J-1 Cultural Exchange Program
Exchange Visitor Orientation
The Role of the American Immigration Council

Congratulations and Welcome to the United States! We wish you an amazing and life changing experience within your BridgeUSA J-1 Cultural Exchange Visitor Program. As your J-1 program sponsor, we're here to support you throughout your research program. We're authorized by the U.S. Dept of State and collaborate closely with your U.S. Host Organization to ensure your well-being and safety during your J-1 opportunity. Feel free to reach out whenever you have questions about your program, life in the U.S., or your responsibilities as a J-1 Exchange Visitor. We're here to assist you every step of the way!
Your J-1 Exchange Visitor Status

As a J-1 Exchange Visitor participant, you will enter the United States under a J-1 visa. Your J-1 status gives you certain privileges and responsibilities during your program in the United States. Please be familiar with the following points concerning your J-1 status:

- You have J-1 status under an Intern, Trainee, or Research Scholar Status.
- Your J-1 status is valid only when accompanied by the DS-2019 form sent to you by the American Immigration Council.
- Any changes made to your placement plan must be approved beforehand by the American Immigration Council. If you engage in any unauthorized training/research, you place your J-1 status in jeopardy of cancellation or termination.
- Your placement plan is site specific; changes can only be made with written approval from the American Immigration Council.
American Immigration Council
Exchange Visitor Program Categories

The American Immigration Council is authorized to sponsor programs under the Intern, Trainee, and Research Scholar categories.
Intern | Trainee Qualifiers

**Trainee:**
A foreign national participating in a structured and guided work-based training program in their specific occupational field who has either:

- A degree or professional certificate from a post-secondary academic institution and at least one year of prior related work experience in their occupational field acquired outside the United States; OR
- Five years of work experience in their occupational field acquired outside the United States.

**Duration:** Up to 18 months

**Intern:**
A foreign national participating in a structured and guided work-based internship program in their specific academic field who either:

- Currently enrolled in an accredited post-secondary academic program outside of the United States; OR
- Graduated from such an institution no more than 12 months prior to the exchange visitor program begin date reflected on Form DS-2019.

**Duration:** Up to 12 months

**NOTE:** The training program and the exchange visitor’s background must correlate
J-1 Research Scholar Qualifiers

A J-1 Research Scholar is a visiting researcher from a foreign country, possessing at least a bachelor's degree with relevant experience in the intended research field, and who has gained approval to enter the United States from their J-1 visa program sponsor and/or U.S. Consulate. The Research Program Duration ranges from 3 weeks to 5 years.

The following conditions apply:

✔ Must not be eligible for a tenure track position.
✔ Must not have taken part in and concluded a research scholar initiative within the last 24 months prior to the initiation of their new program.
✔ Must not have engaged in a J-Visa program for any portion of the 12-month period directly preceding the initiation date of a research scholar program, unless they satisfy one of the subsequent exemptions:
  o The participant is currently engaged in a research scholar program and intends to move to another institution within the United States to continue their existing J-1 program.
  o The participant’s previous physical presence in the U.S. under a J-visa program was shorter than six months in duration.
Important Documents: 
Form DS-2019: Certificate of Eligibility

This controlled document issued by the U.S. Department of State through the American Immigration Council is vital for your U.S. entry and exit. It confirms the J-1 participants legal authorization to engage in their respective training/internships or research programs.

The Form contains important information such as:

- Program start and end dates
- SEVIS number
- Program number
- Exchange Visitor category
Important Documents: The J-1 Visa

This non-immigrant visa is granted by a U.S. Consulate or Embassy to participants in the J-1 exchange visitor program.

The J-1 visa permits foreign nationals to temporarily enter the U.S. for participation in their research program or their training, and internship program.

NOTE: Canadian nationals will apply for their J-1 status at the U.S./Canadian border.
Important Documents: I-94 Arrival/Departure Record

The I-94 Arrival-Departure Record number is a unique 11-digit identifier issued to J-1 participants when they enter the United States.

It is used to track the entry and exit of foreign nationals as well as their visa status and length of authorized stay in the United States.

This form is accessible online and is essential for applying for Social Security and other U.S. benefits. J-1 participants will receive a new I-94 Arrival/Departure Records each time they reenter the United States.
Important Documents: Form DS-7002

Form DS-7002 is intended for foreign nationals participating in the J-1 Intern and Trainee category, functioning as a comprehensive training blueprint. It outlines the activities that Interns or Trainees will engage in during their program, states the skills they will acquire, fosters cultural exchange experiences, and establishes clear performance evaluation criteria.

The form also provides a comprehensive breakdown of program essentials, encompassing crucial details like internship or training program timelines, objectives, assigned tasks, and compensation arrangements.
Starting Your J-1 Program

Now that you have successfully arrived and started your J-1 program with your U.S. Host Organization, there are some additional administrative tasks that you will need to complete:

- Form I-9: Employment Eligibility Form
- Form W-4: Employees Withholding Allowance Certificate
- Social Security Number (SSN) if required

Please be aware that you should wait approximately 3 – 5 business days after your program is validated in SEVIS before applying for an SSN. SEVIS is a DHS web-based system for tracking international students, exchange visitors, and their dependents.

During the SSN waiting period, your host firm is authorized to issue your stipend, if applicable. For detailed instructions on form completion, refer to your J-1 Program Handbook.
Social Security Information

If you receive as stipend/salary from your U.S. Host Organization during your program, you’ll need to apply for a Social Security Number (SSN). Please ensure your SEVIS record is validated through us, wait 3-5 business days for updates, and then apply.

Your SSN will be essential for payroll, opening bank accounts, renting apartments, obtaining a driver’s license, and more. Locate the nearest Social Security Office at https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp (accessible from www.ssa.gov if needed).

Required documents:
✓ Original DS-2019 form
✓ Passport with J-1 visa stamp and I-94 status
✓ I-94 Admission Record
✓ Social Security Number Application (Form SS-5)

For detailed instructions on form completion, refer to your J-1 Program Handbook.
Evaluations

As a J-1 exchange visitor, you're required to comply with U.S. government regulations, which entails completing several evaluations throughout your stay. These evaluations are vital to maintaining your good standing with your J-1 visa. All evaluation forms are accessible through our J-1 platform.

The evaluations/surveys include:

- 30-Day Post-Arrival Survey: This is completed by the J-1 participant shortly after arrival.
- Mid-Stay Evaluation: For programs lasting six months or longer, both the J-1 participant and their supervisor will complete this evaluation.
- End-of-Stay Evaluation: Both the J-1 participant and supervisor will complete this evaluation towards the end of the program.
- Alumni Survey: This survey is for J-1 participants to complete after their program concludes.

Timely submission of these evaluations is crucial, and your cooperation is greatly appreciated.
International Travel

If you're planning a vacation or holiday outside the U.S. during your J-1 program, here's what you need to know:

✔ DS-2019 Endorsement: Before your travel, ensure your DS-2019 form is endorsed by the American Immigration Council. Send the original DS-2019 along with a completed Travel Validation Request form from your supervisor, specifying approved travel dates and your host site’s mailing address. We'll process and return it with instructions.

✔ Check Your Visa: Verify your visa's validity in your passport before requesting travel validation. Canadian nationals do not require a visa. The travel validation signature remains valid for one year from the date it's signed.

✔ 30-Day Limit: Remember, you can only stay outside the United States for a maximum of 30 days per trip to maintain J-1 status. Carry all your immigration documents and your passport with a visa stamp when traveling, as U.S. Immigration Officers may review them upon your return.
Life and customs in the United States

Whether you’re a seasoned traveler or new to international adventures, you’ve probably faced cultural adjustment symptoms. From arriving with excitement in the United States to later moments of behavior uncertainty, these feelings are normal. If you’re stressed or unsure about adapting to life here, consider these suggestions:

Connect with staff at your host site or other exchange visitors.

✔ Ask questions. Do not assume that because something looks the same as it does at home, it carries the same cultural meaning in the United States.

✔ Engage in cultural activities. This will be a great opportunity for you to learn about U.S. society and culture outside of training as well for you to share your culture in return.

✔ Lower your expectations. You have spent a lifetime learning about your own culture. It will take time to understand a new culture and routine.
Local community resources

**Transportation**
Most U.S. cities have a bus system and oftentimes a subway system. It’s best to check with the human resources team within your host organization to request local options and resources. You can also reach out to our exchange team to identify resources for you.

**Medical Centers**
If you find that you need to visit a doctor for a checkup or other matter, please reach out to your insurance provider to identify healthcare professionals in the area that are covered under your plan. If you have the insurance obtained by us in connection with your J-1 program, please reach to the insurance provider at the following: https://www.envisageglobalinsurance.com/student-zone/american-immigration-council/providers.php
➢ If you are facing a life-threatening emergency, please call 911 to obtain immediate assistance and follow up with your insurance provider and our exchange team

**Local Amenities**
Your best resource to identify local banking institutions, recreational centers, libraries, music & art venues, etc. is the human resources team within your host organization. You can also reach out to our exchange team to identify resources for you. During your program, we encourage you to attend social functions with your host organization, as well as to visit the many parks, museums, theaters, and historical sites, and other cultural opportunities available in your area.
Cultural Activities

The American Immigration Council encourages you to engage in cultural activities beyond your training program. We also create events that foster cross cultural engagement. Examples of cultural activities you can participate in include the following:

- Attending a local or national sporting event.
- Take a guided tour of a local art, music, or historical museum.
- Joining a U.S family or staff for a holiday celebration.
- Participating in your host organization’s team building event or luncheon.

We will also reach out to you to provide information about local events in your area as well as to invite to events we will sponsor.

Keep in mind: The best way to immerse yourself in a new culture is to dive in and participate.
Emergencies

Should you suffer an emergency that affects your health, safety, or welfare, please contact 911 immediately. If you need to seek medical assistance, please go to the nearest Emergency Room (ER).

For immediate care in non-emergency situations, you SHOULD go to a Walk-in Clinic, Urgent Care center or local doctor. Urgent Care and Walk-in Clinics are often the best places to seek medical care as you can walk right in, and they require no appointment. You SHOULD NOT go to the Emergency Room (ER) for this type of care unless it is a real emergency situation!

- Don’t forget to also contact us for any emergency nor non-emergency situation

- Email: j1immigration@immcouncil.org
- Main Telephone: 202-507-7532
- 24-hour Emergency Number: 202-368-5385 (NOTE: This number should only be used in the case of an emergency affecting your health, safety, or well-being.)
Questions

Remember we serve as a partner with you throughout your J-1 program. You can contact us or the Dept of State anytime you have questions.

Exchange Team Information
✓ Email: J1program@immcouncil.org
✓ Main Telephone: 202-507-7532
✓ 24-hour Emergency Number: 202-368-5385 (NOTE: This number should only be used in the case of an emergency affecting your health, safety, or well-being.)

✓ Lisa Murray, Responsible Officer, lmurray@immcouncil.org, 202-507-7513
✓ Nadine Harris, Alternate Responsible Officer, nharris@immcouncil.org, 202-507-7515
✓ Olita Williams, Alternate Responsible Officer, owilliams@immcouncil.org, 202-507-7506
✓ Tania Carswell, Alternate Responsible Officer, tcarwell@immcouncil.org, 202-507-7529

Dept of State Contact Information
U.S. Department of State | Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
✓ Tel: (202) 632-2805
✓ InternTraineeNotify@state.gov
✓ http://j1visa.state.gov/
✓ J-1 Emergency Hotline: 1-866-283-9090 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) The Department of State activated the helpline to ensure the health and safety of its exchange participants. Participants have a right to be treated fairly and to report abuse without retaliation or threat of program cancellation.
U.S. Department of State Information for Exchange Visitors

DoS Welcome Letter

Intern Welcome Letter

Trainee Welcome Letter

Scholar Welcome Letter

Newly Validated Exchange Visitor

Exchange Visitor’s Rights and Protection
https://j1visa.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/EV-TRIFOLD.pdf

Wilberforce Pamphlet
Acknowledgment

By my signature, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the American Immigration Council’s J-1 Cultural Exchange Participant Orientation.

NAME:
______________________________________________

DATE:
______________________________________________

SIGNATURE:
______________________________________________

!!ENJOY YOUR J-1 PROGRAM !!