



International Culture and Career Exchange

J-1 Exchange Visitor Programs – A Cultural Experience

Important announcement

The U.S. Department of State has articulated their expectation that all J-1 Exchange Visitor Program participants should be placed only in programs/locales/host companies that provide them with meaningful cultural experiences, a variety of opportunities to meet Americans, and chances to learn firsthand about American society, culture, and values.

The primary purpose of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Programs is to offer young men and women from around the world, an opportunity to increase their knowledge and understanding of the United States firsthand through a combined cultural and “work” (i.e. internship/training) experience. This means that **participants must be provided with a balanced program, including a meaningful cultural experience, that will include a variety of opportunities to meet Americans (in and outside their workplace), and a chance to learn firsthand about American society, culture and values.** In recent years, the “work” component of this exchange program has too often overshadowed the core cultural component that qualifies these programs as Cultural Exchange.

While employment is a critical element, it is neither the only nor the primary element of any of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Programs.

In order to confirm that each job placement leads to a meaningful cultural exchange experience, the U.S. Department of State advises all program stakeholders (including Host Companies) to consider the following questions about each job/internship/training placement:

- Does the position allow for routine interaction with Americans **during the workday**?
- Does the program provide a balance between work time and free time?
- Does the **location of the Host Company** provide opportunities for cultural activities and community engagement (after work)?

Note: The location of the company in this context refers to areas (e.g. rural or highly industrial areas) where there are no opportunities for participants to partake in any cultural or social events that provide exposure to the American culture and customs. Since participants usually live in the close proximity of their training sites, the existence of cultural and social life in the area where the Host Company is located, is an important component of the program as it provides participants with the opportunity to engage in cultural exchange in their free time as well.

Sponsors must be notified if participants are not engaging in cultural events sufficiently - under the employer's aegis and/or on their own, and ensure that participants have accumulated a number of cultural activity experiences before the end of the work portion of their programs. Cataloging these activities by both participants and Host Companies is highly advisable. The U.S. Department of State, in its random program review, may ask for a list of activities participants have undertaken and any documentation **showing the Host Companies' engagement and support.**



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Cultural Activity Information

Here are some examples of activities that provide an opportunity for cultural exchange on- and off-site. This list is not exhaustive. It is just to provide a better idea of what could be considered a cultural exchange opportunity. The more the participants are able to immerse themselves in the American culture, the better their program is, the more enriching their experience and the better their program meets the U.S. Department of State requirements.

- Regular/Daily on-site interaction with American co-workers, customers, guests, etc.
- Lunches, pizza parties or other employee gatherings
- Holiday party/gift exchange to celebrate Christmas or New Year's
- Halloween (celebration, costume party/contest)
- Team building, company picnics and recreational events
- Thanksgiving celebration, luncheons, dinners, potlucks
- Exchanging birthday cards and gifts celebrating employees' birthdays and other holidays
- Encouraging/Inviting participants to employees' family parties or other events (birthday parties, BBQs, excursions, hiking, biking, etc.)
- Visiting with participants (or encouraging participants to visit) local attractions, sporting events, museums, art galleries, concerts, festivals, theaters, historic landmarks, scenic locations, etc.

On the attached form using the above example please list activities that participants will be able to partake in (on- and off-site). Please include any other activities not listed above that your company may facilitate.

International Culture & Career Exchange (ICCE), Inc.



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Cultural Activity Plan

Please list possible cultural events and activities that program participants will be able to join during their programs.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Host Company Name: _____

Host Company Representative: _____

Host Company Representative's Signature: _____

Date: _____