Andela

Program Type
Fellowship

Medium of Delivery
In-person, on-the-job training

Program Duration
4 years (6 months of training +3.5 years of employment)

Annual Participants
1,000+ (500 training; 500+employment)

Organization Type
For-profit

Year Established
2014

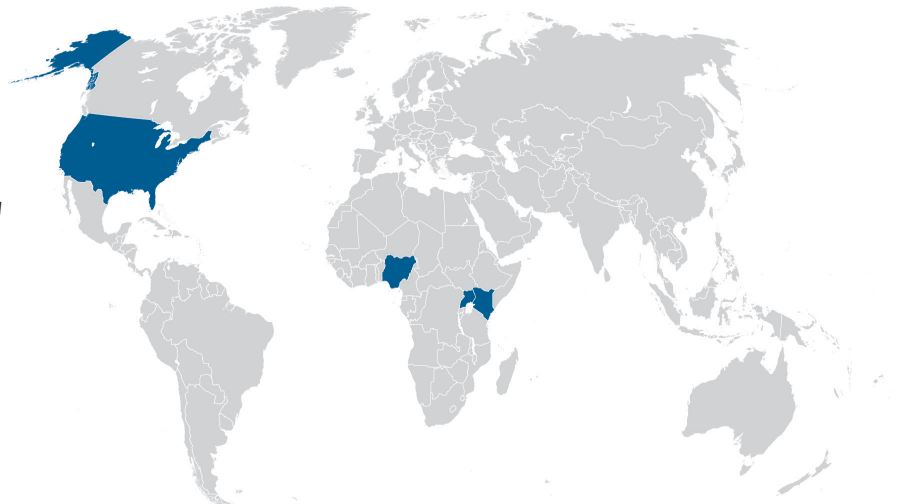**Average Fees per Participant**
No fees; fellows earn a salary

Number of Alumni
~20 (have completed 4 years of the program)

Andela

Geographic Coverage

On-ground presence in Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda, with adminisrative offices in the United States

COMPANY OVERVIEW

Andela is an organization that cultivates IT talent in Africa and provides leading global technology companies with access to a high-skilled resource pool. Andela software engineers participate in a coding boot camp after which they work remotely from Andela's tech campuses across Africa. IFC is currently supporting Andela as an equity investor.

For more information, visit: **https://andela.com/**

Mission Statement

To advance human potential in Africa by investing in talent and ensuring that participants are job ready, while also addressing the global digital skills-shortage faced by employers.

> "You must join a community. It may be good to work alone, but it is much better to work in a team. Andela provided mentors to support me all along the process"
>
> — Andela fellow

Key Innovations

Andela is characterized by two features:

1. **Employment-focused Program Provision:** training includes project-based, on-the-job learning for six months with Andela's internal operations teams. For the remaining 3.5 years, participants work with one of Andela's partner companies. By frontloading the program training, Andela ensures that it has a significant pipeline of developers to offer its employer partners, who are often looking to hire developers for long-term projects.

2. **Self-sufficient Model:** the model is linked directly to employer needs, ensuring continued relevance and funding for the training program. Large brand-name employers also attract more applicants to the program.

Program Overview

Andela is a highly competitive program that trains and employs software developers to power technology teams and businesses across the globe. It aims to build a bridge between talent and opportunity. The program provides students with six months of intensive on-the-job training, followed by 3.5 years of remote employment for partner companies, where they work from one of four Andela office spaces in Africa. This is referred to as "distributed employment," with Andela taking on the role of the distributor. Andela, an IFC investee company, also is backed by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Google Ventures, and Spark Capital.

Program History

Christina Sass, Jeremy Johnson, Ian Carnevale, Nadayar Enegesi, Iyinoluwa Aboyeji, and Brice Nkengsa founded Andela in 2014. They recognized the shortage of technology talent in the United States and saw an opportunity in Africa, where they had worked with and observed talented individuals.

Types of Digital Skills Imparted

The program covers advanced technical skills such as programming and application/software development, including full stack development. The coding basics (Python or Java) are self-taught using Andela's learning resources during the selection process. It also teaches work ethics and team-related skills such as communication, professionalism, and integration.

Business Model

Andela's business model is designed to sustain itself and drive scalability. Employer partners, typically based in the United States, pay Andela to provide vetted, talented, and fully trained software developers. This subsidizes the full cost of the fellowship. Andela held a Series C funding round in 2017 that brought its total funding to over $80 million. It held a Series D funding round providing $100 million in 2019, led by new investor Generation Investment Management.

PARTICIPANT SOURCING AND SELECTION

Target Segment and Pipeline Development

Andela targets talented individuals who have the potential to be leaders in the technology sector. Applications are open to anyone over 18 years old and willing to commit to Andela for four years. About 80 percent of participants have previously completed a four-year degree in computer science or engineering and are around 26 years old. Andela has received over 100,000 applications since 2014.

Rationale for Targeting this Segment:

1. **Untapped Talent:** Africa has a large, fast-growing youth population. Andela believes African youth lack the opportunities and resources needed to meet their potential in the technology sector. "Brilliance is evenly distributed across the world, but opportunities are not," is a popular company refrain. The program seeks to bridge this opportunity gap.

2. **Demand-supply Gap in U.S. Market:** There are five open jobs for every one software developer in the United States, and most companies say that finding qualified talent poses a major challenge. The recruitment process for these companies often takes two months or more and is costly for each hired developer. Andela hopes to address this demand and supply gap by helping largely U.S. companies hire talented, vetted employees from Africa.

3. **Key Value Proposition:** Participants find the program valuable because it is a fully paid, on-the-job education that will advance their career. For the first six months, fellows go through an immersion program and receive a minimal salary in addition to a MacBook, subsidized housing, and two meals a day. The program also offers significant built-in work experience with top-tier technology companies across the world. When fellows are working for these employers, they receive a competitive salary. Fellows work in well-equipped Andela offices based in Lagos, Nairobi, Kampala, or Kigali and have access to ongoing mentorship from senior engineers that Andela hires.

4. **Key Methods to Find Applicants:** Andela has now developed a strong reputation, which has allowed it to scale up. The organization also uses social media to reach applicants and in 2017 launched a free online learning platform, Andela Learning Community. This platform serves as Andela's "scouting" medium, as it allows the company to track learner progress over time by providing a wealth of data points to identify potential participants who are likely to perform well in the program.

Application and Selection

Applicants fill out an online application and then go through a rigorous selection process. The program is extremely competitive and has a selection rate of 0.7 percent. The selection process takes roughly four months from application to program start.

Students begin by filling out a free application and personality test online. Then they gain access to Andela's home study curriculum, which covers software development and team skills. This helps them prepare for the next technical assessment round. All applicants take that assessment, which is based on either Python or JavaScript. The assessment includes virtual lab assignments with test-driven development code to assess the applicant's mastery of Andela's open-source curriculum.

Shortlisted candidates are invited to interview with a panel of Andela staff members and developers at an Andela office. Interviewers gauge the applicant's commitment and alignment to Andela's values. Applicants who pass the interview are invited to participate in a two-week simulation led by senior Andela developers. This comprises one week of home-based self-learning and one week of product development at an Andela campus. Applicants are evaluated for their alignment to Andela's core values (excellence, passion, integrity, and collaboration), and ability to work independently and with a team.

Key Challenges and Solutions

Andela is committed to ensuring a strong representation of women and aims to have around 30 percent women in each of its regions. It has set up all female recruitment cycles to encourage women to apply. When Andela notices a lack of female applicants or too few progressing through technical rounds, the company organizes "level-up" programs and workshops for them. This is done in partnership with corporations such as Microsoft.

PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

Program Training and Approach

Fellows undergo intensive, master's level, project-based training during the first six-month period. Then they spend 3.5 years employed at Andela as remote software developers for global technology companies.

Program Approach

Program cohorts comprise 20 to 30 people on average, with an increasing number every year. Andela fellows go through four levels as a part of a long-term, well-defined learning trajectory. The program tracks over 1,000 data points that measure the progress of the developers.

The first six months are spent exclusively on project-based learning. Fellows work on product teams at Andela's offices writing code and incorporating feedback from senior engineers. This training model mimics the process of learning on the job; the "instructors" are senior colleagues. Fellows are expected to begin the program with a firm understanding of basic technical skills, which they would have developed during the rigorous selection process. Instructors teach soft skills during brief sessions throughout the four years.

After the six-month training period, the fellows are staffed as full-time distributed team members at one of Andela's offices. Within a month of their match with a partner company, fellows are sent to the firm's headquarters for two weeks. This is most often in the U.S. and allows fellows to build strong relationships with the team, despite the remote nature of their work. Groups of three to four fellows often are hired as a team by partner employers. Andela fellows usually work for an employer for at least a year. This means

that they often have the opportunity to work with multiple employers over the course of four years.

Compensation is linked to level and does not vary depending on the client organization with whom fellows are working. Andela pays its developers in line with market standards.

Retention Approach

Andela has a high retention rate with little attrition. The fellows have an official contract with the organization for the first two years. They are expected to stay through the next two years but are not legally bound to do so. Learning tends to plateau by that point, although fellows sometimes choose to stay because of Andela's competitive employment opportunities.

Instructors

Andela does not have traditional instructors. It aims to teach its developers on the job. Andela fellows are grouped in "pods" with senior developers for support. Andela also has a learning management system that tracks participants' progress and helps customize their professional development plan. Senior developers are experts in the field of software engineering with more than five years of experience and are recruited from top tech firms in Africa and around the world.

Program Evolution

Since its inception in 2014, Andela has added initiatives to spur growth. The Andela Learning Community was launched in early 2017 to create a talent pipeline. It provides free learning resources and access to virtual mentorship that individuals can use to prepare for their Andela applications or to gain digital skills. Content on the platform is sourced from Andela's partners, including Google, Udacity, and Microsoft. The initiative has attracted 23,000 learners, and Andela has seen course completion rates reach five times higher than the average for global massive open online courses.

Andela places a strong focus on building team skills and communication during its program. Some offices conduct daily team-building activities to engage developers, while others hold frequent workshops. Their approach is driven by data that has identified emotional quotient as important as intellectual quotient for successful placement.

PROGRAM IMPACT

Learning Goals

Andela seeks to develop software developers who are highly employable by the end of the four years. The program focuses on building technical and soft skills and has over 1,100 engineers on staff.

The company uses six attributes to evaluate the performance of developers in a company environment. The parameters by which they are judged depend on their level and determines their growth in the organization:

1. Quality – Designing product architecture and delivering complete products

2. Quantity — Delivering entire systems of interrelated products against timeline

3. Initiative — Organizing meetings and managing project team

4. Communication — Effectively understanding and communicating client requirements

5. Professionalism — Collaborating effectively with a team to deliver the project

6. Integration — Flexibility in coordinating with multiple teams

Skills Developed:

1. Technical skills — Exclusive focus on software, full stack development

2. Soft skills — Focus on team building and communication, built into curriculum

Employment Process

After program completion, developers generally have three opportunities:

1. **Employment:** developers become full-time software engineers for a top global or local technology company

2. **Entrepreneurship:** some participants start their own business or join entrepreneurial ventures

3. **Employment with Andela:** others return to Andela in positions as senior developers, engineering team leads, or learning facilitators

Employment Oriented Initiatives

1. Entrepreneurship Center: The center serves as a local technology incubator, providing technology entrepreneurs with the guidance to brainstorm, network, build prototypes, and set up operations. This initiative is expected to result in the creation of new and lasting local businesses.

2. Andela Alumni Network: The alumni network is built to provide graduates lifelong access to Andela and its resources. The fellows are also encouraged to consult the alumni community for job opportunities.

Employer Perspectives

The Andela fellowship is considered equivalent to four years of employment experience at top tech companies around the world. Participants develop mastery over specific technology, such as JavaScript, Ruby on Rails, Android/iOS application development. At the end of the four years, they possess significant work experience and marketable skills for employers in the technology sector.

Impact

The organization has succeeded in creating a vast community of employable software engineers. There are over 1,000 Andela developers. Almost 500 of the developers are working as full-time employees with their partner organizations. The remaining engineers are still engaged in their first six months of training or are working on internal engineering teams to develop Andela's proprietary technology.

More than 20 developers have completed four years with Andela and either stayed on as senior developers, started their own businesses, or joined other technology firms as developers. Andela expects to double its developer count by the end of 2019. Over the next four years, Andela plans to create high-end technology jobs with supporting staff members across various countries, improve its training program to provide better employment prospects, and reach a larger community through its online learning center.

Developer Perspectives

Andela developers say the key drivers of its effectiveness are the company's inclusive nature, on-project training, and exposure gained by working for the top companies of the world.

OPERATIONS

Resources

Andela has a staff of over 1,700, with more than 1,100 software engineers (fellows from the program, completing their four years of employment at Andela).

Andela hires individuals who believe in its mission statement and values:

1. **Excellence:** lifelong learners who strive for mastery of our craft

2. **Passion:** people who aspire to change the world and act accordingly

3. **Integrity:** individuals guided by strong moral principles

4. **Collaboration:** individuals who build relationships to cooperate and deliver projects

Path to Scalability

Andela plans to increase its outreach to 100,000 developers in Africa by 2024. It aims to leverage public-private partnerships to grow quickly in new regions. The pan-African technology campus at Kigali, for example, was launched in partnership with a government organization that fundraises with international donors. The company aims to repeat this model in other locations.

Africa's increasing youth population, unlike much of the world, has helped Andela grow. The company believes a similar model can be replicated in regions with sizable youth populations that lack adequate access to digital skills training.

PROGRAM KEY MILESTONES & TIMELINE			
2014	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
Andela was founded and its first cohort of fellows were accepted in Nigeria.	Andela went through the Series A funding round and launched operations in Kenya.	Andela went through Series B funding round and launched operations in Uganda.	Andela went through Series C funding round and launched a pan-African hub in Kigali.

KEY PEOPLE

Christina Sass
President and Co-founder, Andela

As the Chief Operating Officer, Christina helps guide Andela's mission and strategy to build the next generation of technology leaders in Africa. Prior Andela, Christina directed the Program department of the Clinton Global Initiative and advised the President and CEO of The MasterCard Foundation. Christina also has experience in building education and employment programs in China, Gaza and the West Bank, Kenya, and Nigeria.

Jeremy Johnson
Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Andela

Jeremy drives the overall strategy and operations of Andela, and has been instrumental in shaping the organization into one of the most coveted technical institutes. Prior to co-founding Andela, Jeremy co-founded 2U, a company listed on the NASDAQ stock exchange.