

2024 Asia Young Leaders for Democracy (AYLD)

I. Purpose

Democracy underpins global stability, human rights and international security, and a politically active and robust civil society is critical to the sustainability of any democracy. An informed and active citizenry is the driving force behind a genuine and competitive political process. It also helps build citizens' confidence in their country's political system. Democratic transitions are rooted in variables such as the people and social/political movements; thus, sustainable democracy programs cannot be delivered in a top-down, one-off, and short-term manner. In order to achieve sustainable change, democracy promotion must be a long-range exercise and span through generations.

To underscore the importance of a strong civil society, in August 2014, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) launched the inaugural Asia Young Leaders for Democracy (AYLD) program in Taipei, Taiwan. The inaugural AYLD gathered fifteen committed young democracy advocates and NGO activists from across Asia to visit Taiwan for the two-week program. The participants attended lectures and discussion sessions led by distinguished scholars and practitioners on a range of topics related to democracy and human rights. The program also provided extensive networking opportunities for the participants and their counterparts from the region, and it allowed all who were involved to gain insights to the successful case of Taiwan's democratization, as well as the island's rich culture and history, through a series of field excursions.

Building upon the successes of the past few years, the TFD is organizing the program again this summer (August 18 – August 25, dates to be confirmed). The TFD is now seeking applications from passionate and fierce defenders and advocates of democracy and human rights who are interested in the program.

II. Eligibility

- This program is geared towards **practitioners**, who work actively to promote democracy and human rights in Asia.
- Applicants can be policymakers, academics, legal professionals, and leaders of civil society organizations, including representatives of nongovernmental organizations, political parties, legislative assistants, and the media.

- Applicants should be between the ages of 18 to 35 and preferably have 1-3 years of full-time working experience.
- Applicants must enclose **at least two references** from organizations or individuals in the field of democracy or human rights who are familiar with the applicant's work or have worked with the applicant.
- All participants must attend the program for its **entire duration**.
- As the entirety of the program will be conducted in **English**, participants should feel comfortable communicating in English.
- Academic credentials are not a requirement for admission to the program. However, it is crucial that participants have enough academic ability necessary to participate in the program. Participants are also required to submit written reports by the end of the program.

III. Funding

The TFD will cover roundtrip air travel to Taiwan (economy class), accommodation, meals (partial), and visa costs for all participants during the program. Participants will be reimbursed **after** the full completion of the program. The TFD **does not** provide assistance with booking flights. Applicants are encouraged to seek supplementary funding from other sources.

IV. Date and Venue

This year's AYLD Program will be held for a period of 6 days at TFD headquarters in Taipei, Taiwan. The program will run from **August 18 to August 25, 2024**.

V. Program Courses

The AYLD courses include lectures, seminars, discussions, and field visits. Courses are related to democratization, human rights and social movements. Past topics for AYLD included: *Authoritarian Influence and Challenges to Democracy in the Asia-Pacific Region*, *How to Combat Disinformation of Extremism and Hate Speech in Online Space*, *Youth in Politics and Cross-Over from the NGO Sector to Government Institutions*, and *Advocating for LGBTQI+ Rights and Current Challenges*, among others

▪ Possible Field Visits:

1. Taiwanese NGO office spaces
2. Historical/ cultural sites and institutions significant to democracy and human rights.

VI. Operational Procedure

Applications must be received by May 17, 2024. Result notifications will be sent out by the end of June 2024.

VII. TFD's Commitment

The TFD is the first democracy assistance foundation established in Asia. TFD's primary mission is to further consolidate Taiwan's democracy, promote democracy in Asia, and actively participate in the global democratic network.

The TFD puts its ideals into practice through farsighted, transparent and non-partisan management. Building on the strength of civil society, the TFD enables Taiwan to positively contribute to the worldwide movement for democracy. TFD is also active in the international community, making substantive contributions toward the strengthening of democracy around the globe and expansion of Taiwan's international space. Moreover, TFD promotes democracy education and exchanges among professionals, academics, think tanks, parliamentarians, and political parties. The AYLD program is one of the TFD's flagship exchange endeavors. TFD looks forward to continuing such exchange endeavors for many years to come.