

Starting a Chapter: Step-by-Step Guide

From Idea to Official Recognition

Thinking about starting a new Fulbright chapter? Use this guide as an overview for everything you need, from forming your founding team, confirming eligibility, and planning your first events, to officially launching and connecting with the Fulbright Association. The checklist aligns with the New Chapter onboarding process for 2026.

Requirements & Eligibility

To start a new Fulbright Association Chapter, you must meet the following criteria:

1. **Leadership Team:** Identify at least 4 dedicated founding members who will serve as the initial leadership team.
2. **Geographic or Thematic Scope:** Chapters must be tied to a specific location.
3. **Alignment with Fulbright Mission:** All activities should support the Fulbright Association's goals of promoting international education, alumni engagement, and cultural diplomacy.
4. **Governance Readiness:** Founding members should be prepared to follow chapter bylaws and participate in leadership training as needed.
5. **Communication & Engagement:** Ability to maintain regular communication with members and the Fulbright Association, including participation in national programs and reporting requirements.

Chapters that meet these criteria will be eligible to submit an interest form and begin the official startup process.

Startup Checklist

Follow this step-by-step checklist to take your chapter from idea to official recognition. The timeline aligns with the Fulbright Association's New Chapter onboarding process in 2026.

Phase 1: Interest & Awareness (February-March)

- Submit your application form to notify the Fulbright Association of your intent.
- Begin gathering potential founding members and discuss leadership roles.

Phase 2: Cohort Selection (April)

- Attend the New Chapter Info Session
 - The session will provide guidance on the application process, expectations, and first-year planning.

- A recording will be posted for those unable to attend live.
- A Call for Nominations for Chapter Board Members is shared with the proposed chapter's geographic community.
- Eligible applicants are reviewed for participation in the new chapter cohort

Phase 3: Elections (May)

- The Fulbright Association facilitates the selection and election of the founding board
- Selected leaders are notified and invited to confirm participation.

Phase 4: Onboarding (June)

- Official chapter positions begin June 1, 2026.
- Access a pre-onboarding packet with key resources and expectations.
- Participate in Chapter Leader Orientation, covering:
 - Fulbright chapter model and expectations
 - Governance and leadership roles
 - Programming fundamentals and expectations for the first year
 - Overview of required administrative steps
- Assign additional officer positions, as needed, through an internal board vote.

Phase 5: Required Chapter Setup (June-August)

- Apply for an EIN: Required for opening a bank account and financial operations.
- Open a Chapter Bank Account: Used for managing chapter funds and grant disbursements.
- Complete Affiliation Agreement: Formalizes the relationship between the chapter and the Fulbright Association.

Phase 6: Grant Application for Launch Events (July)

- Plan your inaugural events with support from the Fulbright Association.
- Apply for the chapter grant to support launch events.

Phase 7: Launch Your Chapter (August-December)

- Publicly announce your new chapter or interest group.
- Host your first events in Fall 2026.
- Begin regular communications and engagement with members.

Phase 8: Ongoing Support & Integration

- Participate in check-ins and ongoing support opportunities.
- Prepare for full participation in national programming cycles in the following year.