

# U.S. Department of State

## Intern and Trainee Exchange Program

Establishing stronger business, political, and human ties between the United States and key countries around the world

### Key program elements

Intern Exchange Visitor Program	Trainee Exchange Visitor Program
Participants are <b>current university students or recent graduates</b> .	Participants are <b>experienced professionals</b> with a degree or certificate or a minimum of 5 years of work experience in their field.
Maximum program duration is 12 months for interns.	Maximum program duration is 18 months for trainees.
Enhances the skills of international students through exposure to American business techniques, methodologies, and expertise.	Allows international professionals to gain exposure to American culture and receive training in American business practices in their field.

- Participants come from **countries key to U.S. national security interests like Brazil, China, India, Korea, and Eastern Europe**.
- A 2018 study found that 96.3% of interns and trainees gain experience that will help them advance their careers.\* Participants return home to share their experiences and an increased understanding of the U.S., creating a **powerful multiplier effect**.

### Creating leaders and partners for the future

Intern and trainee exchange participants take home positive impressions of the U.S. and its people, as well as an enhanced understanding of American business and professional practices. 73% of interns and trainees developed a more positive opinion of the U.S. after their program experience.\* Their time as interns and trainees leads to more business contact and partnerships between the U.S. and their home countries. Over time, as these program alumni continue to move into positions of leadership, their exchange experiences create a foundation for positive relationships between the U.S. and their home countries, and contribute to a reservoir of bilateral goodwill that will support American interests in the future.

Intern and trainee programs also provide professional development opportunities for U.S. colleagues. 75.3% of host organizations found that hosting an intern or trainee broadened the perspectives of their existing staff. More than 7 in 10 host organizations report the programs help staff develop intercultural communication skills.\*

## **Supporting the interests of American businesses**

American companies, businesses, and nongovernmental organizations choose to act as intern and trainee exchange hosts for a variety of important reasons. Many American companies seek to develop a pool of trained representatives overseas or hope to expand their overseas presence. Some businesses with significant overseas operations wish to exchange key staff in order to improve communication and understanding. Still other organizations and companies see exchange programs as a means to forming ties between world citizens and international markets, cutting through stereotypes and perceptions formed by the media, and creating productive partnerships forged through face-to-face interactions.

Indeed, American companies increasingly see professionally-based exchange programs as integral to their operations. The vast majority (84.5%) of host organizations consider the program important to their business and nearly half indicating that it was very important.\*The relationships formed via exchange programs lead to new overseas partnerships and expansion into new international markets. The programs improve the productivity of American staff, as working with an international colleague often requires new modes of thinking, which can stimulate improved performance. Exchange programs also encourage innovation—the different worldview that international interns and trainees bring to their American workplaces encourages problems to be approached from new angles, and typically results in more comprehensive solutions.

## **Protecting interns, trainees, and American workers**

The Alliance and its members support strong intern and trainee regulations that protect international participants, as well as the interests of their American hosts, and the American people. Intern and trainee sponsor organizations are designated by the Department of State, which regularly monitors and makes adjustments to the regulations for these programs. Intern and trainee program regulations require:

- Intern and trainee exchange participants may not displace American workers or serve to fill a labor need.
- Intern and trainee host employers must complete, and have approved, an Internship or Traineeship Placement Plan, to ensure that exchange participants obtain professional skills, knowledge, and competencies through structured and guided work and activities.
- Host employers must also agree to provide interns and trainees with opportunities to supplement their work experience, such as classroom training, seminars, rotation through several different departments, attendance at conferences, and similar learning experiences.
- Sponsors must actively facilitate cultural exchange opportunities for participants, beyond the cultural exchange that happens daily in the workplace.
- Sponsors actively protect the health, safety, and welfare of program participants, and take seriously their role facilitating experiences that will improve the image and influence of the United States abroad.

\* EurekaFacts, "Intern and Trainee Program: 2018 Review Report," [https://www.alliance-exchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/IT\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.alliance-exchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/IT_Report_FINAL.pdf).