

20
25

FIREBIRD
FELLOWSHIP

Prospectus
& Application

AIM
ACADEMY
FOR IMPACT
THROUGH
MUSIC

AIM ACADEMY FOR IMPACT THROUGH MUSIC

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What is AIM?

Academy for Impact through Music (AIM) is a global innovation lab for changemakers tackling inequality through music education. In particular, AIM focuses on the potential of dedicated teachers in the music for social action field to transform learning for their students and communities.



Music as a force for change

At AIM, we believe music is one of the most powerful ways to engage and inspire children and young people, helping them unlock their highest potential. We also believe music is an unparalleled medium for amplifying global issues—from the climate crisis to economic inequality and racial or gender discrimination—because of its unique power to engage people’s values and connect us at a profoundly human level across languages and cultures.

But it takes more than music alone to achieve these impacts—great teaching is essential to channel music’s transformative potential for young people.

AIM offers inspiring and supportive teacher training that combines high artistic standards, responsiveness to community needs, challenges to traditional music-learning assumptions and adaptability to language and cultural context. Student outcomes are at the heart of our mission and we prioritize cultivating transferable skills that extend beyond instrumental instruction, redefining how music-making is approached and structured.

AIM

The Firebird Fellowship



The Firebird Fellowship is AIM's flagship program, to date guiding 142 Fellows in a life-changing training program that positively impacts thousands of students around the world.

The Fellowship is an in-depth 12-month teacher training program for a cohort of 40 teachers from music for social action programs, emphasizing the vital role of teachers as agents of change. Combining interactive online and in-person learning, Fellows explore the fundamentals of effective and inspiring teaching, AIM's self-assessment framework guided by a coach, and leadership development. Firebirds are changemakers, committed to student-centred learning and empowering young people through music education.



For the first time, the 2025-26 cohort will proudly focus on the impact on student outcomes in Latin America (LATAM). **At least 80% of the cohort will be based in Latin America**, with up to 8 places available for teachers leading change outside LATAM who speak fluent Spanish or Portuguese.

Becoming a Firebird is a life-changing experience - both personally and professionally, as Fellows join a movement to redefine music education and place students at the heart of the learning process.



142

Firebirds in 4 cohorts



16

Countries



28

Program partners

Beyond the Fellowship

Fellowship alumni access programs to support their professional development, both within AIM and beyond. Some highly motivated alumni have become AIM coaches, junior faculty, and presenters delivering approved programs in their communities. Others have been accepted to partner initiatives, such as Global Leaders Institute’s Líderes Emprendedores track. Hear from 3 alumni about their distinctive journeys after graduating from the Fellowship:



‘The network and resources provided by the Fellowship opened doors to global collaborations, transforming my professional journey in meaningful ways.’

Carlos, 2022 Firebird



‘I feel incredibly happy and proud to closely follow the growth and development of AIM, to be part of it, and now to contribute as a coach. This role allows me to share with other educators worldwide what I have been privileged to learn, giving back to the communities I belong to, including AIM, as we continue to grow together.’

Francis, 2021 Firebird



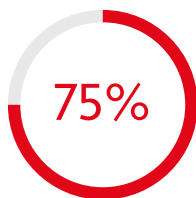
‘AIM has been key in the expansion and consolidation of my professional profile, providing me with access to new opportunities to bring my passion for music and art to diverse communities and make a meaningful impact.’

Duván, 2022 Firebird

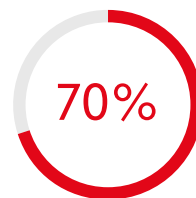
Firebird alumni impact



Bringing the AIM framework and mission to their work



Influencing their colleagues to support better student outcomes



Leading training for teachers and other community members

What you can expect from the Firebird Fellowship approach



"Find your own teaching methods and don't be afraid to let other people criticise them".

Hannes,
Superar Austria, 2021

Youth development outcomes

Using AIM's Destinations, focus your practise to support student advancement beyond musical instruction and performances to wider transferable youth development outcomes that are intentionally targeted through music-making and that can support students in other parts of their lives.

Reflective practise

Reflective practise is at the heart of the Firebird Fellowship. It is a way of studying our own experiences to maximise our learning and improve our work and the positive impact on our learners.

Core teaching competences

Hone and build on the fundamentals of robust teaching practise that are shared by good teachers across any subject and in any context, and access a wider range of strategies available when we look outside music education - and how these directly support student outcomes as described by the AIM Destinations.

Self-assessment

Develop the habit of self-assessment using the AIM Teaching Analysis Framework that helps you become more accurate and focused at identifying the most value-adding areas for development and enables you to track and celebrate your growth journey as a changemaker.

Action research

Action Research is a recognised and respected form of education research. As a Firebird you will develop an action research mindset to help you experiment with your teaching practise and produce clearer insights that improve your own work and then support others to improve theirs.

Practical 'micro-strategies'

Experience, adapt, experiment with and develop small practical approaches and activities that can be adopted in your classroom to support your students.

Coaching and mentoring

Receive a regular combination of coaching and mentoring from both expert faculty and recent alumni who understand the journey you are on, while developing these skills yourself for your own leadership development.

Feedback

Practise your teaching competences with your peers and get supportive feedback from faculty and peers. Analyse the teaching of your peers and practise providing incisive and constructive feedback, a key leadership skill for supporting other teachers to develop their skills.

AIM's Staff & Faculty

Here are some of the expert and dedicated team and Core faculty who supported our Firebirds in 2024-25. Each year our faculty expands to meet the needs of our new cohorts and increasing project delivery:

AIM Core Team



Fiona Cunningham
Director



Marie Ortinau
Head of Programs &
Operations



Elisa Sologni
Participation Manager



Paloma Ramos Udovic
Head of Firebird Fellowship



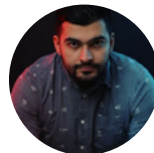
Laia Pujol-Rivera
Firebird Fellowship Manager



Daniela Brito
Programs Coordinator

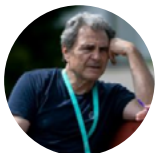


Eli Rosales
Event Producer



Andrés Chavarría Giraldo
Learning Designer

AIM Founding Faculty



Eric Booth



Richard Mannoia



Pablo Millanes



Emma Oliver-Trend

Fellowship Timeline Overview



Zoom Live Sessions are Thursday Mornings (Latin America)

01**Initiate****August - December 2025**

- ✓ **Module 1-3:** Live online and asynchronous learning
- ✓ 10 Live Zoom Session
- ✓ 4 Firebird Coaching Sessions
- ✓ Action Research Project #1

02**Immerse****16-31 January 2026**

- ✓ **Module 4:** Firebird Fellowship 2-week Residency in Colombia

03**Implement****Feb - April 2026**

- ✓ **Module 5:** Live online and asynchronous learning
- ✓ 3 Firebird Coaching Sessions
- ✓ 3 Live Zoom Sessions

04**Integrate****May 2026 - July 2026**

- ✓ **Module 6:** Live online and asynchronous learning
- ✓ 2 Firebird Coaching Sessions
- ✓ 3 Live Zoom Sessions
- ✓ Action Research Project #2
- ✓ Local Graduations (Aug 2026)

05**Inspire****Sept 2026 - June 2027 | Smaller Cohort**

- ✓ **Module 7-8:** Training and opportunities in presenting, coaching, and training other teachers



What is the commitment for a Firebird Fellow? **Time + Energy**

Firebirds who are realistic about their readiness for this commitment thrive during and beyond the Fellowship. You will need stamina, good ability to bounce back when things get challenging, and overall feel you are in a good place to take on the commitment of the Fellowship. The Fellowship can be life-changing and hugely rewarding, but it also requires a level of self-awareness and emotional resilience. We are ultimately seeking teachers who will become field leaders and can create balance, stability and inspiration for young people.

All Firebirds sign an agreement to complete the Fellowship and make pledges to support your community and the field.

Make sure you make the right decision for you!



AIM invests €15,000 in each Firebird.

Firebird's Commitment: Time and Energy Investment

80

hours coaching, live online sessions and asynchronous sessions across 12 months

30

hours additionally for action research projects, lesson planning and graduation

5

hours per week (Approximately)

2.5 week January residency in Colombia in entirety (16 days at 7 hours a day)

Firebird Fellowship Residency 2026



16 -31 January TBC
Recinto Quirama,
Medellín

The Firebird Fellowship Residency is 2 weeks of in-person learning in Medellín, Colombia, home to one of our partners - Iberacademy. Firebirds will live and learn at Recinto Quirama, an events space in the countryside of Antioquia, will play music, plan, teach, learn, analyse and debate every day, accompanied by coaches and guest teachers. Firebirds immerse themselves in reflective s, get hands-on teaching experience and become familiar with the coaching and analysis process. In the last days, Firebirds focus on the year ahead and plan their lessons back in their music programs.

Participation in the full residency is a core and mandatory part of the Fellowship.

Practical requirements

Are you Eligible?

You must be able to check all of the following in order to be eligible:

- Aged 21 or above
- Musical and instrumental mastery to equivalent or above of Year 1 BA in Music Performance
- Speaks and reads Spanish or Portuguese fluently.
- Work with a music for social action program in Latin America, providing consistent teaching of a group instrumental class (minimum 2 times and 6 hours per week). Most students are aged 6-17.
- Secure teaching role in the same music program for the entire Fellowship from August 2025 - August 2026
- Has sufficient if not ample time to fully participate in the Firebird Fellowship
- Teaches an instrument that is commonly taught and/or played in groups



Please note, at this time we are not able to accept teachers who only teach piano, early years or musical initiation or theory

What role do Music Program Leaders play in the Fellowship?

AIM requires written support from the Music Program Director for any Firebird's acceptance, unless the candidate is the Music Director themselves. This endorsement should outline how the Fellowship aligns with the program's broader objectives, ensuring the leader is actively supportive, not merely 'allowing it to happen.' We encourage Program leaders and Firebird applicants to consider applying amongst colleagues, as we notice more impact when there are several Firebirds from one program. Program leaders need to provide the following assurances for any Fellow to be successful during the Fellowship:

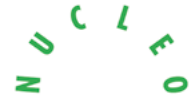
- ✓ Guaranteed stable and paid teaching role for the duration of the Fellowship - minimum August 2025 - August 2026.
- ✓ Time for the Fellows to attend AIM Live Sessions and the 2-week Residency. AIM strongly discourages programs from mandating Firebirds use vacation days, or other days that they will later have to make up, for AIM activities.
- ✓ Time and space for the Fellows from the program to meet 4 times at key moments between August 2025 - August 2026 for sharing of challenges and successes and peer support.
- ✓ Supporting a local graduation for the Firebirds in August 2026, with resources (financial and human) allocated by AIM to support this.
- ✓ Allowance of 2 points in the year where Firebirds can actively share their learnings with other colleagues and exchange ideas and practical tools, once after the 2-week Residency and once as part of the local graduation activities.
- ✓ 6 x hours of leader meetings and general effective communication with AIM
- ✓ Support and cooperation in ensuring program participants sign a release waiver if their image is to be captured for AIM activities

Please check carefully that the relevant program leader in your organisation will be able to ensure the above.

Which music programs have supported Firebirds?



AIM has partnered with some of the world's leading music for social action programs, focused so far in Latin America, the United States, Europe, and Africa. These programs harness the Fellowship as one change mechanism in their wider commitment to keep increasing positive learning for students and community impact.



Firebird Fellowship Application 2025

How to apply

**STEP 1**

(Now): Read this document and watch [this video!](#)

**STEP 2**

(15 Jan - 1 Mar): Attend an Informational Session on [Tuesday 28 January](#) or [Thursday 13 February](#)

**STEP 3**

(1 Mar): Submit Application A



[Firebird Eligibility & Commitment Application 2025](#)

The deadline to submit Phase A is March 1, but you can submit it anytime after January 15. The sooner you submit, the sooner you will receive your eligibility email and can start preparing Phase B.

**STEP 4**

Wait for AIM to confirm your eligibility and send details about TASKS Application (within 2 weeks)

**STEP 5**

Prepare your tasks following confirmation of eligibility:

1. 15-minutes video of you teaching your class
2. Self-analysis of your teaching video using AIM Framework
3. Musical audition video

**STEP 6**

(15 Apr): Submit Application B: Submit TASKS.

Application link provided upon eligibility confirmation

**STEP 7**

(1-15 May): Group Zoom Interviews with AIM Team

**STEP 8**

(31 May): Fellowship selected, offers made

**STEP 9**

(30 June): Cohort public announcement made



Frequently asked questions



Do I need my Program Leader's Permission? Yes, AIM needs your Program Leader's clear support to attend all the sessions, the residency, and to graduate. It is important to discuss the opportunity with your Program Leader before applying. AIM can secure the support in writing after you are offered a place.



Do you accept all music teachers? We accept music teachers who teach common instruments and/or those used in ensembles, as well as voice and choir.



I am primarily a conductor - I do not teach instrumental lessons. Is the Fellowship still relevant/suitable for me? It is relevant if you are a committed teaching artist, meaning that you view the orchestral rehearsal space as a learning environment that can be harnessed intentionally for youth development outcomes. You also need to play an ensemble instrument and be able to model from it in rehearsals. If your main priority is on preparing the orchestra for concerts, this is probably not the right path for you.



My program cannot guarantee I will have consistent teaching or the same group for the duration of the Fellowship - can I still apply? Having a stable teaching context for the period of the Fellowship is vital. One group change may be normal but if you already know that your contract is being reviewed shortly, or you are unlikely to be able to have consistent groups for the Fellowship, this does not sound like the right opportunity for you.



I cannot access a student group for the teaching task - can I find a different solution? Unfortunately not - we need to see you teaching in action. You have until 15 April to film yourself teaching.



Do I have to apply playing the instrument I teach or the instrument I play? Please apply playing your first instrument e.g. the one you play to the most advanced level. However, if your first instrument is an instrument you do not teach, please use one of your performance excerpts to show us how you play the instrument you are teaching.

After applying



What is the assessment process? An AIM team of around 12 core faculty members and Firebird alumni assess each task in isolation to get as diverse a view as possible and reduce opportunities for bias for or against candidates. Conflicts of interest are avoided by ensuring that members of the jury associated with particular programs are removed from assessing Firebirds from those programs. The team navigate the complex task of choosing candidate they think have the best fit for the Firebird profile, while prioritising the potential strategic change impact of individuals and groups within their particular settings, and at the same time seeking to build a diverse and vibrant cohort that will enrich the learning experience for the Fellows themselves.



What happens just after I apply? The AIM team may be in touch with you after 1 February or 2 weeks after you have submitted your Application A: Firebird Eligibility & Commitment Application. The sooner you can submit your Application A, the sooner you can start to work on your B: Firebird TASKs Application. After you submit B: Firebird TASKs Application, we will confirm we have received your tasks or get in touch if we need more information. Please note that the sooner you can submit your application before the 15 April deadline, the more time the AIM team has to assess your application.

Participating in the Fellowship



Will there be simultaneous translation in live sessions and the residency? Yes. There will be translation services in Spanish and Portuguese. However, there will be moments when translation is a challenge, and we ask for flexibility and understanding.



I would need a passport or visa to participate in the residency - can AIM arrange this? AIM supports with costs for passports and visas - if you are offered a place and need a passport or visa to travel, please tell us as soon as possible so we can start the process with you.



What happens if my circumstances change and I can no longer teach young people during the Fellowship? AIM always seeks to assist Firebirds to complete the Fellowship and find solutions for teaching. However if you make a life choice or take a job that removes your ability to teach young people during the Fellowship, you will need to leave the Fellowship.



What happens if I have a major date clash? Check the dates carefully before you commit - the Firebird Fellowship is an immersive academic commitment that requires a minimum of 90% assignment and attendance to complete it. Please note the entire period of the January residency is mandatory. Firebirds who find out they have a date clash may be invited to defer their place to the next year's cohort, but this is on a case by case basis.

Thank you and GOOD LUCK! From the whole AIM TEAM

