INTERNATIONAL ASTRONAUTICAL FEDERATION

2027

IAF EMERGING SPACE LEADERS (ESL) GRANT PROGRAMME

HANDBOOK

- Please read the following guidelines carefully before beginning the application process -

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1. What is the IAF Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme?

The IAF Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme provides each year funding for the next generation of space enthusiasts aged 21 to 35 to attend the International Astronautical Congress (IAC).

Launched in 2008 with just 10 participants, the programme has experienced significant growth over the years. This year, we are pleased to announce that there are 40 available spots.

The IAF Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme aligns with the IAF's commitment to promoting 3G+ diversity (Geography, Generation, and Gender).



The benefits of the IAF ESL Grant Programme

1 - Registrations
The recipients of the 2027 ESL Grant Programme will be registered to the following events:

- IAC 2027
- Space Generation Congress (SGC 2027) **or** UN/IAF Workshop[1]
- Cross-Cultural Communications and Presentation Workshop (CCCPW)

The registration to the IAC and related activities will be handled and paid for by the IAF Secretariat.

2 - Onsite Programme
The Cross-Cultural Communications and Presentation Workshop (CCCPW) is designed for both native English and non-native English speakers and provides Emerging Space Leaders grantees and IAC Next Generation plenary speakers with the opportunity to rehearse and review their presentations.[2]

Receive invitations to participate in the activities of the IAC Student Programme (organised by the International Space Education Board and restricted to students) and the IAF Young Professional Programme (restricted to young professionals) respectively, both of which are conducted during the Congress.

3 - Mentors
The IAF Secretariat will organize a virtual event beginning of June to help the recipient with the preparation. Another informal meeting with the IAF Young Space Leaders will also be organized onsite on Sunday prior to the IAC to help understand what an IAC is, which benefits you can get from it, etc.

[1] Please note that spots for the Space Generation Congress (SGC) are limited. If demand exceeds availability, some applicants may be redirected to the UN/IAF Workshop. This decision will be based on the final scores received in their applications.
[2] This event is mandatory for the Emerging Space Leaders.

4 - Per Diem
The IAF Secretariat will provide with a per-diem equivalent for the duration of the stay, starting the day of arrival in Poznan to cover extras unforeseen by the grant.

5 - Social Events and Technical Tours
Social events, technical tours and Gala Dinner tickets will be available at IAC 2027. Their costs **are not** foreseen in the grant programme but recipients are free to purchase them.

6 - Flight and accommodation
The IAF Secretariat will take care of booking and paying for the flight tickets and accommodation from **22 September – 2 October 2027** in **Poznan.**

7 - Visibility
Successful applicants will be featured on the IAF website, IAF newsletter and IAC Final Programme.

2. Who can apply?

The 2027 IAF Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme is open to individuals who fulfil the following **mandatory** criteria (no exceptions will be made):

- 21 to 35 years old on 1 January 2027
- Students currently attending a recognized university or Young Professionals currently employed in a space-related field
- Present at least one paper (orally or in interactive format), and/or to participate as a panellist in the Next Generation Plenary.

Candidates who meet these criteria may apply regardless of their home country or current residence. While all applications will be considered, through this programme the IAF seeks to encourage applications from candidates in nations with emerging space capabilities and interests **who would otherwise not be able to attend an International Astronautical Congress**.

3. How can I apply? A Step by Step Guide

To be considered for the grant programme, the following materials must be submitted online through the dedicated **PLATFORM** by **31 January 2027 23:59 Paris time**.

Online Application
The completed online application that contains information about your personal background, education, employment experience

Please fill in the Application form on our website: https://www.iaf-grant-programme.org/

Please note that we will only consider complete, signed applications that are validated from the online application system no later than **31 January 2027 23:59 Paris time**.

Endorsement Document
An "endorsement" that certifies your statement to be factual by at least one organisation.

Have your application reviewed and endorsed by a professor, employer, supervisor or responsible official in a

university, company, or professional society.

Please download the endorsement document template available on the application platform and have it filled in by the person who will review your application. The endorsement needs to be **signed** and stamped. Then, scan the signed endorsement in pdf, jpeg or png format and upload it in the appropriate field.

Abstract[3]

Please note that your abstract for a paper that you intend to present - either orally in a technical session or as an "interactive" paper - during the IAC needs to be copied into the application system and uploaded on the IAF website: **HTTPS://IAFASTRO.DIRECTORY/IAC/ACCOUNT/LOGIN/**

To upload your abstract on the website, please follow these steps:

- Login or create an account, visiting the IAF Website at www.iafastro.org and clicking on the "Sign In" button
- You will be taken to the restricted area, where you will find on the bottom of the menu "My Papers".
- Click on "My Papers" and then on "Add new abstract".
- Select the appropriate Symposium and Session.
- Please insert paper title and abstract content (maximum 400 words).
- If you are a student, check the appropriate box.
- Click "Ok".

Next Generation Plenary[4]

Instead of submitting an abstract, or in addition to submitting an abstract, you may apply to the Next Generation Plenary; the Call for Applications will be available shortly on the IAF website. A successful application for this programme will be considered equal to the submission of an abstract.

Reference Letters

All applications must be accompanied by two recommendations from professors, employers, or responsible officials who are familiar with the candidate and who have reviewed their application.

Please download the reference letter template available on the application platform and have your references filled in, signed, and stamped, scan the forms and upload in the appropriate field.

Essay

An essay (of no more than 400 words per questions) discussing your contributions in academia and/or as a young space professional to date and a list of benefits that this potential opportunity would bring to you in regard to:

- Your contributions in academia and/or as a young space professional to date
- What you hope to learn/achieve during this event
- The potential relevance of participation to IAC 2027 to research/job/networking opportunities
- How you will use this experience when returning home and how you plan to share what you have learned during this experience. Please include details relating to what presentations you plan to give and to whom and what communication methods you will use to write about your experience (i.e., articles, blogs, social media, etc.).

Video

You must provide a video sample in English to demonstrate your linguistic proficiency and presentation skills. The video may not be longer than 1 minute. Videos longer than one minute **will not be considered**.

[3] The selection process of the abstracts is independent from the IAF Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme application.

[4] Please note that the application and selection process is independent from the IAF Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme application.

- Record a video presenting yourself, the theme of your abstract or presentation at the Next Generation Plenary and answer the question of why you should be chosen for the 2027 IAF Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme
- You must appear talking on screen in the video for the full duration of the video
- Copy/paste the URL of your video in the appropriate field on the application form

Only videos that are unprotected and easily accessible (no password protection, no necessity to create an account to view the video, etc.) can be considered.

Applicant's Declaration

You can download the applicant's declaration template available on the application platform, copy the text in your **own handwriting**, sign the document, scan, and upload it in the appropriate field.

You are only applying for 2027 edition of the IAF Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme. You must guarantee your ability to attend the congress taking into consideration the event's dates, location, visa requirements, and logistical aspects**.** If an applicant is selected for the programme but is unable to attend, the applicant must reapply for the 2028 or future IAF Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme in order to receive the grant. It is for this year's edition only and cannot be transferred to another year or event.

Completed applications including all above materials must be available online no later than 31 January 2027 23:59 Paris time. Please note that any materials received after this time will not be considered for the 2027 IAF ESL Grant Programme.

4. How is the selection made?

The selection will be made based on the following point system (rating grid). The maximum score one applicant can achieve is **140 points**.

1. Country of citizenship (5-20 points)

Students and young professionals from nations across the world are encouraged to submit a grant request. However, while all applications will be considered, the IAF seeks to support candidates from nations with emerging space capabilities and interests.

- Citizens (passport) of a country belonging to the **European Union** or being member of the **European Space Agency**[5], the **USA**, **Canada**, **Australia,** or **Japan** - **5 points**
- Citizens (passport) of a **country not cited above** and **not belonging to the UN list** of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states, and transition countries[6] - **10 points**
- Citizens (passport) of a country appearing on the **UN list of least developed countries**, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states, and transition countries[6] - **20 points**

2. English Language Proficiency and Presentation Skills (0-15 points)

- High level of linguistic proficiency and presentation skills (can make their ideas understood) - **15 points**

[5] Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

[6] UN list of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states, and transition countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen, Zambia.

- Negligible level of linguistic proficiency and presentation skills (can make their ideas understood) - **0 points**

3. Abstract for Technical Session and Participation in the Next Generation Plenary (0-40 points)

- Abstract has been **accepted** and included in an IAC technical session as oral or interactive presentation – **20 points**
- Abstract has been accepted in an IAC technical session as oral or interactive presentation as **back-up – 10 points**
- Abstract has been **rejected** – **0 points**
- Participant has been selected to **participate** in Next Generation Plenary – **20 points**
- Participant has been selected as a **back-up** participant in Next Generation Plenary – **10 points**
- Participant **has not been selected** to participate in Next Generation Plenary – **0 points**

4. Essay – Citizen of the Space Community (0- 60 points)

Applicants are asked to provide an essay outlining their contributions in academia and/or as a young space professional to date and provide a listing of benefits this potential opportunity would bring.

- Their contributions in academia and/or as a young space professional to date – **0 to 15 points**
- Their knowledge base (what they expect to learn/achieve during this event) – **0 to 15 points**
- Research/job/networking opportunities – **0 to 15 points**
- Their use of this experience when returning home and contributions to their community, as they commit to sharing their experience with others in their homeland – **0 to 15 points**

5. Attendance at the International Astronautical Congress (1-5 points)

- Applicant has never attended the IAC – **5 points**
- Applicant has attended the IAC on one or more occasions – **1 point**

Please note that the IAF Secretariat will verify the accuracy of the facts. Any falsification of information will result in automatic disqualification of the application.

5. Selection Schedule

- Announcement of the call, application form and related documents are posted on the IAF website: **November 2026.**
- Completed applications and related documentation must be submitted to the IAF Secretariat no later than **31 January 2027 23:59 Paris time**.
- Grant recipients will be notified in **May 2027**.

6. Responsibilities of Successful Applicants

Once you have been notified of your selection for the programme, you will have specific deadlines and responsibilities to fulfil. If selected, please review the information below to help you prepare for the conditions and obligations associated with the grant.

After receiving confirmation of your selection to the programme, you will need to submit the following to secure your place:

- **Passport:** Copy of your valid passport valid at least until **May 2028**

- **Flight proposition to and from Poznan:** must be in **economy** and **consider visa requirements in transit countries**. The flight should be from **22 September 2027 and depart on 2 October 2027.** Once accepted by the IAF Secretariat it will be booked and paid.
- **Visa:** The IAF will do its best to support successful applicants with the visa procedure. However, please note that it is the applicant's responsibility to **become familiar with the visa requirements applicable to Poland as well as in transit countries**, to start the visa process in due time, to provide the necessary documentations and to take over any costs related to obtaining your visa such as travel insurance, vaccinations, visa fees, transit visa fees, travelling costs to the embassy, etc.
- The recipients shall be responsible for acquiring insurance covering health insurance, medical emergency, emergency evacuation, repatriation of remains, trip cancellation or interruption, etc.
- Successful applicants are required to read and to agree to the **IAF CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**.

7. Frequently Asked Questions

Q: The abstract submission deadline for the IAC 2027 is 28 February 2027. Do I really have to submit my abstract by 31 January 2027?
A: You need to submit your abstract on the IAF website: https://iafastro.directory/iac/account/login/ by the **31 January 2027**.

Q: Do I have to submit an abstract in order to participate in Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme?
A: If you have applied for the IAF WD-YPP Committee proposed Next Generation Plenary, you do not have to submit an abstract. However, you will increase your chances to be chosen for the Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme if you submit both an abstract and an application for the Next Generation Plenary.

Q: I just heard about the Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme and the Next Generation Plenary. Can I submit only one application video for both programmes?
A: No. Both videos are different in content and length.

Q: Do I have to be the sole author of my abstract?
A: No, you do not. You may have co-authors, but you must be the primary author.

Q: Can I submit an abstract for a paper that has been previously published/presented at a professional conference?
A: No. Participants in the Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme are expected to prepare and present papers that have not been previously published or submitted for publication.

Q: I am a student from one country currently studying in another country. From which country's professors do I have to submit references?
A: You may submit reference letters from professors in either country, or both.

Q: I am a young professional. May I still submit a reference letter by a former university professor?
A: The reference letters may be written by people (professors or employers) who know you and your current academic or professional work well enough to comment on your qualification for the Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme.

Q: I have recently changed jobs. May I submit a reference letter from my former employer?

A: You may ask a former employer if that person is still familiar with your current work. An employer that you worked for several years ago and with whom you have not been in contact since might not be able to submit the best reference.

Q: I have participated in a previous IAF Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme. May I apply again?
A: Applications from previous participants in the IAF Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme will not be considered for the 2027 Programme selection.

Q: Can the same person endorse my application and submit a reference letter?
A: Yes.

Q: I have applied for funding through other sources than the IAF Emerging Space Leaders Grant Programme. Does this influence my application?
A: You are welcome to apply for other funding to attend the IAC alongside the IAF Emerging Space Leader Grant Programme. However, upon receipt of funding from a third-party source, it is your responsibility to inform the IAF about the form of sponsorship (cash/flights/accommodation) and the amount of sponsorship you have received. The Federation will, in these cases, adjust its own awarded grant accordingly.

You could not find an answer to your question?

Please review all the application materials to make sure your question is not answered! If not, please address your questions and requests for additional information/clarifications to:

E-mail: ESLGRANTS@IAFASTRO.ORG