interesting that my friends not only acknowledge the change I have been through but also gives me compliments like I am an engaging person when it comes to presentation skills.

Zaheera Khandaker - West Salem, Wisconsin

I believe that if there is anything that can bring about the best change in oneself, it would be becoming a cultural exchange student. I am immensely grateful to YES program for its enormous impact in my life. I have learned to deal with everyday struggles of being independent, gained endurance for diversity, learned a new culture, shared my own culture with a community that had little or no knowledge of it. I am now stronger than I ever was!

Ahmad Nirjhar Mohiuddin - Colombus, Indiana

YES program helped me chase my dreams. I studied as in grade 11 at Columbus Signature Academy New Tech. I completed my program successfully with the help of my family and friends that I made in America. The USA I knew from the movies was not real. My life USA was a combination of challenges and fun! America was different from Bangladesh in terms of rules, laws, language, food, and culture. YES program has helped me grow certain senses of responsibility. I now know how to wash my clothes, clean the bathroom, and cook. YES program taught me how to keep a positive mindset and keep bringing positive change in the world. This is an experience that is worth experiencing and sharing!

Sanjana Sayed - Caldwell, Idaho

YES program is not just living the 'American Dream' but far beyond that. It is a year of learning, representing my traditions, sharing my culture and weaving a better world together with understanding and love. It is a bridge between the two completely different worlds. I embarked on this challenging adventure only to see myself becoming a problem-solver and a more experienced person. YES made my inner qualities flourish and discover a new, better me. I crawled out of my comfort zone and ventured the unknown. I made friends from around the world and created ties that connected hearts. YES gave me memories of a lifetime!

Tasnia Tahsin Tuli - Coleman, Michigan

YES program is like a story that started with nothing and gave me hundreds of memories and thousands of smiles! It was best year of my life because it changed me into someone better and filled me with the inspiration to bring a positive change in my life and the world. I understood that it was not just about living in America but about the realization that "I can do it"!

Zarin Tasnim Lamiya - Paradise, California

USA has always been my dream country to go study in. YES program made that dream of mine come true! Being a cultural ambassador of Bangladesh gave me the opportunity to learn about American culture and share my own culture with the American people as well. Spending one academic year in America helped me build a global network of friends and family! For the first time in my life, I had to live away from my natural family and it made me sad but little did I know that it was just another opportunity to get a warm welcome from an American family and community who would love me as one of their own! YES program was a journey that journey came with challenges. I overcame all of them by myself and I am thankful for that opportunity because I believe that in life the adventure starts at the end of comfort-zone!

Tanziuzzaman Sakib - Rowlett, Texas

Have you ever pinched yourself to make sure that you are not dreaming because everything happening in your life is too amazing to be true? YES program gave me that feeling! It taught me that life can be better than dreams. Words are inadequate to express how grateful I am to YES program for giving me this fantastic opportunity to evolve into a better person through some incredible experiences during my exchange year. It had not only given me the opportunity to experience one of the best education systems in the world or to learn how to ride a horse like a cowboy from the movies but also blessed me with many amazing moments. YES program changed my worldview, widened my heart and helped me to really grow up!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the cost of the Program?

The U.S. Department of State sponsors the whole program and covers all major expenses including airfare, U.S. visa fee, boarding and lodging in the United States, school tuition and monthly stipend of $125. Candidates will not bear any costs.

2. Is there any flexibility in age?

No, applicants must be at least 15 years old and no more than 17 years on 1 August 2018.

3. Can I apply and then withdraw at any stage from the program?

Yes, but it is highly discouraged because only a definite amount of scholars are selected and the selection is a costly process. Only apply if you are seriously intending to participate in the program from the very beginning and have your family's consent.

4. I am not a Bangladeshi national, am I qualified to apply?

No, the program participation is only for Bangladeshi nationals bearing a Bangladeshi passport.

5. Where will the students live in the USA?

The students will live with an American host family. It can be any state and students are spread across the country with the help of placement organizations. These organizations are approved by Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Bureau of the U.S. Department of State.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

6. What are host families?

Average American families - usually from suburban settings - who volunteer to host exchange students for an academic year. They are very carefully chosen by the placement organizations. The host families receive no monetary profit from hosting the exchange students, but they gain the company of the foreign exchange students who expose them to their own culture and values. That is what inspires them to host in the first place.

7. Where do host families come from?

The host families are as ethnically diverse as the population of the U.S. While English must be the first language spoken at home, many families are from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Students should be mentally prepared for, and be open to, the idea of being placed with host families from any type of ethnic and cultural background.

In addition, families of all religious backgrounds can be found in every American community. A Host family can be of any faith or religion. Community Representatives ensure that female Bangladeshi students are not placed in families where there are boys over 13 years of age. The girls will also be exempted from all activities, sports etc. that require them to wear clothes that show the body and are against Islamic and Bangladeshi values.

8. How are the hosts selected?

The Placement Organizations select the host families, matching them with students of common interests. The potential host families are found through community service organizations, churches, athletic leagues, youth groups, foreign language classes, malls, county and state fairs, advertising, etc. Every host family undergoes a criminal background check by law enforcement authorities.

9. What will be my status at the host family?

A student will develop various relationships during the ten months of his/her stay in the US on the YES program. The relationship of the student with the host family is at the heart of the cultural exchange and is likely to be the most important part of the year. All YES students need to possess a strong desire to be part of an American family and the willingness to accept distinct responsibilities in their new family. These responsibilities may include (for both male and female) helping with household chores such as cooking, washing dishes, laundry, and cleaning and abiding by all family rules, even if they differ from their natural family rules in Bangladesh. Having a domestic helper is extremely unusual in the U.S., therefore, all household chores are done by members of the family. Please note that American families and the American society in general, treat males and females equally; it is important to learn cultural and family norms and abide by them. The student must exhibit flexibility, tactfulness, politeness and maturity of character. YES students who expect to be treated like guests or be given special treatment in their American families are unlikely to excel in the program.

10. Can I live/visit with my relatives, home country friends who live in the U.S.?

No, students are not allowed to be hosted by their relatives in the USA, nor can they demand to be placed with relatives. Such visits are strongly discouraged during the program year, especially during the initial adjustment period, as they can interrupt the continuity of the relationship buildup with the host family and may diminish the exchange experience for the student and the host family. Any unauthorized visit will result in dismissal from the program.

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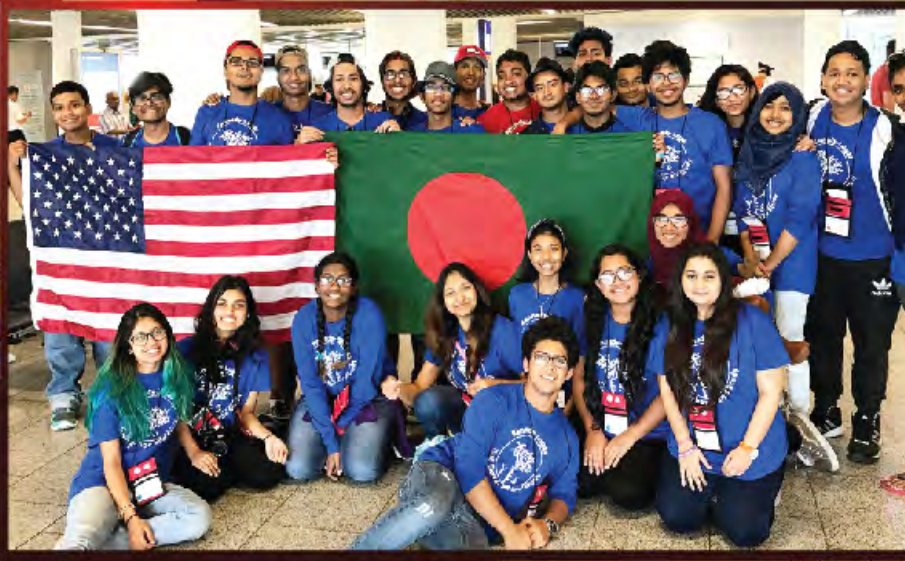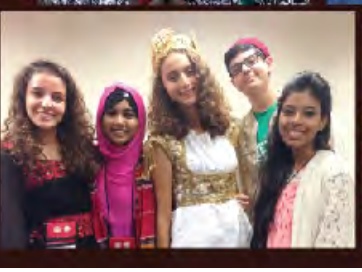
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