

The Trainee Program



The trainee category of the BridgeUSA Program provides the opportunity for foreign nationals with significant experience in their occupational field to receive structured and guided hands-on training at a U.S. host organization to advance their skills and knowledge in this field of expertise. The trainee program is not a substitute for ordinary employment or to gain additional work experience. Trainee positions cannot fill an employment need or displace American workers.

The trainee program is also intended to expose participants to American culture and business practices and to promote an interchange of ideas between foreign nationals and their American colleagues. Trainee participants must agree that they intend to return to their home country once their training program ends to share their experiences and to use their new skills to advance their academic and professional pursuits abroad.

For an overview of eligibility requirements for prospective applicants, please visit the U.S. Department of State BridgeUSA Program website: <https://i1visa.state.gov/programs/trainee/>.

Trainee Positions

Trainees must be placed in positions within their occupational field of expertise. Positions must be full-time, a minimum of 32 hours per week. The position must provide an opportunity for the trainee to gain new knowledge and skills and cannot repeat past work or training experience. IIE can consider applications in the following occupational fields:

- Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing;
- Arts and Culture;

IIE Program Fees

Fees to be paid by the host organization:

- Initial sponsorship fee (up to 12 months) = \$1500
- Extension of sponsorship, per year = \$500
- Expedited processing service (optional) = \$750
- Enrollment in IIE group insurance (optional) = Inquire directly
- Host site visit fee (if applicable) = \$500
- New host company fee (if applicable) = \$200

Fees to be paid by either the host organization or trainee:

- J-2 sponsorship fee, per dependent = \$500
- Individual insurance meeting minimum J-visa requirements = varies, from \$75 - \$200 per month
- Travel validation fee = \$25
- DS-2019 re-issuance fee = \$50

Other Fees

These fees are not included in IIE's services but must be paid during the J-1 Visa application:

- \$220 SEVIS Fee
- \$160 nonimmigrant visa application fee

Note: If you are working with a placement agency, be sure to inquire directly about their fees, and what each fee covers. Check with your host organization to see if you are responsible for any initial visa costs or fees.

- Education, Social Sciences, Library Science, Counseling and Social Services;
- Hospitality and Tourism;
- Information Media and Communications;
- Management, Business, Commerce and Finance;
- Public Administration and Law; and
- The Sciences, Engineering, Architecture, Mathematics and Industrial Occupations.

Trainees cannot be placed in unskilled or casual labor positions, in positions requiring more than 20 percent clerical activity, or in positions that require childcare, elder care, or any kind of patient care or contact.

Duration and Repeat Participation

For most trainee programs, duration can be three weeks to 18 months. Training in the occupational field of Hospitality and Tourism is limited to 12 months maximum. Training in the field of agriculture is limited to 12 months unless it begins with a structured six-month classroom component.

At the end of the program, trainee participants must depart the U.S. to put their experience to use in their home country. Past participants are eligible to apply for another BridgeUSA training program after a period of at least two years residency outside of the U.S. (Similarly, past participants in the BridgeUSA Intern program must have a 2-year residency outside of the U.S. before applying in the Trainee category).

Basic Host Organization Requirements

Trainees must have continuous on-site supervision and mentoring by an experienced U.S. staff. A host supervisor will be responsible for signing the Training/Internship Placement Plan (Form DS-7002). This form outlines the training roles, goals, objectives, and methodology and will be signed by the trainee, their supervisor, and an IIE Alternate Responsible Officer during the sponsorship application process.

Host organizations must be able to demonstrate that they have sufficient resources, equipment, and trained personnel to provide the training. Host companies must agree to provide continuous supervision and ensure that trainees obtain the skills and knowledge they have outlined in the Form DS-7002.

A site visit of the host organization will be required if they have not previously hosted a trainee with IIE and have fewer than 25 employees and less than three million dollars in annual revenue. As a general guideline, host organizations should have a minimum of 5 full-time staff members at the prospective training site.

Please contact IIE by phone or email to discuss any specific questions or for more information on trainee eligibility, position and host organization requirements:



212-984-5313



jvisasponsorship@iie.org

Cost of Living

IIE recommends that each trainee have a minimum of \$2500 per month available, either through wages from the host organization or combination of wages and personal funds. Please be aware that wages and/or stipends from a host organization might not cover all expenses, and trainees should bring additional personal funds.

The cost of living can vary greatly depending on where the host organization is located. Prior to accepting a position, trainees should research online to budget accordingly. Housing in a large city can cost approximately \$2000 per month, while housing in a smaller town might cost closer to \$500 per month. Utilities may include electric or gas (\$50 - \$100 per month, depending on the size of the housing), cable and internet (\$50 - \$200 depending on plan). In a single-family home, the tenant may also be responsible for water and trash collection, about \$150 - \$200 annually. Cost of food may range from \$200 - \$500 per month, depending on location and preference to cook or eat out regularly.

Transit

Most urban areas have public transit, such as subways, buses, and trains and this is a great environmentally-friendly option for transit. The cost of monthly public transit tickets ranges from \$25 - \$150 for local service, or higher for regional service. Owning a car in the U.S. can be expensive, and gas prices can be between \$2 - \$5 per gallon. Drivers will need to make sure they have or obtain the proper driving license (through the Department of Motor Vehicles for the state) and vehicle insurance.

Payroll Deductions

The U.S. host organization will deduct taxes from each paycheck. J-1 exchange visitors are subject to federal, state and local income taxes but are exempt from FICA and FUTA. Generally, employees should expect to pay 22% - 24% of their annual salary in taxes. U.S. tax returns are filed by April for the preceding year. Trainees are responsible for being aware of all personal filing requirements. Questions should be directed to a tax professional with experience in nonimmigrant filing.

Next Steps

Interested in exchange visitor sponsorship through IIE? A representative of the U.S. host organization should contact IIE at jvisasponsorship@iie.org or 212-984-5313 to begin our online application process.

IIE recommends submitting the application at least 2-3 months in advance of the intended training start date. As part of the application trainees will need to provide documentation including, but not limited to: Resume, diplomas, letters of employment, and passport.

The trainee's passport should be valid at least 6 months past the expected program end date.