

THE LANE KIRKLAND SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

application deadline - 1 MARCH 2026

Leaders of Change Foundation

announces an open competition for candidates from
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,
Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan

for

**THE LANE KIRKLAND SCHOLARSHIPS in Poland
for the 2026–2027 academic year**

The Lane Kirkland Scholarship Program has been supporting the individual development of young, ambitious and active citizens from Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia for 25 years. Since 2000, over 1000 alumni have taken part in the Program. This group of alumni includes present members of government, parliamentarians, managers from large multinational corporations, managers in local government bodies, and well-known social activists. The author and founder of the Program is **the Polish-American Freedom Foundation**. The Program is also financially supported by **the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA)**.

The Program offers two semesters of study in one of four Polish academic centers (Warsaw, Cracow, Wrocław, Lublin) and at least two weeks of professional internship in state, private, or non-governmental organizations. The program also offers an extensive training and workshop program.

The program is addressed to young leaders and experts who hold university degrees and are interested in the development of democracy, economy, and civil society in their own countries and in the region.

FIELDS:

- Economics and Management
- Administration/Management in business, NGOs, culture, education and healthcare
- Public Administration (Central and Local Government Administration)
- Law (including Human Rights with Issues of Migration)
- Social Sciences (Social Psychology, Sociology)
- Political Science, Journalism, and International Relations
- Environment and Climate Protection
- Security and Cybersecurity
- Crisis management
- Development Policy and Humanitarian Aid
- Fields related to the reconstruction of areas destroyed by the war e.g. urban planning, civil engineering, forensic science, etc.

25
years

Detailed rules concerning participation in the Kirkland Program can be found in *the Rules and Regulations of the Program*.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

- **Free access to university classes and support from an academic advisor**
- **A scholarship of PLN 22,500 (paid in 9 installments for 9 months).**
- **Reimbursement of travel expenses (arrival in Poland and return) according to limits set annually**

In addition, the Program administrator provides the following (worth approx. 5000 PLN/month):

- accommodation during the whole stay in Poland
- health insurance for medical outpatient care, treatment costs in case of emergency, and civil liability insurance
- one return ticket to Poland (up to an agreed limit)
- public transport cards
- visa costs
- research materials
- participation in an introductory course, and in grantees' conventions,
- Polish language course (October–June).

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM:

- Inauguration of the Program and introductory course (8–10 days, second half of September 2026)
- Classes at universities (two semesters) in leading Polish academic centers, such as Warsaw, Krakow, Lublin or Wrocław
- Preparation of two semester papers and one diploma paper
- Two–three conventions for all Kirkland grantees held in different cities across Poland
- Professional internship (minimum 2 weeks)
- Personal development training and Polish language course (two semesters)
- Graduation ceremony – diplomas (end of June 2027)

The requirement for obtaining the diploma of Program completion is the preparation and defense of the diploma paper. The diploma paper may be of a scientific or practical nature.

CANDIDATES:

The Kirkland scholarships are addressed to individuals who represent the following professional groups:

- civil servants, employees of central and local government institutions
- lawyers
- entrepreneurs
- managers in NGOs, culture, education, media, environmental protection, healthcare, business
- leaders of non-governmental organizations, animators in culture and civic activity
- academic teachers
- journalists

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

- Citizenship and permanent residence in one of the target countries (holders of a Polish residence card, and people living or working in Poland when applying for a scholarship are ineligible; however, **this criterion does not apply to Ukrainian and Belarusian citizens who arrived in Poland after January 2025** – such persons may apply for Kirkland scholarships)
- Full university education – completed Bachelor's or Master's degree, consisting of a minimum of four years of degree study
- Up to 40 years of age
- At least two years of professional experience
- At least two years break from participation in a previous scholarship abroad that was longer than 6 months. This criterion does not apply to candidates from Ukraine, or Belarus who arrived in Poland after January 2025.
- A candidate (from Ukraine or Belarus) temporarily residing in Poland cannot be employed full-time during the scholarship period

Kirkland Program studies may be conducted in Polish or English. Knowledge of the Polish language facilitates full use of the educational offer at Polish universities and of the professional internship. Candidates who plan to study in English are required to indicate in their application form a specific educational offer in that language at one of the above-mentioned four academic centers.

Candidates are required, during the interview, to speak Polish to at least at B2 level, or to speak English at the B2 level and Polish at the basic, A1 level.

Candidates with insufficient knowledge of the Polish language, but who have obtained a high score in the interview, will be allowed to take a Polish language exam at the end of June 2026. The results of the examination determine the final qualification of the candidate for the scholarship.

PREFERRED CANDIDATES:

- candidates actively working in their professional and social fields
- candidates who have significant achievements
- candidates who have not studied in Poland yet

SELECTION PROCESS:

Approximately 40 of the best candidates will be selected in a three-stage evaluation process :

- I. Review of applications regarding eligibility criteria
- II. Review of applications by experts in the fields in question
- III. Interviews (planned for 7–24 April 2026)

The candidates who have advanced to the third stage will be notified by e-mail by 30 March. Information on the final nominations will be mailed to the candidates in May.

Candidates, who are selected to participate in the Program on condition that they improve their knowledge of the Polish language, will have the opportunity to pass the language exam organized at the end of June 2026.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:

- ✓ On-line application form
 - detailed personal questionnaire
 - reasons why the candidate wants to participate in the Program; the project to be carried out during his/her stay, containing an outline of the diploma paper that will be prepared if the candidate wins the scholarship, as well as proposals concerning the implementation of the scholarship and plans how to use the knowledge gained afterwards (4,000–6,000 characters with spaces).
- ✓ Two letters of reference (in Polish or English), describing the achievements and qualifications of the candidate as well as the expectations connected with the candidate's further development and work in her/his professional or social field. Recommendation letters must not be written by the candidate's family members and/or life partners.
- ✓ Copy of latest university degree

APPLICATION PROCEDURE:

A description of the program can be obtained directly from the following website: www.kirkland.edu.pl. They can also be requested by e-mail from the Program Office.

Application forms should be filled out on-line and include the following attachments in PDF: 2 letters of reference and a copy of your university degree.

APPLICATION DEADLINE:

Application forms and relevant documents should be received by the Program Office no later than:

1 march 2026

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

The Program is named after **Lane Kirkland** (1922-1999), the legendary trade union leader (AFL-CIO), member of the Polish-American Enterprise Fund Board of Directors, and promoter of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation. In the 1980's, he wholeheartedly supported the Polish "Solidarity" movement. He also understood and supported the aspirations for freedom and democracy of other peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. He was awarded the highest distinctions, including the American "Medal of Freedom" and the Polish "Order of the White Eagle." In 2022, he was posthumously awarded the "Medal of Gratitude" for his support for the Polish "Solidarity" movement.

CONTACT:

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L. Kirkland Scholarship Program

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POLISH-AMERICAN FREEDOM FOUNDATION (PAFF) – Program Founder

The Foundation began its program activities in 2000 with the dual intention of consolidating the results of the transition begun in Poland in 1989 and sharing the Polish experience of transformation with other countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

POLSKO-AMERYKAŃSKA
FUNDACJA WOLNOŚCI



POLISH-AMERICAN
FREEDOM FOUNDATION

In Poland, the Foundation pursues its goal mainly through programs aimed at equalizing educational opportunities and improving the quality of education, as well as supporting civic activity at the local level, especially in rural areas and small towns.

Between 2000 and 2025, the Foundation allocated more than \$302 million for its activities while raising nearly 299 for foundation programs from other sources.

The Lane Kirkland Scholarship Program, implemented from 2000, is a long-term endeavor for the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, and has been administered by the Leaders of Change Foundation since 2016. Additional information about the Polish-American Freedom Foundation and its programs can be found at: www.pafw.pl

25
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The
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LEADERS OF CHANGE FOUNDATION (FLP)

– Program Administrator



The Foundation was established in February 2016 by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation.

The main activities of the Foundation include the administration of the long-term programs financed by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation: the Lane Kirkland Scholarship Program and "Study Tours to Poland" Program.

The Lane Kirkland Scholarship Program and Study Tours to Poland Program were transferred to the new Foundation, together with their experienced teams who have been responsible for their creation for many years. A combination of programs with similar profiles, and the participation of new people in their co-creation constitute an opportunity to expand and enrich our activities. We would like to have a broad offer addressed to those who are willing to benefit from the experiences of active people from East Europe, the Caucasus region, and Central Asia. In collaboration with academic centers and institutions in the public and NGO sectors, we also hope to offer some new forms of internship and research stays in Poland. We gather together people who believe in the power of change.

Additional information about the Foundation is available at www.leadersofchange.pl

Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA)

Since 2019, some scholarships under the Kirkland Program are funded by NAWA (Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange).



NAWA is a new institution that was established on October 1st, 2017 by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education. It is set up to coordinate the process of internationalization of Polish academic and research institutions by stimulating scientific cooperation and academic exchange. The mission of NAWA is to foster scientific excellence, disseminate information about Polish universities and research institutions as well as to promote Polish language and culture in order to create the image of the country offering interesting educational and research opportunities. These goals are met through a broad range of programs: Programs for Researchers, Programs for Institutions, Programs for Students and Polish Language Programs. www.nawa.gov.pl