



AEA FAQs

What is the Appalachian Entrepreneurship Academy?

The Appalachian Entrepreneurship Academy AEA is an immersive, four-week summer learning experience designed to catalyze and support youth entrepreneurship and innovation across Appalachia. The all-inclusive and all-expense paid residential program includes:

- entrepreneurship training and skill building
- mentorship and coaching
- access to work from software and hardware maker spaces
- work exposure and experiences with leading startups and forward-thinking businesses
- connection to local and regional networks that will continue to support AEA alumni

Who is leading or hosting the program?

The AEA was created by the Appalachian Regional Commission *ARC* and the Institute for Educational Leadership *IEL* and they have partnered with several Pittsburgh based youth serving organizations to bring students leading edge training, innovative programming, mentorship, and coaching. This collaboration also brings together networks of supporters and coaches that will guide students during the program and beyond.

Who can apply? And How?

We invite rising high school seniors in the Appalachian region to apply. Students must be in their senior year of high school in the fall of 2020 and must attend a school in the Appalachian Region during the 2020-2021 school year.

Students must complete the online application entirely in order to be Considered.

APPLY BY March 20, 2020 to be considered!

How many students will be selected?

The brand-new program is seeking 26 rising high school seniors from any school in Appalachia's 420 counties to join an inaugural class of innovators this July in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Is it really free? All expenses paid?

Yes. It is an all-expense paid program. There are limitations to the word “all”. The following are 100% covered by AEA: Transportation to and from Pittsburgh for the summer program and during the 4 weeks for planned activities; Breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily; constant Wi-Fi connectivity; lodging/hotel; Bedding: sheets, pillows, blankets; Overnight essentials: soap, shampoo, towels, hair dryer, etc.; daily cleaning service; program activities, trainings, events and program supplies.

Where will students stay?

Students will stay at a hotel in East Liberty Pittsburgh, right next to where they will be during the day for programming. Students will share a double room with another AEA student from a different state.

How safe will it be for youth in Pittsburgh?

Students will be closely chaperoned (24/7) by teachers and coaches hired for this program. Night chaperones will be located on each floor to ensure students stay in their rooms, that everyone is safe, and serve as a resource for anything that comes up. Every chaperone will have passed all the security checks, certifications, and insurances required federally and by the state of PA for working with minors.

East Liberty is a mini tech and innovation hub in Pittsburgh. It’s also home to world renown startups like Duolingo and numerous accelerators and co-working spaces serving entrepreneurs in the city.

How does the \$600 stipend work?

All students selected will receive a portion of their \$600 stipend upon arrival to Pittsburgh as a living stipend for any personal expenses during the program (...beyond what we cover like meals, lodging, transportation and programming activities). At the end of the program, the student will receive the remainder of the funds.

Why should I apply? What value does AEA2020 bring?

Through the AEA experience students will learn how to take a business idea from concept to commercialization with a curriculum informed by leading authors in the field and entrepreneurs as well as develop their creative and maker skills with hands-on practical applications of what they are learning and experiencing. The AEA experience will expose you to leading

entrepreneurs, innovative startups and forward-thinking businesses where they will see first-hand what it takes to bring ideas into reality and therefore be better prepared to meet the demands as a future employee, creator, or business owner.

Students will team up with other students selected from the Appalachian region to develop their own business idea or innovation or one presented to them by AEA that solves a community problem. Business training and hands-on creator experiences with a focus on innovation, design thinking, and lean startup approaches to problem solving provide students with a framework for reaching goals in their business and life. With the support of AEA instructors and mentors, teams will develop innovative business solutions, a plan to market their ideas, and a pitch presentation for all constituents. The 4 weeks culminate with a pitch presentation from all the teams to a panel of expert judges and potential investors who give feedback and for a chance to win \$1k!

Exposure to Leading-Edge Learning, Facilities, and People

- World Renown Training and Programming
- Hardware and Software Maker Spaces
- Businesses and Community Leaders
- Career Paths and Internship Opportunities

Connection to a Regional and Global Network

- Mentors and coaches during the program and beyond
- Investors will have an opportunity to hear and give feedback on student business ideas
- Teammates and other AEA alumni will stay connected
- Business and community leaders are great role models and have vast networks that students may benefit from for future endeavors

Collectively Problem Solve and Innovate with a Team

- Learn how to work with peers from around Appalachia on business innovations and problems, leveraging the unique strengths of everyone on the team
- Create something individually and collaboratively with hands on maker and team building experiences
- Friendships and potential business relationships can emerge from these team experiences!

Presentation and Storytelling Skills and Practice

- Learn to tell your story using different mediums
- Present yourself and your role on a team/your work to an audience
- Pitch an idea/business to customers/constituents/investors

What is a typical day for students?

Students will wake up each morning to a hot and cold buffet breakfast with juice and water. Programming starts at 9:30am sharp and ends at 3pm most days with 45mins for a catered lunch unless there is an activity planned. A healthy dinner is served Sun-Thurs at 7pm back at the hotel. At 9:30pm we require all students to be back in their rooms. Friday and Saturday students will participate in local activities where breakfast, lunch, and dinner will be provided.

What are the application requirements?

- Applications will close on March 20, 2020 at 11:59 p.m.
- Email will be the primary mode of communication between the applicant and the AEA so be sure to list an email that you check regularly.
- In addition to answering several questions on the short online application form, you will be required to submit a short video or presentation and a letter of recommendation (see below for details)
- **By April 3, 2020** students will know if they were selected and will have 1 week from the date the student is notified to accept or reject the award.
- Students applying to the Academy must be in their senior year of high school in the fall of 2020 and must attend a school in the Appalachian Region during the 2020-2021 school year.
- If you know of anyone that may meet the requirements, please pass this along! We want to extend this opportunity far and wide across the Appalachian Region.

What type of questions/responses are asked of applicants?

In addition to personal and school contact information we have asked questions that give us a profile of a student's entrepreneurial interests, strengths, and propensity to be innovative. We also want to understand how a student might bring value to a team and their broader network and community. Although we ask about previous experience in hands-on learning activities and innovation, it is important to note that it is not required to have experience in either. We look for students who display any of the following: resourcefulness, curiosity, resilience, coachability, ingenuity, collaboration and an entrepreneurial spirit.

What criteria do students need to meet to be considered?

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has established the following criteria for selecting participants for the 2020 summer experience.

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS:

- Student participants must be entering their senior year of high school during the 2020-2021 school year.
- Student participants must attend a school in a designated Appalachian county (see <http://www.arc.gov/counties>) and plan to enroll in school in a designated Appalachian county for the 2020-2021 school year.
- There will be 2 students selected from each state. Preference will be given to students from distressed communities as these students traditionally have little access to such programs and opportunities.
- Student applicants must upload a letter of reference from a teacher, school counselor, school administrator, or other adult who is not related to the student
- Student applicants must upload a video or presentation

Application Materials

Video / Presentation

We ask that you tell us your story and why you are interested in applying through a video or a presentation.

- The video should not exceed 1 minute and should be saved in one of the following formats: MP3; MP4; MOV.
- The presentation should not exceed 5 slides and should be saved in the following format: PDF.

You can take a video with any smartphone and upload it in the application when you are ready to submit. Make sure the picture and sound are clear. You may have to do several takes, but the most important thing is to keep it simple, make sure we can see and hear you, and speak to the questions being asked below.

The video or presentation should address the following:

- Introduce yourself... tell us a bit about you,
- Do you have a background, interest, or talent that is especially meaningful to you? If so, please tell us about it.
- What about this Academy interests you/why are you applying?
- What do you consider your biggest strengths, assets, talents to be?

- What areas would you like to grow in?
- What would you like to get out of this summer experience?

Letter of Recommendation

One letter of recommendation is required. You can upload the letter or a photo of the letter online in the application. The letter needs to be written by a non-family member of your community such a community leader, teacher, school counselor, or coach that speaks to the applicant's character, maturity, self-discipline, and potential for a program like the Appalachian Entrepreneurship Academy. **Please save the letter in one of the following formats: PDF, PNG, JPG, JPEG, or GIF.**

Below is a template to guide recommenders. They are free to write the recommendation in their own words or use the language below and personalize the sections in brackets.

To: Appalachian Regional Commission

I am pleased to write a letter of recommendation for [name of applicant]. I highly recommend [name of student] to participate in the Appalachian Entrepreneurship Academy. I have known [name of student] for the past [year(s) or month(s)].

As [his/her/their] [relationship to student], I have had an opportunity to observe [his/her/their] ... [Give two specific examples of when the student displayed resourcefulness, resilience, coachability, or collaboration. Point out the areas in which this individual has learned and had the chance to grow with these opportunities.]

[Name of student] is well equipped to grow from challenges that [he/she/they] [is/are] presented with. [His/her/their] [list three key traits (examples: patience, maturity, curiosity...)], prepare [him/her/them] for this summer experience. I strongly endorse [name of student] to participate in the Academy.

Sincerely,

*[Name of Recommender Title
Phone number Email Address]*

Still have questions?

Please contact rodriguezg@iel.org. Thank you and best wishes!