

ANNUAL REPORT FY2023

1 OCT. 2022 - 30 SEPT. 2023



FULBRIGHT
Iceland

ICELAND - UNITED STATES
EDUCATIONAL COMMISSION

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Cover photo: Fulbright Iceland Alumni and U.S. grantees at the Fulbright Alumni tree planting in September.



What times we live. People in the free world have become so complacent that sometimes it seems that the only ones who truly value freedom, democracy and classical liberal values are those who live in brutal autocracies or are being invaded by one. Violence, aggression and intolerance seem to become more acceptable. Are we bound to repeat the mistakes of our human history, where times of enlightenment must always be followed by periods of darkness? Such thoughts can overtake one at times, when heroes are murdered and those who fight for the light appear to be all but abandoned.

When such thoughts overwhelm me, there is one thing that gives me respite – interviewing young people who have applied for an award from the Iceland-U.S. Educational Commission. Just after the life of Alexei Navalny was so tragically taken – one of the few politicians of our day who was willing to personally sacrifice for what he believed, and who stands with President Zelensky as the most inspiring political figures of our time – I took part in interviewing young Icelanders who applied for a grant to attend EducationUSA Academy and the Ben Franklin Transatlantic Fellowship. These awards go to high school students. We had so many applications that we joked that it was harder to get this grant than to get into an Ivy League college, statistically speaking. The young people who were interviewed are not only smart, but also thoughtful and so intent on making a positive impact in the world. They are hard-working and value education, not just to get ahead for themselves, but to contribute to a better future, be it through the arts, science, entrepreneurship, or other means. These young people, and indeed also the scholars and specialists who apply for Fulbright grants and other grants offered by the Commission, are a beacon of hope and I am thankful every day that we get to be a small part of their journey and provide opportunities that they would not otherwise have. After a day of interviews, my faith in humanity is always restored and I feel that there is yet hope.

As for the Commission, we have had a busy year and I feel confident that Fulbright Iceland has truly worked to increase mutual understanding and contribute to the sharing of knowledge that will strengthen our societies. I would like to note one recent innovation in our work. Following our positive experience with the Fulbright-Hays teacher seminar, we were very interested in further strengthening our work with teachers. We have now joined the Fulbright Distinguished Award in Teaching Research Program and will hopefully have our first U.S. grantee in 2025. While we will start this project with U.S. teachers coming to Iceland, we hope in the future to secure funding to also give this opportunity to Icelandic teachers. I firmly believe that working with teachers and allowing them to add an international dimension to their work and learn from each other is one of the best ways we can increase mutual understanding.

We have some exciting grant projects in the works and look forward to sharing them with you over the next year. There are also challenges to overcome and further innovations to be made to keep Fulbright strong and relevant in Iceland. The work of Fulbright Commissions matters. We hope our friends and alumni will join us in the work ahead.



Belinda Theriault, Executive Director



I was a Fulbright visiting scholar in the spring semester of 2015, visiting the University of California, Berkeley. I recall the excitement I felt when I got the letter confirming the award, the planning with my family, the anticipation over our coming adventure, and what an important moment it was when my wife and my parents accompanied me to the reception that honored all Icelandic grantees for the coming academic year. Getting a Fulbright is a great achievement and I have been proud to pay it forward over the past five years, playing a part in allowing others to realize their aspirations.

Each step of the process is important. I have enjoyed reading applications and being part of interview panels, of celebrating with outgoing Icelandic grantees in the spring and welcoming American grantees in the fall, and not least contributing to the strategic and financial planning to maintain a strong Commission and Fulbright presence in Iceland.

As a professor in computer science, I can admit that I have been especially proud of the work the Commission has done over the past years in cyber security and critical infrastructure, bringing in much needed expertise from the U.S. in this field into Icelandic academia and industry. I hope funding will be available to continue this important work. It was also gratifying that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Fulbright Iceland renewed the Arctic grant agreement last year. The Board sees the Fulbright Arctic work as a pillar of the Commission grant program and appreciates partnerships with both the National Science Foundation and the Ministry in this area. Grants for teachers is another important area where Fulbright Iceland has been making new contributions, both through the Fulbright-Hays program and with a new grant for teachers starting in 2025. It is safe to say that Fulbright Iceland is always looking for ways to meet needs in our societies, always innovating in its work and creating valuable opportunities.

During the last months of FY2023, the Board spent much time working with the Executive Director to secure appropriate office space that will hopefully be a long-term solution. We were very happy to find housing in a central area that fits the needs of the Commission well, being easily accessible to both Icelandic and U.S. grantees. The Commission did not move until FY2024, so I did not get a chance to visit the new facilities before the end of my term, but I look forward to attending events there in the future.

I wish the new Board and the Commission all the best and look forward to following the work in the coming years. It is clear that Fulbright still has an important role to play in Iceland and that Iceland has a lot to offer the U.S. through this partnership as well.

Páll Melsted,



Professor of Computer Science
Vice-Chairman of the Board FY2023 and
Acting Chair August-September 2023

The Commission, which operates under an agreement between the governments of Iceland and the United States, implements a selective grant program for graduate students and scholars. Grantees include Icelandic students who are awarded grants to commence graduate studies, Icelandic visiting student researchers (PhD students who undertake shorter research visits to the U.S.), Icelandic scholars who are awarded grants to undertake research in the United States, U.S. students who are awarded Fulbright grants to enter a study program or conduct research, and U.S. scholars who teach and/or conduct research in Iceland. In addition, the Commission provides opportunities for Icelandic institutions to receive U.S. scholars for shorter periods through the Fulbright Specialist Program and Inter-Country Travel Grant Program. Finally, the Commission offers various additional Fulbright opportunities at different times, as well as non-Fulbright grants that are in line with the goals of the Commission. Various ad-hoc programs may be implemented in given years.

The Commission has grant partnership agreements with the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the U.S. National Science Foundation. The Commission administers the Boas Award for LLM studies at Harvard and the Cobb Family Fellowship for graduate studies at the University of Miami. The Commission also has memorandums of understanding with a few U.S. universities.



FFSB Chair Donna Brazile and the ED meeting with officials at the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

In FY2023, in addition to its regular activities, the Commission welcomed back the majority of its Fulbright-Hays grantees from 2021 and organized a follow-up seminar. The year also saw the successful conclusion of Fulbright Arctic Initiative III. Work was also started on Iceland's participation in the Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Research Program, with the first grantee expected in 2025. In addition to the grant programs, events and advising activities, the Commission has a wider mandate to enhance the bilateral U.S.-Iceland relationship. To this end, the Commission undertakes a variety of activities.



The ED with Allan E. Goodman, CEO of IIE



The Minister for Foreign Affairs signs an extension of the Fulbright-MFA Arctic scholar grant agreement

Grantees are selected by the Fulbright Iceland Commission Board and confirmed by the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board in Washington, D.C. Below is a list of grantees for 2022-2023, who were grantees for most of FY2023. The second list shows grantees for the 2023-2024 academic year, most of whom started their grant period in the fall of 2023, shortly before the end of the fiscal year. The Commission consistently receives outstanding applications from American and Icelandic scholars and students.



“My goal for my Fulbright year in Iceland was to learn as much of the Icelandic language as I could in nine months. I can say with confidence that my Icelandic skills have improved significantly. If classroom grades are any indication of language ability and acquisition, then this year was a great success. I earned first class distinctions with honors. I also focused on honing my ability to communicate orally in Icelandic. Little by little, Icelandic became my primary language of communication.

My long-term goal, broadly-speaking, involves working with Icelandic, Norwegian, and American/English languages, literature, and cultures in a professional capacity. I find myself on a good path for the ultimate realization of this goal. I am exceedingly grateful for the support of Fulbright and Árnastofnun on this journey, and am excited for the additional opportunities that lie ahead in this beautiful and unique country.”

Eric Maher (Rice University), hosted by the Árni Magnússon Institute



Fulbright scholar Tenley Banik in the geochemistry clean lab at the University of Iceland



Fulbright fellow Brittany Key harvesting mint in Ísafjörður

1. GRANTEES 2022 - 2023

Name	Field	Home	Host
ICELANDIC STUDENTS			
Hanna Þráinsdóttir	Media, Culture & Comm.	Georgian Court Univ.	New York University
Helgi Sigtryggsson	Computer Science	University of Iceland	Carnegie Mellon Univ.
Sara Þóll Finnbogadóttir	Survey & Data Science	University of Iceland	University of Michigan
Unnur Elfa Hallsteinsdóttir	Law	University of Iceland	UC Los Angeles
Þórhildur Þórsdóttir	History	University of Iceland	Columbia University
- Visiting Student Researchers			
Orri Smáráson	Child Psychology	University of Iceland	Baylor University
Sigurður Björnsson	Energy Economics	University of Iceland	Univ. of Washington & UC Berkeley
Sóllilja Bjarnadóttir	Environmental Sociology	University of Iceland	Harvard University
ICELANDIC SCHOLARS			
Hera Gunnlaugsdóttir	Geology	University of Iceland	UC Irvine
- Fulbright Arctic Initiative III			
Sigríður Kristjánsdóttir	Urban Planning	Agricultural Univ. Iceland	Univ. of Washington
Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir	International Relations	University of Iceland	Univ. of Colorado
U.S. STUDENTS			
Bethany Bronkema	Engineering	Swarthmore College	Reykjavik University
Sydney Fox	Chemistry	California State Univ.	Reykjavik University
Brittaney Key	Interdisc. Studies	UC Davis	Univ. Centre Westfjords
- Fulbright-Ministry of Culture			
Erik Maher	Icelandic Language	Rice University	University of Iceland
- Fulbright-NSF Arctic Research			
Meghan Orman	Education	University of Pittsburgh	University of Iceland
U.S. SCHOLARS			
Kirk Hoppe	History	Univ. of Illinois Chicago	University of Iceland
- Fulbright-NSF Arctic Research			
Áslaug Ásgeirsdóttir	Political Science	Bates University	University of Iceland
Tenley Banik	Geology	Illinois State Uni.	Research Centre Westfjords
Wanda Gregory	Computer Science	Univ. of Washington Bothell	Reykjavik University
- Fulbright-Ministry for Foreign Affairs			
Cayla Rosché	Music	Edgewood College	Iceland University of the Arts
- Fulbright-NSF Distinguished Scholar in Cyber Security and Critical Infrastructure			
Rakesh Verma	Computer Science	University of Houston	University of Iceland
- Fulbright Arctic Initiative III			
Jessica Graybill	Geography	Colgate University	University of Iceland
U.S. SPECIALISTS			
Bridget Burger	Education	Cape Cod Comm. College	Húsavík Academic Center
Jeremy Firestone	Environmental Science	University of Delaware	University of Iceland
Merrie Kaas	Public Health	University of Minnesota	University of Iceland
Thomas Michael O'Reilly	Education	Pine Manor College	Bifröst University
Kristi Rudelius-Palmer	Education	University of Minnesota	University of Iceland
Nathan Thomson	Environmental Science	National Park Service	Vatnajökull National Park

Name	Field	Home	Host
OTHER FULBRIGHT COMMISSION ICELAND GRANTS			
- Iceland-U.S. Educational Commission Scholar			
Paul Muench	Philosophy	University of Montana	University of Iceland
- Iceland-U.S. Educational Commission Health Exchange			
Sigrún Ólafsdóttir	Sociology	University of Iceland	Harvard University
- Fulbright Iceland Alumni Collaboration			
Erlendur Sveinsson	Film	Iceland University of the Arts	N/A
- Summer Institute			
Embla Rún Halldórsdóttir	Political Science	University of Iceland	Shippensburg University
- EducationUSA Academy			
Eybjört Ísól Torfadóttir	Upper secondary	Kvennaskólinn in Rvk.	Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison
Dór Ástþórsson	Upper secondary	Menntaskólinn in Rvk.	Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison

Name	School	City	Title
FULBRIGHT-HAYS - FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR			
Amy Barsanti	Jamesville Elementary School	Plymouth, NC	Teacher
Lisa Carotenuto	Tucson Unified School District	Tucson, AZ	Prof. development
Ellen Craig	Bettendorf Middle School	Bettendorf, IA	Art Teacher
Laurie Eldridge	Ira A. Murphy Elementary	Peoria, AZ	Art and Gifted Education
William Hilt	Hull Prairie Intermediate School	Perrysburg, OH	Social Studies
Cheri McNeely	Churchill High School	San Antonio, TX	Special Ed. – Sc. and math
Kimberly Mellor	Ephesus Elementary School	Chapel Hill, NC	Literary Coach
Jennifer Myers	School Without Walls	Washington, D.C.	Special Ed. - English and Social St.
Karen Richey	Toby Johnson Middle School	Elk Grove, CA	History/Social Sc. Teacher
Anya Rose	Springside Chestnut Hill Academy	Philadelphia, PA	Teacher
Anne Schaefer	Marin Oaks	Novato, CA	High School English Teacher
Sara Sharer	Cedaredge Elementary	Cedaredge, CO	English Language and Arts



“I have both grown professionally and personally in my first year of graduate study. Throughout the year I put special emphasis on developing relationships with my classmates and my professors, as well as other Fulbright grantees at the University of Michigan. Alongside my studies, I have had the opportunity to work for a research company called Westat.

Working with this organization has been a very positive experience, as I have had the opportunity to apply what I am learning in the classroom. This experience has also shown me how valuable survey and data science can be for research in Iceland. Overall, my first year at UM was lifechanging. I will forever be grateful for the opportunity that the Fulbright Commission in Iceland has given me and hope to be able to support and show students in Iceland how valuable it is to seek an education in the USA.”

Sara Pöll Finnbogadóttir (University of Iceland), M.A. program in survey and data science at the University of Michigan

2. GRANTEES 2023 - 2024

Name	Field	Home	Host
ICELANDIC STUDENTS			
Arnhildur Tómasdóttir	Human Genetics/Genetic Couns.	University of Iceland	Stanford University
Gríma Irmudóttir	Documentary Media	University of the Arts London	Northwestern University
Hrafnkell Guðjónsson	Law	University of Iceland	UC Berkeley
Ivana Nikolic	Law	University of Iceland	Harvard University
Jónatan Hróbjartsson	Law	University of Iceland	Duke University
Sigurbjörn Edvardsson	Law	University of Iceland	Harvard University
- Visiting Student Researchers			
Emil Dagsson	Econometrics	University of Iceland	Brown University
G. Ríkey Thoroddsen	International Relations	University of Iceland	Harvard University
Sólveig Sanchez	Ecological Restoration	Agricultural Univ. of Iceland	University of California-Davis
U.S. STUDENTS			
Sebastian Acevedo	Biology	Santa Clara University	Icelandic Institute of Nat. Hist.
Annesley Black	Sustainable Energy	West Point	Reykjavik University
Eleanor Greer	Environmental Sciences	Wellesley College	Agricultural University of Iceland
Kristie Gonzalez	Medieval Studies	University of Puerto Rico	University of Iceland
Christine Groves	Engineering	U.S. Coast Guard Academy	Reykjavik University
Nathaniel Wire	Geophysics	Pomona College	University of Iceland
- Fulbright-NSF Arctic Research			
Garrison Gerard	Environmental Studies	University of North Texas	Univ. of Iceland
Emily Herbert	Materials Science	Drexel University	University of Akureyri
Andrew Jester	Energy	Villanova University	University of Iceland
Daison Weedop	Environmental Sciences	University of Maine	Hólar University
U.S. SCHOLARS			
Gita Steiner-Khamsi	Education	Columbia University	University of Iceland
- Fulbright-NSF Arctic Research			
Christopher Dunn	Environmental Sciences	Colorado School of Mines	Stefansson Arctic Institute
Barbara Kerr	Education	University of Kansas	University of Iceland
Derek Schutt	Geology	Colorado State University	University of Iceland
- Fulbright-NSF Distinguished Scholar in Cyber Security and Critical Infrastructure			
Dipankar Dasgupta	Computer Science	University of Memphis	Reykjavík University
Larry Leibrock	Computer Science	Idaho State University	University of Iceland
- Fulbright-MFA Arctic Scholar			
Gregory Harris	Environmental Studies/Writing	Harvard University	University of Iceland
- Fulbright Greece-Iceland Joint Award for Arts and Design			
Rory Stuart	Music/Jazz	The New School	Iceland Univ. of the Arts
U.S. SPECIALISTS			
Jason Beckfield	Sociology	Harvard University	University of Iceland
Wanda Gregory	Computer Science	Univ. of Washington Bothell	Reykjavík University
Cheryl Ann Purdy	Cyber Security	Univ. of the Cumberlandands	University of Akureyri
JoAnn Conrad (TBC)	Folkloristics	Diablo Valley College	University of Iceland
Gregory Falco (TBC)	Disaster Response	Cornell University	Bifröst University
Andriy Semenyuk (TBC)	Film	N/A	Iceland University of the Arts
INTER-COUNTRY TRAVEL GRANT			
Iveta Silova McGurty	Comparative Education	Arizona State University	University of Iceland

Name	Field	Home	Host
OTHER FULBRIGHT COMMISSION ICELAND GRANTS			
- Summer Institute			
Axel Bjarkar Sigurjónsson	Engineering	Reykjavik University	Shippensburg University
- EducationUSA Academy			
Eron Thor Jónsson (TBC)	Upper secondary	Verzlunarskóli Íslands	Boston University
Vaka Sif Tjörvadóttir (TBC)	Upper secondary	FAS	Embry-Riddle Aeronautical Univ.
- Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellowship			
Heiðrún Vala Hilmarsdóttir (TBC)	Upper secondary	Kvennaskólinn in Rvk.	Purdue University



Sidney and Eric hiking Mount Esja



Unnur Elfa's first day of school



“This project was an opportunity for me to expand my research horizons and knowledge base into water- and fish-based geochemistry from my existing background in rock geochemistry in Iceland. I conducted a proof-of-concept pilot study that investigated the potential of geochemical analyses to link rocks, waters, and fish for greater holistic understanding of the ways human activities affect, and are affected by, changes in these areas.

Pending the rock data, I anticipate that at least a portion of this dataset will be presented at an international conference and submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. I also have some follow-up research questions, which I aim to have a student researcher begin investigating at my home institution. Pursuing these research questions led me to establish connections with numerous experts and community members in various fields both in Iceland and abroad, and I anticipate that most of these connections will remain important to my research in this area going forward.”

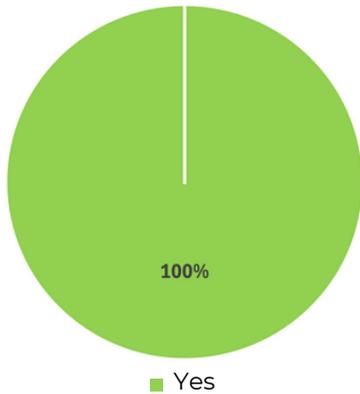
Dr. Tenley Banik, Associate Professor, Illinois State University, hosted by the Research Centre of the Westfjords

3. U.S. GRANTEE FEEDBACK 2022 - 2023

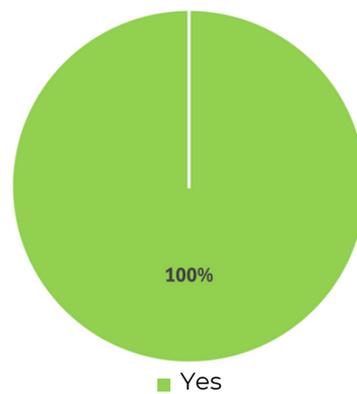
U.S. Scholars:

Below are a few highlights from final reports of Fulbright Iceland U.S. Scholars regarding the impact of their Fulbright on their lives and careers.

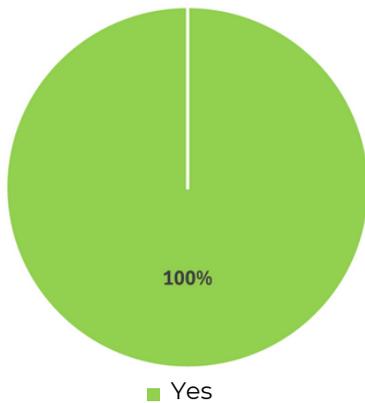
Did you make new contacts and acquire new collaborations in the host country?



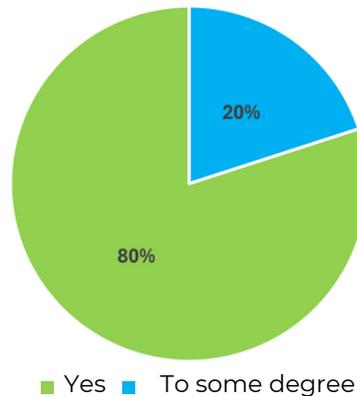
Did your teaching experience meet your expectations?



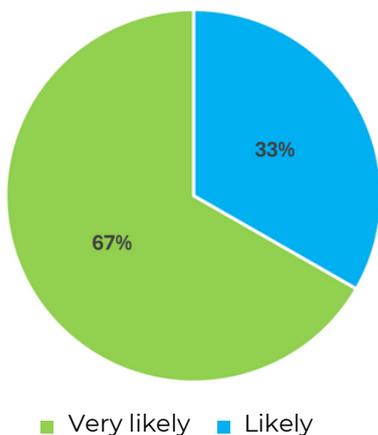
Do you think your Fulbright experience will have positive impact on your career?



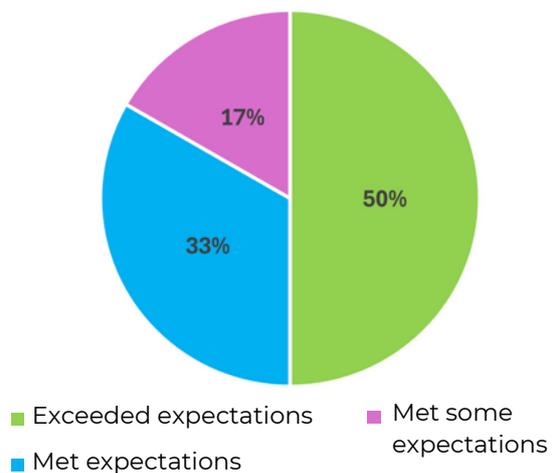
Do you expect your teaching experience in Iceland to enrich your academic activities back home?



How likely is it that you will remain in contact after you return home?



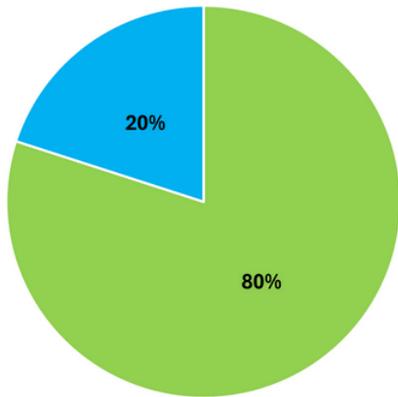
Did the Fulbright Iceland Scholar program meet your expectations?



U.S. Students:

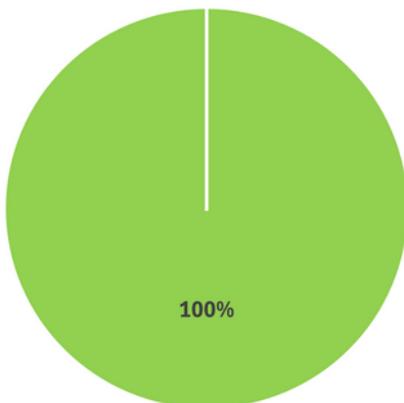
Below are a few highlights from the final reports of Fulbright fellows regarding their Fulbright experience.

Did the Fulbright Iceland Student Program meet your expectations?



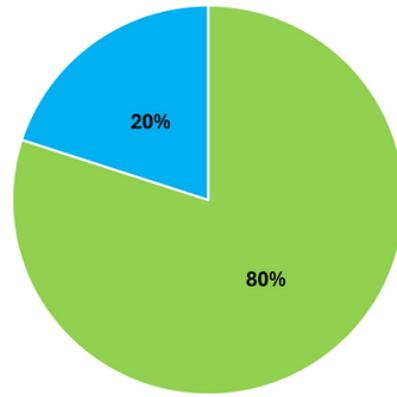
■ Exceeded expectations ■ Met expectations

Did you establish personal/professional relationships that will continue after your return to the U.S.?



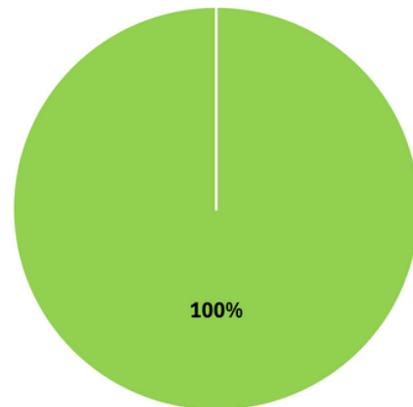
■ Yes

Fulbright's effect on student's personal development/skills



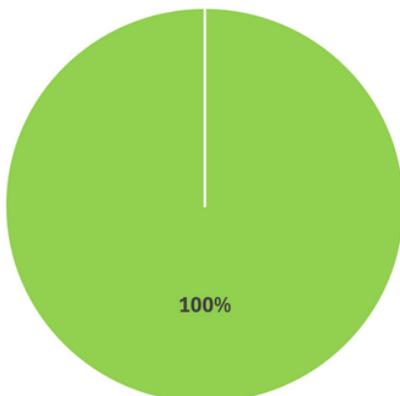
■ Excellent ■ Satisfactory

Studying in Iceland broadened my horizons and gave me new perspectives



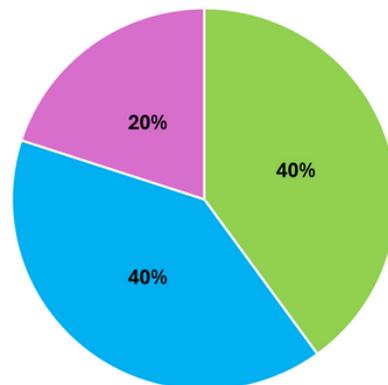
■ Significantly

Fulbright's effect on student's professional development/skills



■ Very positive

My studies/research in Iceland met my expectations



■ Exceeded expectations ■ Met to some degree
 ■ Met expectations



Professor Gita Steiner-Khamsi giving the keynote address at an education conference at the University of Iceland



Sara Þöll newly arrived at the University of Michigan



“The time I have spent at UC Irvine working with professor Guðrún Magnúsdóttir (a former Fulbright fellow herself) and her research group at UC Irvine has been of great value. There, I have received training in the technical and methodological aspects of developing and designing climate model experiments as well as interpreting physical mechanisms underlying the emerging climate response following high latitude/Icelandic volcanic eruptions.

It was a privilege to have the opportunity to bring my family to Irvine, too. My three sons attended school for one semester with each in one school stage, elementary, middle and high school, in one of the best schools in the country, where each day was an adventure, learning new things and meeting new friends. This experience had a big impact on them and it will continue to shape them for years to come. It is safe to say that this would have been impossible without the Fulbright support.

The Fulbright community in Southern California was very active. During my stay we were invited to visit the RAND corporation, a research organization, to learn about homelessness and the work to find solutions to this problem in Los Angeles. A part of the event involved working in a food bank to sort and distribute food to the homeless community. It was indeed an insightful day into a part of society that one seldom sees.”

Dr. Hera Guðlaugsdóttir, Climate Specialist, Environmental Agency of Iceland, hosted by UC Irvine

“This May I completed an LL.M degree at the University of California, Los Angeles UCLA, with specialization in international and comparative law and international human rights with a Fulbright Scholarship.

In addition to taking some very interesting courses, I also conducted independent research with Professor Michael Roberts, the executive director of the Resnick Center.



The research involved looking at how food is being used as a weapon during armed conflict, especially looking at the Ukraine war. After Christmas I also participated in the Jean Pictet Competition, a moot court competition in international humanitarian law, on behalf of UCLA. The competition took place in Albania. This was a great experience that allowed me to meet with other students and professionals that are passionate about humanitarian law.

I participated in an externship at UCLA Center on Reproductive Health Law and Policy and took a seminar in reproductive justice. This gave me a good insight into where reproductive rights and justice stand in the U.S. During my externship I also worked towards improving the implementation of the California Educational Act in relation to comprehensive sex education and got to meet students at high schools in Merced County and give them presentation about their rights and the law. During my time at UCLA, I also got to attend a conference on food law at Yale Law School and attended an international law weekend and conference in Washington. Finally, I also got to attend a conference on environmental law in the U.S. at Yosemite. This was a great opportunity to engage with the JD students, learn more about environmental law and explore beautiful Yosemite. I graduated with my degree in early May with a Pro Bono distinction. My pro bono work entailed work with the Promise Institute on Human Rights on monitoring possible human rights violations during the midterm elections held in the U.S. in November 2022. Another project was a clinic supervised by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative on doing research regarding eliminating modern slavery.

Overall, I was very happy with UCLA and the great opportunities that the LL.M. program provided me with. I am also happy that I got a chance to learn about issues that would normally not have been on my radar. Following the completion of my LL.M, I was offered a summer research position at the Promise Institute for 2 months, looking at possible human rights violations, especially child labor, in the coco supply chain in Western Africa. I was also offered a short internship at the legal offices at the UN headquarters in New York. Now I have returned to Iceland and to my job at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. I will be forever thankful for my year in the USA and for the support of Fulbright. I sincerely believe this whole experience has made me better equipped to undertake future endeavors, both personally and professionally.”

Unnur Elfa Hallsteindóttir (University of Iceland), LL.M program at UCLA

4. FULBRIGHT-HAYS FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR



The Commission was thrilled to welcome back 12 of the Fulbright-Hays teachers who first visited Iceland in 2021. This follow-up visit was made possible by the U.S. Department of Education. These teachers all produced ambitious curriculum developments projects after their first seminar and we were excited to facilitate their further connections to Iceland. During the 10-day follow-up seminar, the group visited the Westfjords and Snæfellsnes peninsula and spent the final days of the seminar in the capital area. A few of the highlights of the seminar included an Arctic seminar hosted by the University Centre of the Westfjords, meetings with school officials and teachers in Ísafjörður, Hafnarfjörður and Reykjavik, a visit to Vigur Island and Hesteyri, a tour of Grundarfjörður, and a lunch with Donna Brazile, Chairman of the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.





5. SUMMARY OF GRANT-SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

A. Events for Icelandic Grantees

In spring 2023, two orientation meetings were held for grantees leaving for the U.S. for the 2023-2024 academic year – in March and April in-person. A send-off reception to honor Icelandic grantees was held in early June, with the U.S. Ambassador in attendance.





“In my studies at Carnegie Mellon I have focused on software systems, specifically distributed systems, computer networks, cloud computing and operating systems. While studying in the U.S., I have had the opportunity to improve my skills in developing technologies in these fields and it has given me a better idea of recent advancements in these areas. The classes in the U.S. are somewhat different from what I am used to at home.

It is not uncommon to have guest speakers from prominent software companies discuss the challenges they are facing today as well as lively discussions about recent research in the classroom. The classes also require significant technical implementation and sometimes work is carried out in teams where I have had the opportunity to work with people from all around the world to tackle exciting problems. As a student at Carnegie Mellon, I have had the opportunity to study in an environment where there is a rich emphasis on innovation, problem solving and creativity, surrounded by excellent faculty and peers. I have already made significant progress in my academic and professional development as a computer scientist and I am eager to contribute to the field in meaningful ways. In the future I would like to lead the development of new technologies in response to critical problems in collaboration with experts in various fields of science and technology.”

Helgi Sigtryggsson (University of Iceland), M.S. program in computer science at Carnegie Mellon University

B. Events for American Grantees

The Commission organizes a variety of events for U.S. grantees through its monthly enrichment program, with events tailored to give grantees an opportunity to explore their host country; gain insight into Icelandic society, culture, and customs; and foster a sense of community among the grantees and with the Commission. A member of the Fulbright Board often joins in grantee events, providing a welcome opportunity for Board members to become better acquainted with the grantees they have selected.



Enrichment Activities in FY2023:

October 2022: Historical walk in Reykjavik

November 2022: Christmas magic cooking class

December 2022: Christmas Concert

January 2023: U.S. Embassy visit

February 2023: Bun day celebration at the ED's house

March 2023: Watching a women's handball game at a local sports stadium

April 2023: Visit with the President of Iceland at his residence, Bessastaðir

May 2023: Fulbright Forum lunch and post-forum celebration

September 2023: Orientation for incoming U.S. grantees

U.S. Embassy visit

In FY2023 we offered enrichment events that allowed grantees to make connections and enjoy a variety of quintessentially Icelandic events. Towards the end of the fiscal year, in September, the Commission welcomed a new group of U.S. grantees with an orientation day into all things Fulbright and Iceland.





“During the last nine months, I feel that I was able to accomplish a lot of what I set out to do with this grant period and learned some very valuable skills. At the start of my project – a life-cycle assessment of inert anodes in aluminum production – I knew very little about the aluminum industry and had only a minor background in environmental modeling.



I knew that modeling was something that I was interested in exploring more, so this is what led me to set up my project with my advisors. In this regard, the first major outcome that I want to highlight from my grant is just the amount of knowledge that I was able to gain about modeling in general, and modeling in relation to aluminum more specifically. My more tangible outcomes from the project include two conference admissions. First, an abstract and a poster of my work has been published and presented at the EGU2023 conference that took place in Vienna in April of this year. Further, a full conference paper of mine was accepted to the DEMI conference in Banja Luka.”

Bethany Bronkema (Swarthmore College), independent research project at Reykjavik University

C. Fulbright Forums

Four Fulbright Forums were held during the year, where U.S. Fulbright grantees have an opportunity to present their projects in Iceland. Two were held in December 2022, one in April and one in May 2023. These events showcase the wide variety of topics that grantees have used their Fulbright grant to address, whether they are studying, teaching or doing research.



Dr. Kirk Hoppe



May presentation event for grantees



Dr. Wanda Gregory



Clockwise from top left: Brittaney Key, Erik Maher, Dr. Tenley Banik and Dr. Rakesh Verma

Top: Dr. Paul Muench; bottom: Sydney Fox



Hanna playing with the basketball team at NYU



Sóllilja getting to know the Harvard campus

“I experienced a very successful semester at the University of Iceland, teaching two Modern African History courses. My two courses – Modern Africa 1850 to Present, and African Decolonization and Independence, 1950 to Present – had 30 students in total. I developed meaningful connections with Icelandic colleagues here. I presented a talk “Decolonization and African History,” at the department’s graduate seminar. There are no African History faculty at the University, so my contributions were new.



Teaching African History in Reykjavik energized and focused my intellectual thinking on three issues where contemporary and historical Africa, and Icelandic history and current experiences, intersect in powerful ways. One issue is the implications of massive and sudden urbanization, the urban/rural split, and having political and economic power and population overwhelmingly centered in a single dominant urban space. A second issue is international labor migration with implications for national language, education and cultural integration. A third issue, most central to my own research, is the economic, political, cultural, and environmental implications of eco-tourism.

I certainly intend to maintain professional and collegial connections developed during my semester here. It was a pleasure to contribute to the Fulbright mission and program. I appreciate the opportunity to have engaged in the Fulbright international academic exchange, and to be part of a program that is a very valuable and positive force for global good.”

Dr. Kirk Hoppe, Associate Professor, University of Illinois at Chicago, hosted by the University of Iceland

D. Fulbright Iceland at Arctic Circle

Fulbright Iceland hosted a breakout session chaired by the ED at the annual Arctic Circle conference in October 2022, where Fulbright Iceland Arctic scholars and fellows presented to and engaged with conference participants about their research. The ED hosted a pre-session lunch for all participants.



The scholars speaking at the Arctic Circle panel



The following scholars participated:

Dr. CAYLA ROSCHÉ, Lecturer at Edgewood College, Fulbright-MFA Arctic Scholar at the Iceland University of the Arts

Project: Icelandic Lyric Diction and Repertoire

MEGHAN ORMAN, PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh, Fulbright-NSF Arctic Research Fellow at the University of Iceland

Project: Developing Nature Connection and Environmentally Sustainable Behaviors in Early Childhood

Dr. WANDA GREGORY, Lecturer at the University of Washington, Fulbright-NSF Arctic Research Scholar at Reykjavik University

Project: Empathic Computing-Mental Health and Wellness

Dr. TENLEY BANIK, Associate Professor at Illinois State University, Fulbright-NSF Arctic Research Scholar at the Research Centre of the Westfjords

Project: Exploring Connections Between Bedrock Geology and Atlantic Cod Populations in the Westfjords

Dr. ÁSLAUG ÁSGEIRSDÓTTIR, Professor at Bates College, Fulbright-NSF Arctic Research Scholar at University of Iceland Centre for Arctic Studies

Project: Iceland in the Arctic: Evolution of Arctic Policy and its Impact on Priorities in the Arctic Council

Dr. SIGRÍÐUR KRISTJÁNSDÓTTIR, former Dean of Department of Planning and Design, Associate Professor and Director of the master's Program in Planning, Agricultural University of Iceland, Fulbright Arctic Initiative III Scholar

Project: Future Sustainable Circumpolar Development



Dr. Cayla Rosché

E. Communication and Local Outreach

Various outreach activities took place throughout the year, both virtual and in-person, including participation on university international days, visits to local institutions and liaison with a variety of partners. The Commission also received many guests from the U.S. for both formal and informal consultations. The total number of page visits to the webpage was 21,142 visitors, including visitors to the Fulbright Iceland and EducationUSA advising center pages.



Fulbright alumnus John Allegrante and Thomas Bailey, president of Teachers College at Columbia University, visiting the Commission in June



Florida International University students at the Commission

Visits to Icelandic Universities

The ED visited University of Akureyri, Hólar University, Agricultural University of Iceland, Bifröst University and the University of Iceland in fall 2023.



Visiting the Agricultural University of Iceland

U.S. University Visits

In FY2023 two alums of the scholar program visited with their students. Having spent time in Iceland on a Fulbright, scholars are well equipped to lead student visits, where U.S. students explore a variety of themes and research questions. Because of their connection with Fulbright, these scholars often ask the Commission to give presentations to the students, consisting of a basic introduction to Iceland and a presentation about Fulbright opportunities, where students get various tips about the application process in general. In FY2023, groups from Florida International University, led by Lukas Danner, and Indiana University, led by Priscilla Barnes and Lily Albright, visited the Commission.

Additional informal meetings took place with university representatives visiting Iceland, including two visits from Columbia University's Teachers College.



Priscilla Barnes, Lily Albright and students from Indiana University with Fulbright Iceland staff

Publication

Newsletters were published in November 2022 and in August 2023. A new video profile, produced by the Commission in cooperation with Fulbright alumnus and filmmaker Erlendur Sveinsson, was premiered in May. The film features Icelandic Fulbright fellow Hanna Dráinsdóttir, master's student at New York University. Hanna shared insights into her Fulbright journey and will hopefully serve as an inspiration to students who are thinking of applying to study in the United States and those who want to apply for a Fulbright. The Commission is deeply grateful to the Icelandic Consulate in New York for allowing us to tape the interview with Hanna at their offices. Also in May, the first video profile featuring a U.S. scholar was premiered, featuring Fulbright-NSF scholar Tenley Banik who talked about her research and experiences living in the Westfjords of Iceland.



The film crew at the Icelandic consulate in New York



“I want to begin by thanking the Fulbright Commission in Iceland for selecting me as a grantee. It has been an absolute pleasure to be here, to participate in Commission sponsored events, and getting to know the other Fulbright grantees. This year, I have been working on two papers. I will continue to work on both over the next year, present them at conferences, and submit them for publication.

The first paper is titled “Development of Iceland’s Arctic Policy” and focuses on the development of Iceland’s Arctic policy since the mid-aughts. am hoping to present this paper at the Arctic Congress in Bodø, Norway in 2024, after which I will submit it for publication.

The second paper titled “The Elusive Quest for Responsible Fisheries” focuses on the challenge of managing straddling fish stocks in the North Atlantic. Using the North Atlantic as a case study, the paper argues that the shared management of valuable fish stocks needs to be transformed, from a structure of highly political annual negotiations to a more automated system that reacts to scientific advice in a relatively predictable fashion. I am planning on presenting this paper at the International Studies Association’s Annual Conference in early 2024, after which it will be submitted for publication.”

Dr. Áslaug Ásgeirsdóttir, Associate Dean and Professor at Bates College, hosted by the University of Iceland

F. International Cooperation

In November 2022 the ED and a program officer travelled to Oslo to meet with Nordic colleagues. Fulbright Norway hosted the meeting, which allowed for consultations and discussions amongst colleagues.

While in New York filming, the ED used the opportunity for additional meetings with partners in the city, including a full day at the Institute of International Education (IIE) headquarters to meet with several colleagues. The final meeting of Fulbright Arctic Initiative III was held in Washington, D.C. in April 2023, followed by the European Fulbright Conference in Prague, which included Executive Directors as well as U.S. Embassy representatives.

The U.S. State Department hosted a global meeting of Fulbright Executive Directors in Washington in May, which was followed by the annual NAFSA conference, where the ED was on an IIE panel to discuss the U.S. Scholar Program and introduced the Iceland program to Fulbright campus advisers.



The ED addressing campus advisers at NAFSA



A panel discussion in Prague



Meeting with Nordic colleagues in Oslo



Global Fulbright Executive Director's meeting in Washington, D.C.

6. PARTNERSHIP AWARD

The Fulbright Commission administers the Partnership Award in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy. The award was established in 1991 by Ambassador Charles Cobb on the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Iceland and the United States. He and his wife, Ambassador Sue Cobb, presented the City of Reykjavik with the sculpture Partnership to commemorate the anniversary and established this award at the same time. The award goes to an American who has demonstrated a long-term commitment to fostering U.S. relations with Iceland and to building bridges between the two countries. The recipient is selected on average every two years by the Board of Directors of the Fulbright Commission.



After receiving and reviewing nominations, the Fulbright Board selected Robert Dell, geothermal sculptor, founding Director of the Laboratory for Energy Reclamation and Innovation and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art. His relationship with Iceland spans over three decades, starting with a Fulbright Research grant in 1988. He has returned many times to Iceland and built successful relationships both in the arts and science. He has been a consultant to the town of Hveragerði, a visiting scientist at Keilir, is affiliated with the University of Iceland and has worked on research administered by the Agricultural University of Iceland and funded by Reykjavik Energy. He has an impressive research record with Icelandic colleagues, resulting in more than 30 research papers. He has facilitated over 80 U.S. students conducting research in Iceland. Robert has had solo installations at the Reykjavik Art Museum, Akureyri Art Museum, Geysir Nature Conservation Area, Perlan, and Seltún Hot Springs. He has also widely exhibited geothermal powered work inspired by Iceland in the United States. A reception was hosted at the U.S. Embassy to honor the award recipient.





“The aim of my project was to explore young Icelandic children’s (age 4-5) connection to the natural world and sustainable behaviors. The primary research questions were: (1) What do young children’s nature connection and sustainable behaviors look like? (2) What factors are associated with children’s nature connection and sustainable behaviors? To answer these research questions, we performed three primary tasks: (1) children drew themselves while doing something in nature and then were interviewed about their drawings; (2) children took a novel, picture-based survey about nature; and (3) parents and teachers were surveyed about their views on nature and the environment.



Nine classrooms across six preschools in southwest Iceland and one in north Iceland participated in the study. While preliminary findings are promising, it is clear that more comprehensive analyses are needed. A multilevel model will be built to simultaneously explore relations between child, parent, and teacher nature connection. Three publications are expected to come out of this project, the first exploring methodological perspectives on young children’s nature connection based on the findings from our novel picture-based survey and parents’ survey of child’s nature connection. The second will explore early childhood nature connection based on children’s drawings and interviews and the third will present the multilevel model.

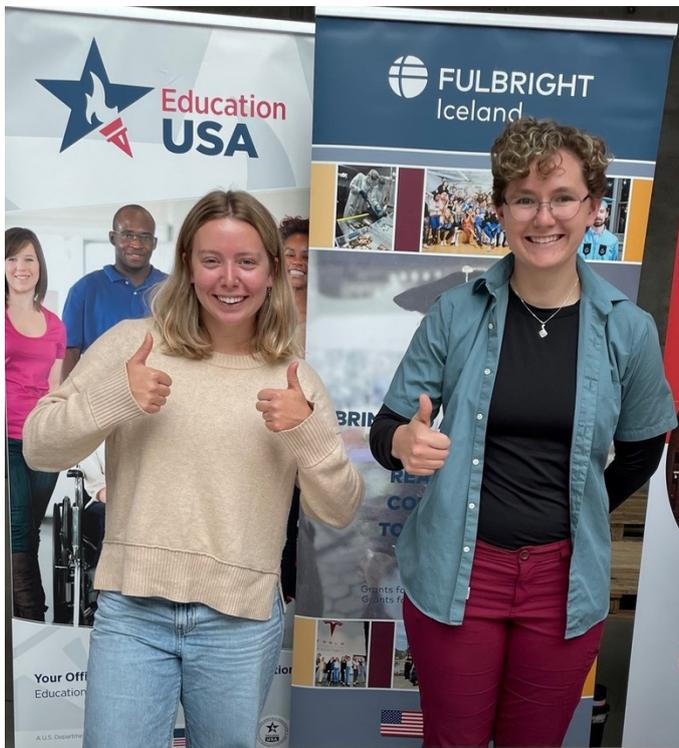
My two mentors at HÍ, Kristín Norðdahl (Education Department) and Freyja Birgisdóttir (Psychology Department), are on my dissertation committee and will continue to support my dissertation work. I will continue to also work with them other field specific projects. Also, at the Arctic Circle Assembly in October 2022, I met the directors of Youth for Arctic Nature, an international organization based out of Hólar University (Iceland), dedicated to connecting Arctic youth to nature. I was able to work on a small project with them during my time in Iceland and will be traveling back to Iceland and to Norway in the upcoming year to help them develop the psychological components of their programming.”

Meghan Orman, who in February 2024 defended her PhD dissertation at the University of Pittsburgh, was hosted by the University of Iceland

1. ADVISING AND OUTREACH

The EducationUSA advising center welcomes individuals interested in both undergraduate and graduate studies and provides comprehensive one-on-one advising services for all fields and levels of university education.

In the beginning of FY2023, the advising center maintained its weekly opening hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In FY2023 it became necessary to decrease the hours devoted to EducationUSA due to budget decreases. The advising center is open one day per week for in-person appointments. Limited additional appointments are given outside formal opening hours.



Fulbright fellows, Annesley Black and Christine Groves, at Reykjavik University International Days

The advising center has a library of reference materials and electronic databases that is accessible for students and scholars. Furthermore, students can borrow preparation books for tests that they must take when applying to U.S. schools, including TOEFL, SAT/ACT, GRE and GMAT. While the library keeps a small supply of certain key reference books and guides, as well as a comprehensive range of test preparation books, its main emphasis is now on assisting students with online information.

The Fulbright adviser provides in-house advising services on an individual and group basis to students interested in studies in the United States. Additional services are provided through speaking engagements, participation in education fairs, and contact with appropriate schools and universities. EducationUSA presentations are now mostly done virtually. Presentations that highlight Fulbright grant opportunities also feature general student advising, and vice versa. Thus, all opportunities are used to create synergies between grant promotion and advising.

During FY2023 the emphasis was on maintaining core advising activities despite the budget decrease, but it is clear that only basic services can be provided under current circumstances.

2. EDUCATIONUSA ACADEMY

EducationUSA Academy is an opportunity that was first offered through the Commission in the year before the emergence of COVID-19. The program resumed in FY2023 to an enthusiastic response by Icelandic students. The Academy gives excellent high school students an opportunity to take part in a summer program at a U.S. university to learn about the higher education system, gain an insight into what it is like to study at U.S. colleges and universities, and receive practical tips and training into the college admission process. Offering this grant has become one of the most impactful services of the EducationUSA advising center. This has led to many Icelandic students thinking about study in the United States. Many contact the adviser and come in for advice specifically because they heard about this opportunity. The grants are funded by the U.S. Embassy in Reykjavik. These grants are reaching a high demand market and the opportunity to apply is very much appreciated by students, for whom this is a learning experience even if they do not ultimately receive a grant.



3. REAC VISIT

Melissa Deschamps, Regional Educational Advising Coordinator for Europe, made a three-day site visit to Fulbright Iceland's EducationUSA Advising Center in summer 2023. After presentations on the history of EducationUSA advising in Iceland and current student mobility issues, there were productive discussions on the services and activities of the advising center, promotion and outreach, strategic planning and future work. Melissa conducted training sessions for the adviser on a wide range of topics, including resources and where to find information on different topics, fact sheets, on-line advising, financial aid, the common application, community colleges and more.



4. EDUCATIONUSA STATISTICS ICELAND FY2023

As can be seen in the figures on the next page, the number of Icelandic students studying in the U.S. has slightly decreased from the previous year but remains relatively stable in the longer term. This year there were more Icelandic students enrolled in a graduate or non-degree program than the year before, with a remarkable 69% increase for non-degree students. More than half of the Icelandic students in the United States are pursuing an undergraduate degree. The split between private institutions and public institutions is relatively even, with private institutions slightly above public ones. The vast majority of Icelandic students are enrolled in universities which offer doctoral programs, and the top three receiving states are located on the East and West Coast (California, New York, and Massachusetts).

Student Mobility Facts and Figures 2023

Iceland



360,872

Total Population¹



12.6%

Population Aged 15-24¹



119

International Student Place of Origin Ranking, 2022/23



21

U.S. Study Abroad Destination Ranking, 2021/22



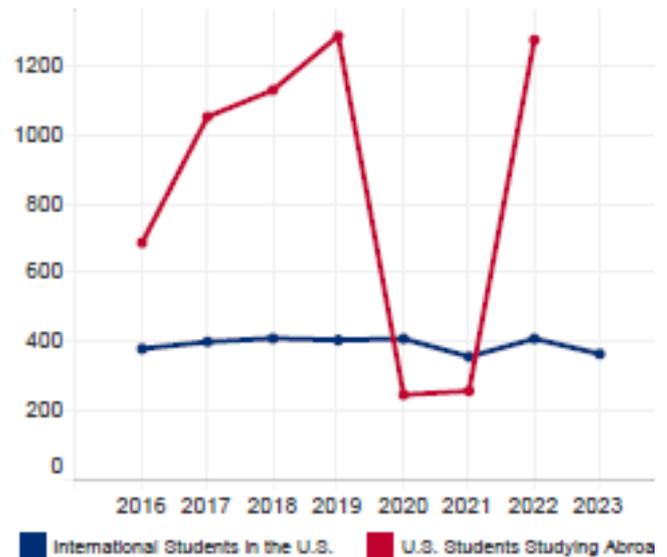
N/A

International Student Economic Impact, 2022²

STUDENT MOBILITY TOTALS

Year	International Students	U.S. Study Abroad
2022/23	367	N/A
2021/22	411	1,274
2020/21	359	260
2019/20	411	249
2018/19	407	1,286
2017/18	412	1,129
2016/17	402	1,052
2015/16	382	688

2015/16-2022/23



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS BY ACADEMIC LEVEL

Academic Level	2021/22	2022/23	Total	Change
Undergraduate	239	189	51.5%	-20.9%
Graduate	104	111	30.2%	6.7%
Non-Degree	13	22	6.0%	69.2%
OPT	55	45	12.3%	-18.2%

STUDENT VISAS ISSUED

Visa	Change 2021-2022 ³
F	19.6%
J	50.7%
M	500.0%

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS BY INSTITUTION TYPE

Institution	Total
Associate's Colleges	2.4%
Baccalaureate Colleges	7.4%
Doctoral Universities	68.8%
Master's Colleges and Universities	21.1%
Special Focus Institutions	0.3%
Private Institutions	54.9%
Public Institutions	45.1%

TOP RECEIVING STATES

California

New York

Massachusetts

Florida

Texas

Source: Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange. For more information, visit www.opendoorsdata.org.

Other sources: ¹The World Fact Book, ²U.S. Department of Commerce, ³travel.state.gov (Fiscal year October 1 - September 30).

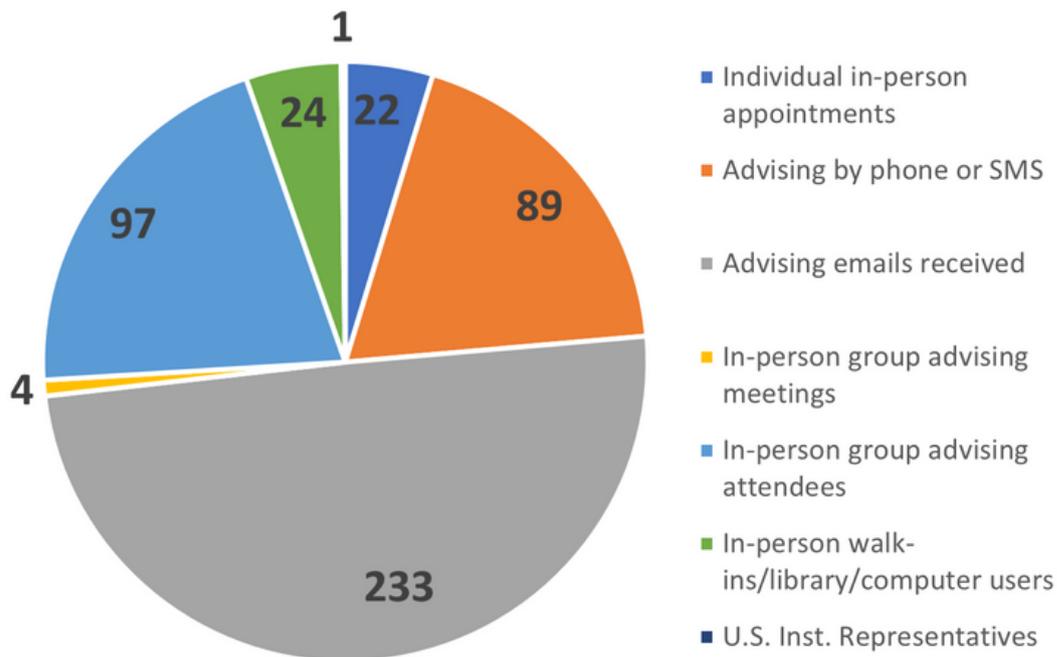
Note: N/A reflects information that is not available or not applicable. Open Doors does not publish rankings for totals of less than ten students.



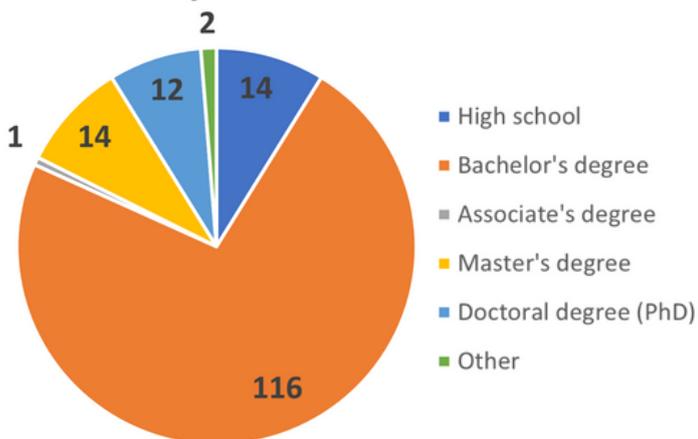
5. ADVISING CENTER FY2023

FY2023 was a busy year for the EducationUSA advising center. The most popular fields of study were law, computer science and arts. Below are three charts outlining statistics for some of the types of contact, the level of study the students were interested in, and the different types of outreach activities held or attended by the center.

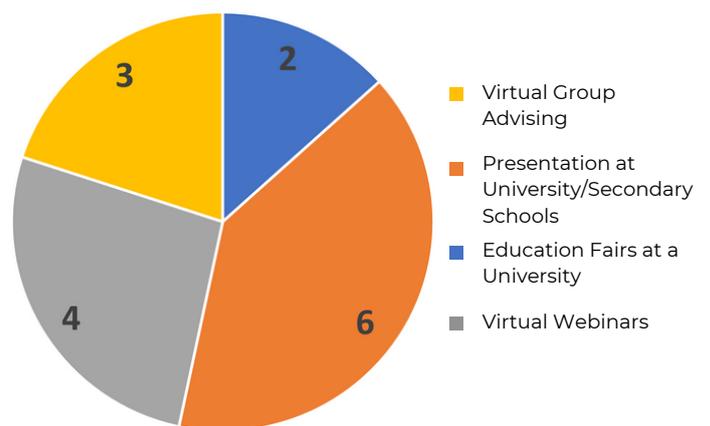
Types of Contact



Study Level



Education Fairs and Presentations



The combined attendance of the education fairs was around 1,100 prospective students while 37 prospective students attended one of the virtual webinars. Around 60 attended virtual group advising events.



“I wanted to start by thanking Fulbright for the amazing opportunity they gave me to move to the U.S. and study at Harvard. What I am most thankful for is all the wonderful people I have met while living in the U.S. and what I am most proud of is all the work I have done while studying here. I had the great opportunity to participate in some very interesting courses. I also had such great and insightful meetings throughout my stay with my host professor, Jason Beckfield, who is also a member of my PhD committee.

The courses, the meetings with Jason, and all the networking at Harvard has expanded my knowledge in environmental sociology as well as enhanced my skills as a researcher beyond measures. Upon returning to Iceland, I feel ready to finish my dissertation and I am excited to get a chance to teach my own course in environmental sociology at the University of Iceland. I am very confident about teaching the course after my stay at Harvard.”

Sóllilja Bjarnadóttir, PhD student at the University of Iceland was a Visiting Student Researcher at Harvard University. She is currently teaching a course at the University of Iceland entitled “Environmental sociology: Climate change and societies.” She designed the course based on two courses she took at Harvard, “Sociology of Climate Change” and “The Politics of the environment and climate change.”



Embla Rún with SUSI peers



Þórhildur with fellow Fulbrighters in Washington D.C.

“In addition to her teaching and research contribution, Dr. Wanda Gregory also cooperated with faculty members at the Department of Computer Science in curriculum development and played an important role in the early stages of a successful grant proposal for the development of a joint degree with the Iceland University of the Arts. Dr. Gregory really helped us to meet some of our teaching and mentoring needs, including exposing our students to ethical issues in computer science. The three-week course she delivered received very high scores from the students who took it. We are keen on maintaining connections with her. We look forward to Wanda’s continued assistance as we further develop the joint bachelor’s program with the Iceland University of the Arts. Overall, we had an excellent experience with the Fulbright Scholar Program and were very pleased with Dr. Wanda Gergory’s contribution to the department.”

Fulbright scholar host Luca Aceto, Professor of Computer Science at Reykjavik University



Dr. Kirk Hoppe and family



Meghan Orman at a conference in South Iceland on nature education



Sigurður Björnsson checking out geothermal installations

“We would like to express our gratitude to the Fulbright Commission for funding Dr. Cayla Rosché’s visit. She was extremely active and made so many connections with faculty and other music professionals. Her expert knowledge in vocal diction and phonetics for singers, combined with her specific research into Icelandic vocal repertoire and Icelandic diction, makes her the leading expert in her field. This is of great value for Iceland on an international level, introducing Icelandic vocal repertoire internationally and making it accessible for nonnative speakers. On a national level her contribution has enhanced the teaching and learning of vocal performance at the Icelandic University of the Arts.”

Fulbright scholar host Prof. Þóra Einarsdóttir, Dean of film, music and performing arts at the Iceland University of the Arts

1. FULBRIGHT BOARD OF DIRECTORS FY2023

Honorary Co-Chairs:



Carrin F. Patman
U.S. Ambassador to Iceland



Áslaug Arna Sigurbjörnsdóttir
*Minister of Higher Education,
Science and Innovation*

U.S. Board Members:



Karen Huntress
Chairman of the Board*
*Public Affair Officer,
U.S. Embassy*

*Board member October 2022 - July 2023



Jeff Dirks
Treasurer
*Retired State Department
Foreign Service Officer*



Dr. Margaret Cormack
Board member
*Affiliate Professor, University of
Iceland, Professor Emeritus, College
of Charleston*



Elizabeth Lay
Board member
*Architect, PhD Student
Researcher in Education*



Dr. Catherine P. Chambers
Alternate
*Research Manager of
the University Centre of the
Westfjords*

Icelandic Board Members:



Dr. Páll Melsted
Vice-Chair*
Professor of Computer Science, University of Iceland, Fulbright Scholar Program alumnus
**Acting chair from August 2023*



Dr. Hrunn Ólöf Andradóttir
Board member
Professor, Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Iceland



Dr. Bryndís Björk Ásgeirsdóttir
Board member
Dean, Professor of Psychology, Reykjavík University



Geir H. Haarde
Board member
Former Ambassador to the U.S.



Dr. Berglind María Tómasdóttir
Alternate
Artist and Professor of Contemporary Music Performance

Belinda Theriault, Executive Director
Ex officio board member



Board Members Páll Melsted and Margaret Cormack left the Board at the end of FY2023 after serving for five years. They made significant contributions during their time on the Board and provided invaluable support to the work of the Commission.

The Board of Directors comprises a diverse group of leaders who bring a wealth of expertise and experience to the table. The Board has important responsibilities in connection with carrying out the goals of the bilateral agreement between Iceland and the United States, including setting and monitoring long-term program objectives and general oversight.

An important responsibility of the Board involves selecting grant recipients, which includes evaluating grant applications and interviewing candidates. The Board works closely with the ED. Individual Board members, who volunteer their time and expertise, are instrumental in achieving the goals of the Commission. The Board met five times during FY2023: in October, November, December, January, and April. Between meetings, consultations between the ED and the Board took place regularly. Board members take part in various Commission activities, providing an opportunity to interact with grantees and to promote Fulbright Iceland.

2. FULBRIGHT COMMISSION STAFF

The Commission team members in FY2023 were Pétur Valsson, program officer for scholars and specialists, executive officer and alumni liaison and Sóley Rafnsdóttir, program officer for students, EducationUSA adviser and assistant to the ED.



“Courses at the University of Washington and UC Berkeley, seminars and conferences – including the POWER Conference on electricity organized by the Energy Institute at Haas, and BERC’s (Berkeley Energy and Resources Collaborative) Energy Summit – as well as discussions with professors and fellow students undoubtedly have widened my scope, added to my knowledge base and in general have made me a better researcher. All these experiences have informed my PhD project, not only in an obvious way through coursework and seminars, but also collectively through unexpected connections.



To name a few examples, Prof. Michael Wagner, who is also a part time optimization expert at Amazon, gave me great advice regarding my optimization model. My meetings with Professor Joe Mahoney, who heads an online program on energy infrastructure within the civil engineering department, were invaluable and I am very grateful for his guidance. He and I also discussed that I would develop and teach a course on geothermal energy within the program, a superb opportunity for me. At UW, I shared an office with several other PhD candidates studying hydrology. A couple of us are looking at future collaboration, since my project aims at looking at the complementarities of geothermal and hydropower. I return to Iceland equipped with knowledge for my own teachings at both the University of Iceland and Reykjavik University, which I am excited to share.”

Sigurður Björnsson, Visiting Student Researcher in energy economics at the University of Iceland, hosted by the University of Washington, Seattle, and UC Berkeley.



The Fulbright Alumni Association in Iceland (FFSÍ) is an important partner of the Fulbright Commission. Founded in 2008, the Association has from the outset played an active role in fostering a sense of community amongst grant recipients and supporting the work of the Commission. After three years of pandemic-pause, the Fulbright Alumni Thanksgiving celebration was finally back on in FY2023. Newly arrived U.S. Ambassador Carrin F. Patman greeted the guests at the sold-out event where alumni, current grantees and friends of Fulbright celebrated together with a traditional Thanksgiving feast. Two alumni happy hour events were held in winter and spring and gave alumni and new grantees the chance to mingle and share experiences. In September, alumni and many of the newly arrived U.S. grantees gathered for the second round of tree planting in the Fulbright forest. This time 485 trees were planted, bringing the total number to 1045. The goal is to plant trees for every Icelandic and U.S. student and scholar awarded grants by the Commission. The Fulbright Forest was made possible by a generous grant from the U.S. Embassy in Reykjavík.

The annual meeting was held in February 2023. Arnór Gunnar Gunnarsson, Fulbright fellow 2018, Columbia University, was re-elected Chairman for 2023. The following alumni were also elected to the Alumni Association Board for 2023: Bergljót Gyða Guðmundsdóttir, Harpa Lind Jónsdóttir, Ingibjörg Friðriksdóttir, Kristján Theodór Sigurðsson and Sólveig Ásta Sigurðardóttir.



FFSÍ Chair Arnór Gunnar Gunnarsson and former Chair Sigrún Ólafsdóttir steered the fundraising raffle at Thanksgiving.

1. DONORS

The Fulbright Commission started some very limited fundraising last year when Icelandic rules changed to allow individuals and companies to receive tax breaks for charitable donations. Fulbright Iceland has such status, so it was decided to start looking at this possibility for alumni and friends of Fulbright Iceland to donate locally. Last year five individuals made donations to Fulbright Iceland and we wish to thank them for their contributions. These individuals are:

- Ásbjörg Einarsdóttir
- Belinda Theriault
- Kristín Dýrfjörð
- Lára Jóhannsdóttir
- Ragnheiður Sigurgeirsdóttir

This is a step in the right direction and Fulbright especially wants to thank them for leading the way and hopefully inspiring others to follow in their footsteps. The funding received by donors in Iceland, 53.000 ISK, will go towards a grant for an Icelandic student in 2024-2025. With rising education costs, current allocations do not cover the breadth of work that the Commission aspires to. We want to support more Icelanders seeking education, as well as research and cooperation opportunities, in the United States. By donating to Fulbright Iceland, donors are investing in the future.

2. FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Following is the audited Financial Statement for FY2023, including a Statement by the Executive Director, Auditor's Report, Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Status of Funds Report, and Notes to the Financial Statements. The Statement was prepared by the Commission's accountant and Executive Director and audited by the Icelandic National Audit Office (INAO).

INAO is an independent body operating under the auspices of the Icelandic Parliament, Alþingi. The Office is a part of the legislative branch and its monitoring of the executive branch. Its main role is to audit the State accounts and the financial statements of State bodies and to monitor and promote improvements in the financial management of the State and in the use of public funds. The Office's remit covers all ministries, agencies, and other State bodies, including public companies in which the State has a majority holding, and all budgetary chapters. The Office is also authorized to audit private companies, associations, non-profit organizations, or any other bodies that receive Government funds or guarantees.

The National Audit Act stipulates that the Office shall have access to all data important for the performance of its tasks. Furthermore, the Office may request reports on the disposal of grants and other contributions from Government funds and assess whether such payments have achieved the intended results.

*Please note that in Note 9 to the Financial Statement (p. 9) the latter part of this sentence is cut off. The full sentence should read: "Awards granted in one fiscal year are in some cases paid out the same year, in other cases they are paid out in part or in full in the next fiscal year."

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Guðmundur Björgvin Helgason
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Ástæða: Undirritun

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ICELAND - UNITED STATES EDUCATIONAL COMMISSION

Financial Statement and Balance Sheet
for the Fiscal Year 2022 - 2023 (FY 2023)

March 2024

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Statement by the Executive Director

It should be noted at the outset that core contributions remain stable and equal between the two countries on an annual basis. In FY2023, however, due to discrepancies regarding when funding was received, the balance sheet shows a double contribution from the US and no contribution from Iceland, as the annual contribution from Iceland for 2023 was not received before the end of the fiscal year. There was also a double contribution from NSF, again due to the timing when funding was received, at both the beginning and end of the fiscal year. Due this anomaly in the receipt of funding, the balance sheet shows a skewed picture of funding on an annual basis.

Core government contributions are approximately 40% of total income for the fiscal year. The main component of additional funding this year is from the National Science Foundation. All supplemental funding is earmarked for specific projects, much of it for future projects, which in some cases take place over multiple years.

Grant commitments made in one year, may be paid out in the same fiscal year or they may be partially or wholly paid in subsequent years. For FY2024, with reference to grants that have gone forward already or are expected to go forward in the new year, the number of Commission grantees totals 37 so far. In FY2023, the number of Commission grantees totalled 47.

Revenue of the fiscal year from 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023 amounted to roughly 156 million ISK, with expenditures at approximately 121 million ISK. As is explained in the notes, most of what is classified as equity in the accounts is in fact already obligated or earmarked. Real contingency funds amount to 66 million ISK. It is necessary for all Fulbright Commissions to have adequate contingency funds. The Commission expects to release a portion of current contingency funds for projects and grants over the next years, but it will be important to maintain necessary contingency funding.

The financial statement includes in-kind contributions, both governmental and non-governmental. This allows the financial statement to better reflect actual financial value and real contributions from the contracting parties. This is done in consultation with the State Auditor and only contributions that are verifiable and quantifiable are included.

There are additional important contributions, which are not part of the financial statement. Icelandic Fulbright fellows (students) often receive additional benefits from US universities, that are not administered jointly by the Commission. These can be attributed, at least in part, and often significantly, to their Fulbright status. Last year such support amounted to 232,871 USD from US universities in the form of tuition waivers, scholarships and other awards, certainly a significant amount.

As Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission in Iceland, I hereby confirm and accept the financial statements for FY2023.

15 March, 2024



Belinda Theriault

Auditor's report

To the board of the Iceland - United States Educational Commission

The Icelandic National Audit Office has audited the accompanying general purpose financial statements of the Iceland - United States Educational Commission, as of and for the financial year ended September 30th 2023, as listed in the table of contents. This financial statement is the responsibility of the management. The Icelandic National Audit Office's responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on its audit.

The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. These standards require that the audit is planned and performed to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. Icelandic National Audit Office believes that the audit provides a reasonable basis for its opinion.

It is the Icelandic National Audit Office's opinion, that the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Iceland - United States Educational Commission, at September 30th 2023 and the results of its operations and the cash flows for the year then ended, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles in Iceland.

Icelandic National Audit Office, March 21st, 2024

Guðmundur Björgvin Helgason
Auditor General

(digitally signed)

Iceland - United States Educational Commission

INCOME STATEMENT

October 1 2022 - September 30 2023

	Notes	FY 2023 ISK	FY 2022 ISK
Revenues:			
Allocation, US government.....	4	61.651.784	27.979.733
Allocation, Icelandic government.....	4	0	27.900.000
Other contributions, US government.....	5	11.536.642	36.735.241
Other contributions, Icelandic government.....	6	6.949.750	0
Other contribution-NSF-US government.....	7	75.693.750	32.782.500
Other contributions.....	8	382.719	0
Total revenues:		<u>156.214.645</u>	<u>125.397.474</u>
Expenditures:			
Program costs, Scholar program.....	9	27.650.844	43.098.508
Program costs, Student program.....	9	34.098.317	32.031.386
Program costs, Specialist program.....	9	1.030.453	877.455
Program costs, Other program.....	9	12.484.708	6.409.554
Salary and salary related costs.....		34.174.694	31.424.158
Rent and utilities.....		2.593.634	2.528.277
Services.....		2.989.418	2.937.924
Equipment and furniture.....		294.096	169.545
Supplies.....		501.750	418.323
Travel, training and transport		446.441	6.481
Grant supporting activities.....		4.524.675	3.674.290
Total expenditures:		<u>120.789.030</u>	<u>123.575.901</u>
Income (deficit) before interest expense/revenue		35.425.615	1.821.573
Interest expense/revenue.....		3.493.675	236.246
Exchange rate (loss)/profit.....	4	(16.040.443)	22.808.955
Income for the year		<u>22.878.847</u>	<u>24.866.774</u>

Iceland - United States Educational Commission
IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS/EXPENDITURES
 October 1 2022 - September 30 2023

	FY2023	FY2022
	ISK	ISK
Grant and grant-supporting		
Government grant for Icelandic studies, Árnastofnun.....	1.780.400	1.780.400
Icelandic government non-cash contributions.....	0	335.596
Host institution costs for US students, scholars and specialists.....	5.221.978	6.060.436
US Embassy contributions.....	404.040	343.245
Direct DoS grantee funding (SUSI, Specialists, etc.).....	6.123.800	3.964.822
BOAS Award.....	5.471.200	
Total non-cash grant and grant-supporting contributions	19.001.417	12.484.499
Administrative		
Auditing services	600.000	600.000
Total non-cash administrative contributions	600.000	600.000
Total non-cash contributions	19.601.417	13.084.499

Iceland - United States Educational Commission

BALANCE SHEET

September 30 2023

		FY 2023 ISK	FY 2022 ISK
Assets			
Cash (USD)	4	247.586.378	227.792.139
Cash (ISK)	3	19.466.639	16.516.865
		<u>267.053.017</u>	<u>244.309.004</u>
Total Assets		<u>267.053.017</u>	<u>244.309.004</u>
Liabilities			
Current liabilities.....		4.456	0
Unpaid salaries and employment tax.....		738.861	728.472
Income-tax deduction and pension funds.....		561.983	711.662
		<u>1.305.300</u>	<u>1.440.134</u>
Trust account			
Funds on hand October 1.....		242.868.870	218.002.096
Income for the year.....		22.878.847	24.866.774
Funds on hand September 30.....		<u>265.747.717</u>	<u>242.868.870</u>
Total Liabilities and Equity		<u>267.053.017</u>	<u>244.309.004</u>

Iceland - United States Educational Commission

STATUS OF FUNDS REPORT

For Year ending: September 30 2023

		2023
		ISK
1.	FUNDS ON HAND OCTOBER 1 2022.....	244.309.004
	-Current liabilities	<u>-1.440.134</u>
		242.868.870
2.	RECEIPTS: CURRENT FISCAL YEAR	
	A. Current Year Receipts:	
	1. Received from U.S. Mission.....	73.188.426
	2. Host Government Contribution.....	6.949.750
	3. Other Contributions.....	382.719
	4. Other Funds received.....	75.693.750
	5. Interests on Deposits.....	3.493.675
	6. Exchange fluctuation.....	<u>-16.040.443</u>
	Total Received Current Year	143.667.877
	B. Total Funds Received Current Fiscal Year	143.667.877
3.	DISBURSEMENT: CURRENT FISCAL YEAR	
	A. Current Year Disbursement	
	1. Administration and advising.....	41.000.033
	2. Grant supporting activities.....	4.524.675
	3. Program.....	<u>75.264.322</u>
	Total Disbursement Current Year	120.789.030
	B. Total Disbursement to Date	120.789.030
4.	FUNDS ON HAND SEPTEMBER 30 2023.....	267.053.017
	-Current liabilities.....	<u>-1.305.300</u>
		265.747.717

Notes to the Financial Statements

1. Accounting records have been kept according to Icelandic law and the ECA Fulbright Manual for Bi-national Commissions and Foundations. Amounts are in ISK.
2. The bank balances as per statements from Íslandsbanki hf., accounts no. 560169, 405300 and 7358, have been verified at September 30 2023 as ISK 4.409.964, 15.050.886 and ISK 5.789, taking into account payments at the end of the fiscal year.
3. A dollar account no. 102882 in Íslandsbanki hf. has been verified as at September 30 2023 USD 1.810.106,58 or ISK 247.586.378 (exchange rate booked at daily rate of 136,78).
4. The US government core allocation for FY2022 was USD 213.374 and was received and recorded in October 2022, i.e. in FY2023. The additional amount constitutes payment from the US government for its annual allocation in FY2023, 232,750. Thus we have two years of funding paid in FY2023, which explains the higher amount. The Icelandic government contribution for 2023 was 30,3 million ISK, but had not yet been received at the end of the fiscal year.
5. Other US government contributions includes EoY funding, Arctic funding and travel funding.
6. Funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was received for 2 years in FY2023, as no funding was received in FY2022. This is because the Ministry works in calendar years.
7. Two years of payment were received from NSF, both FY2022 and FY2023 were received in FY2023.
8. This refers to payment from Ambassador Cobb in order for Fulbright Iceland to administer the Cobb Partnership Award in 2023.
9. Awards granted in one fiscal year are in some cases paid out the same year, in other cases they are paid out in part or

US Scholars	26.243.744
Icelandic Scholars	1.407.100
US Students	17.270.077
Icelandic students	16.828.240
Program cost US specialists	1.030.453
<u>Other grant programs</u>	<u>12.484.708</u>
Total expenditures	75.264.322
10. Fulbright-MFA Arctic Scholar Program disbursements

Grant & supporting	1.806.183
<u>Admin costs</u>	<u>126.433</u>
Total expenditures	1.932.616

The balance of MFA funds at end of FY2023 is 7.650.906 ISK.
11. Fulbright-NSF Arctic Research Program disbursements

Grant & supporting	10.307.330
<u>Admin costs</u>	<u>1.030.733</u>
Total expenditures	11.338.063
12. Total NSF Arctic disbursements amount to approximately 83,000 USD.
The balance of NSF Arctic funds at the end of FY2023 is approximately 549,000 USD.
This is obligated to future grants and associated costs.

13. Fulbright-NSF Cyber Security Program dispersements		
Grant & supporting		3.782.630
Admin costs		378.263
Total expenditures		<u>4.160.893</u>

The balance of NSF Cyber Security funds at the end of FY2023 is approximately 132,000 USD.

This is obligated to future awards and associated costs in cyber-security and critical infrastructure. This may include both specialist and core scholar awards.

14. Although not part of the annual accounts, an inventory of non-expendable property is maintained by the Commission and has been updated for FY2023. Current value is 774.480 ISK.

ISK.

15. Non-expendable property is insured for ISK 8.051.684 (fire, burglary, water damage) from July 1 2023 to June 30 2024.

16. Ms. Belinda Theriault has been bonded to the amount of USD 25.000. This insurance is valid for the period from January 1 to December 31 and renewed annually.

17. In-kind contributions are all contributions that do not go through the Commission accounts, i.e. are paid either directly to the grantee or are received by the Commission or a grantee in-kind.

18. There was no core contribution from the Icelandic government received in FY2023, because the full annual contribution for FY2023 was received after the end of the fiscal year. Since two years were received from the US side within the same fiscal year, the equivalent of a full government contribution was received. Thus, when we look at the fiscal year, 100% of core government contributions were received from the US. When additional government cash contributions are taken into account, the funding ratio is approximately 95% US to 5% Icelandic. When government non-cash contributions on the balance sheet are included, the US government allocation ratio is 91% to 9% Icelandic.

19.

Ratio of administrative costs to grant costs, including non-cash expenditures shown in the income statement.

	IKR.	%
Grants and grant supporting activities	98.790.414	70%
Administrative costs	41.600.033	30%
Total costs	<u>140.390.447</u>	<u>100%</u>

20. Funds that are already obligated/earmarked for specific projects in FY2024 and beyond in ISK:

MFA	7.650.906
NSF Arctic	75.177.234
NSF Cyber	18.154.130
ECA Arctic	33.407.800
EoY funding	8.607.310
ECA dependent supplement	2.159.980
US Embassy funding	1.484.972
Bruce Fowler Mobility Fund	1.216.070
Total	147.858.402
Projected non-earmarked obligated grant funding	30.000.000
Projected admin costs for 6 months	23.000.000
Total	53.000.000
Total obligated funding	200.858.402
Contingency funding	66.194.615



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