Program Overview

The READ Program Overview

In 2021, the Albanian-American Development Foundation (AADF), in coordination with the Institute of International Education (IIE), has established the Albanian Diaspora Fellowship Program called Research Expertise from the Academic Diaspora (READ) Program. READ is a 7-year project that will connect Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Albania with the Albanian scientific diaspora and their respective academic institutions. The program is built on AADF's strategic priorities in education, especially in the higher education system. As diaspora engagement initiatives have been sporadic, AADF will play a leading role in establishing a well-structured path for channeling contributions of the scientific diaspora in ways beneficial to the Albanian HEIs. The READ Fellowship Program will benefit from the existing networks of AADF and other initiatives in higher education such as CleanScore, Center for School Leadership, and Junior Achievement of Albania.

This program offers a unique opportunity to address the untapped potential of the Albanian intellectual diaspora in ways that would enhance capacities and bring about structural changes in the Albanian higher education system. The READ Fellowship Program will address this gap by setting up a *catalytic model* for Fellows and Albanian HEI alike to benefit from creative collaborations. On the one hand, READ will allow diaspora scholars to make a meaningful contribution to Albania. On the other hand, the program will strengthen the capacities of Albanian HEIs by making full use of the valuable skills and experiences of the diaspora.

The READ Fellowship Program provides a formalized and structured fellowship program through which the Albanian academic diaspora can contribute to the development of HEIs in Albania and the overall development of scientific research in the country. READ will offer short-term fellowships (from one to six months) to highly qualified diaspora scholars (Albanian-born and second-generation Albanian) in OECD countries to pursue capacity-building collaborative research projects at Albanian HEIs. The Fellowship will contribute to Albania's research output and will connect Albanian academic institutions with peers abroad. It will also help Albanian researchers access research grants from different donors by training them in grant application and project design skills.

The program is designed on the successful model of diaspora fellowships implemented and administered in collaboration with Institute of International Education (IIE). READ

supports Albanian collaboration among Albanian HEIs and diaspora scholars through four main activities: **collaborative research, curricula and course development, and co-teaching.**

The three key program objectives are: **Sustainability—**sustainable collaborations between diaspora scholars and Albanian HEIs while fostering the opportunity for new collaborations and increasing access to research funding; **Institutional Capacity Building**—educational projects in collaborative research, curriculum offerings, graduate programming, and PhD mentoring; **Community Engagement**—knowledge production, international collaborative networks, and increased visibility and engagement with Albanian HEIs.

To enable institutions to seamlessly launch, implement, and scale collaborative activities with diaspora scholars, the framework of the diaspora fellowship programs includes the following key elements:

- An Advisory Council comprised of thought leaders from the Albanian diaspora and researchers from HEIs in Albania will select priority fields of academic scholarship aligned with national interests and demands in human capacity development.
- Universities identify their needs for new curriculum and research in priority academic fields and propose projects for international academic collaboration.
- Scholars from the diaspora express interest and are matched with projects based on expertise and mutual interest.
- Selected scholars carry out short-term fellowships at the universities to complete the projects and co-teach and mentor undergraduate and graduate students.
- Scholars and universities participate in alumni engagement activities and convenings to enhance the fellowship experience for future cohorts, contribute to the program's sustainability, and continually identify areas for collaboration.

In 2025, the READ Board of Trustees approved "READ 2.0" to extend and enhance the READ Program. The updated program will include new and revised components designed to address the sector's most pressing needs and align with the best international practices, including:

- Applied Research Grants will support projects that directly tackle Albania's development challenges, making sure academic work has a real-world impact. This addresses a clear gap in the system, where local research often struggles to get funding unless it is closely linked to teaching duties. By focusing research on national priorities, READ can help close the gap between academia and development policy.

- The Diaspora Fellowship Program will bring highly qualified Albanian scholars from abroad to work at local universities for extended periods of up to 6 months. These fellows not only teach courses and mentor students but also immerse themselves in the academic life of the institution, building long-lasting ties that persist beyond their stay. Their presence has been shown to enhance educational standards, diversify curricula, and inspire both faculty and students.

In this way, READ will evolve from a program that connects Albania with its academic diaspora into a larger ecosystem that nurtures talent, strengthens institutions, and links knowledge with action. This expansion presents an opportunity not only to build on what has worked but also to expand its reach and lasting impact.

Nature of Fellowships

The READ Program sponsors collaboration between Albanian scholars in the Diaspora and those in Albania (Resident Scholars). READ provides benefits to both sides of the collaborative partnership. The benefits awarded to the Albanian Resident Scholars include:

- Research grants of up to 500,000 ALL (2,500,000 ALL for projects at public universities pursuing applied research). Applicants will be asked to provide a detailed financial proposal for the project activities.
- Fellowships are awarded for a period of 1 to 6 months for one or more of the below activities:
    - Collaborative research (joint research paper and/or joint research project),
    - Curricula and course development, and
    - Co-teaching.
- Projects can extend across the program year, but the Diaspora Scholar's in-person engagement in Albania should be a minimum of 2 weeks and a maximum of 3 months (60 days). The Diaspora engagement can be either in person or a combination of in-person or virtual collaboration, but virtual time should be a maximum of 1/3 of the total engagement.
    - Diaspora Scholars may visit Albania multiple times, although flight costs exceeding the READ budget are not eligible for reimbursement.
    - Diaspora Scholars must spend a minimum of two weeks in-person on their READ project.

- The maximum number of working days for a Diaspora Scholar is 60. A maximum of 1/3 of the total number of working days for a Diaspora Scholar can be virtual; the rest must be in-person.
- Projects may require up to 2 Diaspora Scholars, but the maximum number of working days for each Diaspora Scholar is 30 days.

A grant may be revoked, terminated, or suspended. Grounds for revocation or termination include, but are not limited to:

1. Violation of any law of the Republic of Albania;
2. Failure to observe satisfactory academic or professional standards;
3. Physical or mental incapacitation;
4. Engaging in any unauthorized income-producing activity;
5. Failure to comply with the grant's terms and conditions.

A grant may be suspended if:

1. The grantee ceases to carry out the project or academic program during the grant period or
2. The grantee leaves Albania without authorization of the READ Program.

Application and Review Process

Learn More

- Albanian Resident Scholars at Albanian HEIs are responsible for submitting the details of the envisioned project. READ projects must include collaborative research, curricula and course development and/or co-teaching.
- Project Requests are submitted during the annual application cycle by the relevant deadline set by the READ Program.
- In the project, Albanian Resident Scholars may identify a Diaspora Scholar with whom they wish to collaborate, or request that READ seek a Diaspora Scholar match for the project's requirements.
- After the deadline, initial screening and endorsement of applications are done by AADF and IIE. If READ coordinates the matching of a project and a Diaspora Scholar, the parties involved will be notified prior to the project entering the peer review process for approval.

- Once a project from an Albanian Resident Scholar is linked to a Diaspora Scholar (either through READ matching or through the Diaspora scholar being named in the Project Request), the linked project/Diaspora scholar pair will be sent to a peer review panel.
- The READ Advisory Council will select finalists from among the projects recommended in peer review. Finalists will interview with AADF for funding consideration.
- Notifications will be sent at each stage of the review process (initial screening; peer review; Advisory Council selection) to the Albanian Resident Scholar.

Developing A Project with an Albanian Diaspora Scholar

READ is a two-sided application process requiring a project submitted by a Albanian Resident Scholar at an Albanian HEI, and the credentials of a Diaspora Scholar submitted to the Roster. In many cases, READ anticipates that Albanian Scholars are in contact with colleagues from Diaspora and will collaborate on the project details submitted by the Albanian Resident Scholar. READ encourages this kind of cooperation, although it does not increase the likelihood of selection in comparison to projects without such prior cooperation.

Program Eligibility

Application Note: If you are a scholar in the Albanian Diaspora seeking to submit their credentials to be considered for a project, please submit your application at https://myapp.iie.org/read_diaspora_scholar.

If you are based in Albania but have not yet attained a PhD, please submit an application at https://myapp.iie.org/read_resident_phd_student if you wish to be considered for education and training projects under the READ Program.

Program Eligibility

Albanian Resident Scholars are academics based at an eligible institution in Albania. The Albanian Resident Scholar(s) will collaborate with Diaspora Scholar on the project request. If selected, the Albanian Resident Scholar(s) will be the primary point of contact for the Diaspora Scholar during the fellowship period.

For the 2026-2027 competition, academics at the following institutions are eligible to submit a project to READ:

- Albanian University
- Aldent University
- Aleksander Moisiu University, Durres
- Aleksander Xhuvani University, Elbasan
- Armed Forces Academy
- Canadian Institute of Technology
- Epoka University
- Eqrem Cabej University, Gjirokaster
- European University of Tirana
- Fan S. Noli University, Korca
- Ismail Qemali University of Vlore
- Luarasi University
- Luigi Gurakuqi University, Shkoder
- “Marin Barleti” University
- Metropolitan University
- POLIS University
- Polytechnic University of Tirana
- Sports University Of Tirana
- Tirana Business University
- Universiteti Mesdhetar
- University College Bedër
- University of the Arts
- University of Agriculture of Tirana
- University Of Medicine
- University of New York Tirana
- University Of Tirana
- Western Balkans University

Additionally, Albanian Resident Scholars must possess **all** the following qualifications in order to be eligible for the READ Program:

- Albanian lecturer/ scholar / academic staff that is currently working at Higher Education Institution in Albania.
- PhD or equivalent degrees.
- More than 5 years of working experience at a university / HEIs or research center in Albania, within the last 10 years.
- Proficiency in English appropriate to the research project to be carried out in Albania.
- Knowledge of the field of expertise and willingness to share and commit with the Diaspora Scholar.

Note: A team with two or more scholars from HEIs has an advantage

Program Eligibility Choose One:

1. I meet all the above required criteria
2. I do not meet one or more of the above required criteria

Resident Scholar(s) and Institution Details

Application Note: All items must be in English.

Primary Albanian Resident Scholar

Please give your name exactly as it appears on your passport

Prefix (Dr.,Mr., Mrs., Ms.,Mx.)

First Name

Middle Name

Last Name

Birthdate

Gender

Current Country of Residence

Primary Citizenship

Secondary Citizenship (if applicable)

Country of Birth

City of Birth

Contact Information

Primary Email Address

Secondary Email Address

Phone

If you are working as a team, click here to enter information about other members. You, the applicant, are the **Project Leader**. Please enter *other* members of your team below. You should **NOT** add PhD or other students here, nor should you add a Diaspora partner you may have identified.

Resident Scholar 1:	Name	Title	Institution
Resident Scholar 2:	Name	Title	Institution
Resident Scholar 3:	Name	Title	Institution
Resident Scholar 4:	Name	Title	Institution
Resident Scholar 5:	Name	Title	Institution

Educational History

Please complete the following fields regarding your PhD or other terminal degree.

Institution Name

Field of Study

Faculty or Department

Year PhD was awarded

Current Institution Details

Affiliated Institution Name

Country: Albania

Street

City

Region

Postal Code

Department / Office

Faculty / School

Current Position

University Website

Position Start Date

Most significant professional accomplishments, honors and awards, and up to three significant publications (100 words)

Please enter the number of peer-reviewed articles you have published in an international journal.

Project Details

Application Note: All items must be in English.

Question 1: Which of the following eligible activities do you plan to pursue in collaboration with a Diaspora Scholar on a READ Fellowship? * Choose one or more.

READ encourages projects that include co-teaching combined with other activities.

- Co-teaching
- Collaborative Research (joint research paper and/or joint research project)
- Curricula and course development

Question 2: Field of expertise
Select one discipline from the list below that best describes your general area of expertise.

Question 3: Research Areas of Interest - Please describe generally your research areas of interest, not limited to the research area of your READ project. (100 words)

Question 4: Project Title

Question 5: Abstract (100 words)

Question 6: Project Description: With reference to the project activities selected above, please describe the proposed activities to be pursued by the Resident Team and a Diaspora Scholar. (500 words)

Question 7: Project Background: Please address why this project is needed, and how your project will address these needs. (500 words)

Question 8: Project Outcomes: Please describe the impact of your project, and detail the expected outcomes. If you plan to publish an article or attend a conference, please give the names of the journals or conferences you are considering. If you plan to develop a curriculum, please list the names of the expected courses you will develop. (500 words)

For Projects with a Collaborative Research Component

Question 10A: Methodology: Explain the approach, methods and plan you will use (for example, interviews, library or archival research, or laboratory experiments). Indicate whether the proposed research is quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. (500 words)

Question 10B: Applied Research: Applied research is focused on specific, real-world problems and seeks to find solutions in partnership with industry, government or other sectors, or which can quickly be put into practice in industry, government or other sectors.

Is the project you are proposing an example of applied research: Choose Yes/No

If yes, **Question 10C:** Please describe how the results of your research will be applied to have an immediate, real-world effect in collaboration with industry, government, or other sectors. Please list the businesses, agencies or other actors that will apply your research (250 words) *

Question 10D: Please describe any involvement of students as part of the research work. If students at your institution will be collaborating in research work, please list their names. Further, please note whether you would be interested in working with students from the Albanian Diaspora. (250 words)

For Projects with Curricula Development

Question 11A: Which courses do you plan to update and why?

Question 11B: How many students are attending this/those courses?

Question 12: Sustainability: How will the research collaboration proposed here between the Resident and Diaspora Fellows continue into the future? What steps will be taken during the project visit to ensure sustainability? What other funding sources may be available to support your future work? (250 words)

Diaspora Scholar Selection

Search For Diaspora Scholars:

Scholar Selection Option #1: I will search for a Diaspora Scholar.

You have opted to choose a Diaspora Scholar from our system.

If you know the name of the person you would like to work with, please search for them in one of the name fields below.

If you do **NOT** have a specific scholar already identified and wish to search the Roster for a potential match to your project, please search below by Field of Study. The list of scholar represents all scholars who have submitted an application to the READ Roster.

To search for all scholars, simply leave the filters blank and click **Search**.

Question: What skills or knowledge will this Diaspora Scholar contribute to this project?

Question: Have you contacted this Diaspora Scholar to confirm their interest in participating in this project?

Don't Find Your Scholar?

If your desired scholar has not yet submitted a READ Roster application, you may write in the scholar's name here:

Please do make sure you mention the Name, Email Address, and University of the Scholar.

Scholar Selection Option #2: READ will search for a Diaspora Scholar.

You have requested that READ searches for a Diaspora Scholar on your behalf. READ will promote your project to available candidates, and share with you the CVs of any interested candidates for you to consider.

Question: What skills or knowledge should a Diaspora Scholar contribute to this project?

Project Timeline and Workplan

Application Notes: *All items must be in English*.

Projects selected in this cycle should start no earlier than **1 June 2027** and be completed by **31 July 2028.**

In this section, please describe the steps that you will take to achieve the objectives of your proposed project. In each segment below, please select a range of dates.

Then, within that range, describe the activities that you, the members of your team in Albania and/or the Diaspora Scholar will undertake during that range. Please be specific as to the roles of each member. Not every member is expected to contribute equally, nor at the same time.

Finally, in order to calculate an appropriate budget for each member of the team, please provide an estimated number of working days for each member during each segment. You should also note whether the Diaspora partner's work will be done during an in-person visit to Albania, or virtually.

Notes:

1. Dates below should not overlap.
2. Diaspora Scholars should spend a minimum of 2 weeks in Albania over the course of the project.
3. While the Diaspora Scholar may make multiple visits to Albania, their total travel reimbursement is limited to $500 USD (for scholars based inside Europe) and $1,500 USD (for scholars based outside Europe).
4. The total number of working days for a Diaspora Scholar is 60. A maximum of 1/3 of the total working days can be virtual.

Segment 1

Start Date

End Date

Description of Activities (200 words)

Proposed Working Days per Team member

Project Leader (You):
Resident Scholar 1
Resident Scholar 2, etc.
Diaspora Scholar (virtual)
Diaspora Scholar (in-person)

Segment 2

Start Date

End Date

Description of Activities (200 words)

Proposed Working Days per Team member

Project Leader (You):
Resident Scholar 1
Resident Scholar 2, etc.
Diaspora Scholar (virtual)
Diaspora Scholar (in-person)

You will have a maximum of 10 segments to use to illustrate how you and the members of your team will engage in the work proposed.

Research and Infrastructure Budget

Under the READ Program, research project are eligible for financial support of up to 500,000 ALL, and applied research projects at public institutions are eligible for up to 2,500,000 ALL.

There are two types of budgets. The Research Budget is payable to the individuals involved and includes supplies that will be used during the project.

The Infrastructure Budget provides covers equipment that will be used beyond the timeline of this project. Equipment purchased under this project will be owned by the higher education institution and used by the researcher(s) engaged in the project.

In the READ Year VI application, applicants will be asked to complete a spreadsheet in Excel format, and to upload that to the online application. This will allow READ to work directly with finalists in analyzing and completing their budget request.

After completing the spreadsheet, applicants should input the totals for each category. By inputting these costs into the system, READ can run reports for the overall program year. We appreciate your understanding in entering your costs.

Guidelines with more specific instructions on completing your budget submission can be downloaded from the Budget page inside the online application.

All costs below should be in Albanian lek (ALL)!

Research Budget

Category 1: Honorarium

Resident Scholars are allowed to request honoraria for themselves and members of their team. There should be some connection to the expected working hours of each member of the team, but READ recognizes that it is unlikely given the budget available that scholars will be fully compensated for their work on their project. Further, honoraria are allowed make up a maximum of 30% of the total Research Budget. In the Honorarium category, please list each member of the team and the requested honorarium for each, along with the working days and other details that help READ understand how the total was calculated.

Category 2: Publications, Trainings & Workshops

Costs related to disseminating your research results fall into this category. Allowable costs under this category include:

- Costs of publication in international journals with a high impact factor, including "Reviews", the publication fee and any other costs applied by the publisher for the publication of the scientific article.
- Costs related to presenting at international conferences (please identify the conference(s)), including conference participation fees and international travel.
- Costs of hosting a workshop or training session, including room rental, coffee break/catering, gifts (such as notepads/pens) for participants; and costs of travel for guest speakers. Do not include the cost of your Diaspora partner as their travel costs are paid directly to them through their fellowship.

Category 3: Kits and Reagents:

Applicants may include the costs of kits and reagents, laboratory supplies, and other perishables that will be used during the project.

Category 4: Field Work

Costs related to field work, including travel to the site, meals and accommodations at the site, and necessary supplies. If your Diaspora partner will join you at the site, please include the related costs of the Diaspora Scholar's participation. While READ provides the Diaspora Scholar with a budget for their international travel to Albania, travel within Albania for the project should be included in the project budget.

Category 5: Other

You are eligible to submit other costs related to the project that do not fit into the above categories. Please be specific as to your requests.

Infrastructure Budget

The Infrastructure Budget is limited to projects at public universities that are pursuing Applied Research. Please ignore this section if you do not meet both of these conditions.

The Infrastructure Budget provides covers equipment that will be used beyond the timeline of this project. Equipment purchased under this project will be owned by the higher education institution and used by the researcher(s) engaged in the project.

Infrastructure costs may include (but are not limited to):

Category 1: Equipment and Devices

The Infrastructure Budget can be used for any device that will remain after the project is completed for future use:

- Computers (laptop, desktop)
- Computer accessories
- Scanners, sensors, etc.
- Monitors, analytical devices
- Other devices.

Category 2: Computer Programs/Software

The purchase of computer programs or licenses for use can be submitted in this category.

Category 3: Books & eBooks

Please specify the type/name of book in this budget line.

Category 4: Other

Other hardware, devices, or materials that will outlast this project for future use can be submitted in this category.

CV Upload

Any uploaded documents must be typed or computer-generated; please use 12-point or larger type. Handwritten resumes will not be accepted.

When composing a curriculum vitae, it is important to include:

- Education (universities attended, degrees earned and dates received)
- Positions held
- Courses taught and other services provided to students and the home institution
- Publications (provide full citations and list them starting with the most recent)
- Other professional activities, such as workshops, seminars and consultations
- Membership and activities in professional associations
- Professional honors, awards and fellowships
- Community service

The application asks for similar information but provides limited space for answers. In the curriculum vitae, you should expand upon these topics to fully illustrate your accomplishments.

Important: Curriculum Vitae/Resume cannot exceed 6 pages.

Recommendations

You may register one recommender from your Chair of Department, Head of Institute, Dean, or a similar professional. Letters should be on university letterhead and signed.

- Prefix
- First Name
- Last Name
- Organization
- Position/Title
- Relationship
- Telephone
- Email

Note: Use your recommender's institutional or corporate email address. Submissions from anonymous email addresses (Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo) may be subject to additional review.

- Personal Message to the Recommender

Certification

l certify that the information provided here is true and complete.

In place of your signature, please type your full legal name:

REMINDER: This **is not an official application**. Please use this document as a guideline to prepare your materials for the online application.

If you have questions, please contact READ@iie.org.