

BridgeUSA Support Statement

For more than fifty years, the Department of State's **BridgeUSA**, also known as the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, has helped bring international college students and young professionals to the United States for cultural exchange experiences and to learn about American culture and meet real Americans — at no cost to the U.S. taxpayer.

BridgeUSA includes such successful exchanges as Summer Work Travel, Camp Counselor, Au Pair, Intern, Secondary School Student (High School), Trainee, and Teacher.

These exchange programs enhance America's diplomatic success and national security by improving the perception of the United States in the eyes of future leaders from more than 90 countries. Every year, the vast majority of participants report having a positive experience on their programs and in the United States.

Additionally, BridgeUSA programs greatly benefit America and Americans. The programs contribute significantly to the U.S. economy. They support seasonal businesses in tourist, vacation, and resort communities. They support American working families by providing an accessible and culturally rich childcare option. They bring camp counselors from all over the world to interact with young American campers. They bring future business leaders to intern and train with American companies, creating new international partnerships and supporting American business development abroad. They shape young Americans into positive agents of change by bringing interactive teaching practices, building the critical thinking skills, inquiry, and analytical approach that foster good citizenship.

BridgeUSA is good for Americans and great for America.

BridgeUSA is necessary to the diplomatic and national security success of our country, as well as the continued economic viability of our communities and our families. Its programs are well regulated by the Department of State, protecting the welfare of both international participants and the United States workers.

As the American businesses, families, academic institutions, chambers of commerce, business and trade associations, and community leaders who embrace and support exchange programs, we are advocating for strong and thriving international cultural exchange BridgeUSA programs. We ask our leaders to support BridgeUSA and other cultural exchange programs. We recommit ourselves to the efficacy of these programs, and strongly believe that our country should not only maintain them, but also grow them in the future.