

*"The FLEX program gave to my daughter more than my husband and I could ever expect: maturity, patriotism, leadership and independence. I could not believe that in one year, she grew up and became an adult person with a great desire to improve our country."*

—Mother of FLEX student from Kyrgyzstan

*"We hosted so that we could help our own children realize how much we all have in common with people from all over the globe and so that a young person from outside the U.S. could meet and know us. We now have a 'forever friendship' and a part of our heart is in Serbia."*

—The Phillips Family, Colorado

*"Our kids, many of whom have lived in Alabama their entire lives, get their boundaries stretched and their experiences broadened by making friends with our exchange students."*

—Calera High School Principal, Alabama

**THE UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
Future Leaders Exchange Program  
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# Promoting Peace and Understanding

Between the United  
States and Countries  
of Europe and Eurasia



## What is FLEX?

The **Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX)** is a U.S. government program that provides scholarships for high school students (ages 15-17) from countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia to spend a year in the United States, living with a family and attending an American high school. FLEX participants come from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

## What is the goal of the FLEX program?

The program was created from former Senator Bill Bradley's conviction that the best way to ensure long lasting peace and understanding between the United States and the countries of Europe and Eurasia is to enable young people from these countries to learn firsthand about the United States and Americans. The primary goal of FLEX is to improve mutual understanding between our countries by allowing young citizens of Europe and Eurasia to have the opportunity to observe and

experience an American way of life. Since the FLEX program began in 1993, it has expanded to include new countries and has welcomed tens of thousands of students to the U.S. During the program, participants attend school, share their culture and perspective with Americans, and contribute to their host communities. These young leaders return to their countries with a new enthusiasm and share their experiences and newly acquired knowledge to benefit their home communities.

## How are FLEX participants selected?

Participants are recruited and selected through a multi-step, merit-based, open competition spanning over 200 cities across the region. Academic performance, English language competence, and personal qualities are important factors in the selection process. Applicants take tests in English speaking, writing, and comprehension; write essays; take part in individual interviews; submit letters of recommendation; and must have the academic equivalent of a "B" average. Approximately 20% of applicants advance to the final round and their applications are sent to Washington, DC, where trained volunteers make their final selections. On average, one in 40 applicants is selected to participate.





*"We love our exchange daughter more than anything! What a life-changing experience for all of us! And we've also gained a new amazing Georgian family."* — **Host family in New Mexico**

*"I extend my sincere gratitude to my son's host mother, Jennifer. This is a person with a great soul and a kind, gentle and considerate heart. She is a hidden treasure for children with visual impairments. She can teach a child to cook, find his way, and be more independent."*  
— **Mother of a blind FLEX student**

## Who administers FLEX?

FLEX is a program of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. government. The Department of State awards grants on a competitive basis to U.S. private, not-for-profit organizations that have submitted proposals to manage various components of FLEX. Grantee organizations recruit and select applicants, place students with American families and in schools, provide support to students while they are in the United States, liaise with natural families, conduct special programming, facilitate the participation of students with disabilities, and coordinate alumni activities.

## Why and how can you become involved?

U.S. citizen engagement in the FLEX program is vital to its success. We are looking for host families who reflect the cultural, ethnic, national, and geographic diversity of the United States. Host families can be with or without children at home, young couples, empty nesters, single adults, and single parents. Your family, school, and community can learn about a different part of the world and help a FLEX student learn about our country. Everyone involved has the unique opportunity to learn about each other based

on personal, direct interaction and sharing of cultures. When American host families welcome FLEX students into their homes and host schools receive FLEX students for an academic year, everyone benefits. Many FLEX students stay in touch with their U.S. host families and friends after they return home and many feel that they have gained a second family. Interested individuals; schools; and private, not-for-profit organizations should contact the FLEX program office at the U.S. Department of State for more information at [FLEX@state.gov](mailto:FLEX@state.gov). Together we can make a difference!

## What is the impact of the FLEX program?

A year in the U.S. gives FLEX students a unique opportunity to expand their horizons and prepare for the challenges ahead, while also bringing countless benefits to American host families and communities. Just as most FLEX alumni are eager to share what they have learned about American society and culture with their families and friends back home, so too are the U.S. host families, schools and newfound friends motivated and inspired by these students. FLEX students not only share about their home countries and cultures with the broader community, but they also give back, in the form of community service.

In a typical year, FLEX students perform tens of thousands of hours of community service in the hundreds of host communities that welcome them for their exchange year. This reciprocity is echoed by host schools and their teachers as well. As one Tajik student's teacher at Jasper High School in Jasper, Missouri put it, "She is leaving our school a better place." The impact of FLEX students across the country lingers in the hearts, minds, and spaces that embraced them.

*"My host family became my second family and I love them so much. It is a wonderful feeling when you know that you have another family on the other side of the world."* — FLEX student from Montenegro

*"We hired Daler right after he got back from the FLEX program. In the two years he has worked for us he has shown himself to be responsible, punctual, reliable and trustworthy. He speaks English perfectly, which is essential for our company. Daler has exceeded our expectations in terms of his workload while at the same time attending university. We are proud to have such an employee!"*  
— **Director of an IT company in Tajikistan**

