

Request for Applications: Richard Rockefeller Fellowship at Columbia Global

RFA issue date: February 27, 2026

Application link: <https://cwp.submittable.com/submit/348217/richard-rockefeller-fellowship-2026>

Deadline for submissions: April 17, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Beijing Time

Overview

Columbia Global will host the Richard Rockefeller Fellowship (RRF) in 2026 to support the practical development of emerging leaders in China's philanthropic and non-government sectors as they explore strategic philanthropy for a sustainable future and strengthen collaborative ties between the U.S. and China in these areas.

This year's program, which will begin in July 2026, will empower a cohort of eight social entrepreneurs and nonprofit leaders from China, focusing on sustainable development and climate issues. Fellows will gain in-depth knowledge, skills, and networks to scale their organizations' initiatives and create lasting positive change.

The fellowship will span a duration of four to five months and include a range of program elements:

- **Onboarding and Cohort Strengthening:** Fellows will engage in an introductory phase that covers core topics, including a two-day "Creative Ideas" launch and the development of a draft action plan while in China.
- **A Five-Week Stay in the U.S.:** Fellows will benefit from a carefully curated educational and capacity-building experience at Columbia University and leading U.S. philanthropic organizations. This portion will focus on practical learning and tailored academic experiences that align with their interests and goals.
- **Comprehensive Expense Coverage:** The fellowship covers essential expenses, including housing, meals, international airfare, training program tuition, insurance, materials, and other relevant program-related costs.
- **One-on-one Mentorship:** Fellows will be paired with experienced mentors who will offer guidance, expertise, and support throughout the program, enhancing their learning experience.
- **Expanded Networks:** Fellows will enjoy sustained networking opportunities with U.S. and Chinese colleagues to support their continued work in China.

- **Final Action Plan Presentation:** Fellows will finalize their action plans and present them to key stakeholders in China, ensuring that their insights and strategies are effectively communicated.

Throughout the program, fellows will engage with three core components: Personal Leadership Development, Strategic Philanthropy, and Climate Action and Solutions, each focused on equipping them with the tools and expertise to drive impactful change in their work.

Requirements: The RRF is an intensive, full-time fellowship that lasts approximately four to five months. Fellows should obtain a formal leave of absence from their current work for the five-week stay in the United States, as well as the onboarding and final action plan presentation days in Beijing.

During the program, fellows will be responsible for completing a set of activities and research objectives. Responsibilities include active participation in meetings and lectures, research, writing, and logistical and administrative coordination. Fellows will be asked to submit regular progress reports during the length of their fellowship.

Required outputs:

- A mid-term and final English-language report summarizing key insights from their experience, research, and their thoughts about how these insights can contribute to the development of strategic philanthropy in China;
- An internal presentation to Columbia Global leadership and staff on fellowship findings;
- A comprehensive action plan presentation to key stakeholders in China, demonstrating newly acquired skills and knowledge while identifying sustainability and climate solutions tailored to the Chinese context;
- Contribute to the program by sharing fellowship experience via events, videos, or articles, resulting in at least one tangible deliverable.

Anticipated Timeline

- **Application Deadline:** April 17, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Beijing Time
- **Fellows Announced:** Early June 2026
- **Onboarding Session:** Late July/Early August 2026
- **Columbia University/NYC Modules:** Sept. 19 - Oct. 18, 2026
- **West Coast Module:** Oct. 19-23, 2026
- **Concluding Event:** November (Beijing)

Covered Accommodations and Expenses

The Fellowship will provide a modest stipend and cover costs for housing, food, international airfare, program materials, local meetings, and travel costs, as well as other relevant program-related expenses. Fellows will have room and board consisting of single-room dorm accommodations.

Selected applicants must participate in the fellowship as individuals. We are unable to invite and/or cover expenses for significant others and/or family members to join the fellows in New York.

Selection Criteria

Baseline Requirements

- Stage: Mid-career professionals at a pivotal point in their career journey
- Citizenship: A Chinese citizen (including those from Hong Kong and Macau)
- Education Level: Bachelor's degree or higher

- English Proficiency: Strong speaking and writing skills in English. This can be fulfilled by meeting at least one of the following criteria:
 - Holding an undergraduate or graduate degree from a country where English is an official language.
 - Providing scores from recognized English proficiency tests.
 - Accepted tests include the Test of English as a Foreign Language iBT (TOEFL) - including TOEFL iBT Home Edition and Paper-Based Test (PBT), International English Language Testing System Academic (IELTS), Pearson Test of English (PTE Academic), or Duolingo English Test (DET).
 - Demonstrating proficiency through other means, such as using English as the primary language for work, study, or daily living.
- Availability for Program
 - Are you committed to spending July to November 2026 participating in the RRF?
 - Are you committed to spending five weeks from September to October 2026 in the United States?
 - During the portion of the program when you are staying in the United States, do you agree to live in the program's pre-determined accommodations?

Criteria

- **Mission Alignment**
 - Demonstrates significant vision and the potential to become a social impact leader in China, with a strong commitment to sustainable development and addressing climate issues.
- **Personal Quality**
 - Optimistic, inquisitive, and open-minded, with the ability to work independently and collaboratively.
 - Approaches societal challenges with creativity, critical thinking, and cross-disciplinary perspectives.
- **Potential for Growth and Learning**
 - Demonstrates a strong desire to acquire new knowledge and skills to overcome current challenges (e.g., scaling impact, securing funding, refining strategy).
 - Actively seeks opportunities for personal and professional growth through academic and network resources.
 - Presents a realistic plan for applying new knowledge and skills to their work.
- **Skills & Experience**
 - Excellent communication, research, and writing skills in English.
 - Demonstrated track record of entrepreneurial or leadership experience in social enterprise, nonprofit, or impactful projects.

How to Apply

Please complete an application by **April 17, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Beijing Time** to be considered for the program. You can access the application link at <https://cwp.submittable.com/submit/348217/richard-rockefeller-fellowship-2026>.

Please include the following materials **in English** with your online application:

- Personal Statement (200 words or fewer) addressing the following three questions:
 - Describe your current work as it relates to climate and sustainability.
 - What do you hope to focus on during the fellowship, and how does this relate to your current or future work?
 - Why is this moment the right time in your career to benefit from this program?
- Scanned copies of diplomas from all post-secondary institutions attended

- Resumé or Curriculum Vitae (three-page maximum)
- A video (up to two minutes) answering the following question:
 - Your name, current work/study status.
 - What motivates you about your current work in climate and sustainability, and how would this program help you achieve your goals?
- Two letters of recommendation (**either in English or Chinese**) from individuals in academic, professional, or community service settings
- Applicants who have not earned their undergraduate or graduate degree from a country where English is the official and widely spoken language must provide evidence of English proficiency.
 - Acceptable documentation includes recognized test scores (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS, PTE, DET) or proof of significant professional experience where English was used as the primary language for communication, such as employment verification, written statements from employers, or transcripts from English-taught programs.

For general information or questions, contact Columbia Global Center Beijing at beijing.cgc@columbia.edu or through WeChat ID: ColumbiaChinaCenter.

About Columbia University, Columbia Global, Columbia Global Center Beijing, and Columbia World Projects

Among the world's leading research universities, [Columbia University](#) in the City of New York seeks to advance the frontiers of scholarship and foster a community deeply engaged in the complex issues of our time through teaching, research, patient care, and public service. The University is composed of 17 undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools, and four affiliated colleges and seminaries in Manhattan, and a wide array of research institutes and Global Centers around the world. More than 40,000 students, award-winning faculty, and professional staff define the University's underlying values and commitment to pursuing new knowledge and educating informed, engaged citizens.

[Columbia Global](#) was established in 2022 to bring together major global initiatives from across Columbia University to advance knowledge and foster global engagement. These initiatives include the Columbia Global Centers, Columbia World Projects, the Committee on Global Thought, the Center for Undergraduate Global Engagement, and the Institute for Ideas and Imagination. Columbia Global's vision is to reimagine the university's role in society as not only a nexus for learning and intellectual exploration but also as a catalyst for creativity and impact locally, regionally, and globally.

[Columbia Global Center Beijing](#) is part of a network of 11 Global Centers of Columbia University in the City of New York, one of the world's leading academic institutions. For over a decade, the Beijing Global Center has served as a regional hub in East Asia, creating spaces for dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge exchange between Columbia and China's top academics and leaders, contributing to solutions for global challenges and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

[Columbia World Projects](#) supports connections between the Columbia community and social impact practitioners and policymakers around the globe to achieve concrete change benefiting humanity. More than a think tank, we are a get-it-done tank, working to create positive change both in the world at large and within Columbia.