



# HOST EMPLOYER HANDBOOK

A Resource for Cenet Host Employers



[cenet.org](http://cenet.org)

GOING PLACES, TOGETHER.

## **IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **Cenet**

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**Fax:** 1-573-335-7110

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**Website:** [www.cenet.org](http://www.cenet.org)

### **Other Resources**

**United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)**  
1-800-375-5283  
[www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

**Social Security Administration**  
1-800-772-1213  
[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

**Internal Revenue Service (IRS)**  
1-800-829-1040  
[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

**Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs**  
1-202-632-2805  
[exchanges.state.gov](http://exchanges.state.gov)

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**Cenet**, located in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, strives to inspire a safer, more prosperous and compassionate world through international education and cultural exploration. Cenet administers several BridgeUSA Programs (International Intern, International Trainee, Summer Work Travel, and Camp Counselor) for non-U.S. participants, as well as operates the Magellan Exchange, a non-profit university consortium offering student and faculty exchanges both within the United States and abroad.

## UNDERSTANDING THE J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR VISA

The J-1 Visa provides opportunities for international candidates looking to travel and gain experience in the United States. The multifaceted programs enable foreign nationals to come to the U.S. to teach, study, conduct research, demonstrate special skills, or receive on-the-job training for periods ranging from a few weeks to several years.

Our world has become globally interdependent and continues to shrink daily. BridgeUSA participants bring expertise and a global perspective to your business, helping your company face the challenges of the competitive global market. Employing BridgeUSA participants creates a dynamic, culturally diverse work environment, resulting in a mutually rewarding experience.

## BRIDGEUSA CATEGORIES

Cenet has been designated by the U.S. Department of State to administer the following program categories.

The **Internship Program** is designed to allow foreign college and university students or recent graduates to come to the United States to gain exposure to U.S. culture and to receive hands-on experience in U.S. business practices in their chosen occupational field. The maximum duration of participation is 12 months.

The **Training Program** is designed to allow foreign professionals to come to the United States to gain exposure to U.S. culture and to receive training in U.S. business practices in their chosen occupational field. The maximum duration of participation is 18 months, except for training programs in the field of agriculture and in the occupational category of Hospitality and Tourism; the maximum duration of program participation for these two fields is 12 months.

The **Summer Work Travel Program** allows college and university students, who are enrolled full-time and pursuing studies at post-secondary accredited academic institutions located outside the United States, to travel to the U.S. to share their culture and ideas with the American people through seasonal employment opportunities. The maximum duration of participation is four months.

The **Camp Counselor Program** enables post-secondary students, youth workers, and teachers to share their culture and ideas with the people of the United States in camp settings throughout the country. The maximum duration of participation is four months.

## CENET'S ROLE

Cenet is a U.S. Department of State-designated sponsor. As such, Cenet is authorized to issue the Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status (Form DS-2019), which is the basic document to support an application for a BridgeUSA (J-1) visa.

BridgeUSA Programs are strictly regulated by the U.S. Department of State. As a BridgeUSA Program sponsor, Cenet is obligated to enforce those regulations.

Cenet also serves as your main point of contact while participants are employed by your company. We are here to answer any questions or address any concerns you may have.

## SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

Participants will need to apply for a Social Security Number, unless they have participated in a previous program and already have one. This number is necessary if they are receiving a paycheck or if they apply for a driver's license, and often for identification. There is no fee.

Participants should take the following documentation to the Social Security Office when they apply for the card:

- DS-2019
- I-94
- Passport (valid for at least six months beyond the program's end)
- Program sponsor letter from Cenet (they can download this in their Cenet portal)
- Job offer (*Summer Work Travel or Camp Counselor*) or DS-7002 (*Trainee/Intern*)

Please advise participants to wait up to 5 days after they have notified Cenet of their arrival in the U.S. before applying for the card. Upon arrival, Cenet activates the participant's record in the SEVIS government database. It may then take up to five days for information to become available to the Social Security Office.

Participants may begin with your company before they have received a Social Security Number if they have applied for the number and have receipt of their application. Please contact Cenet if you have any questions about this.

*Best practice: Many host employers assist participants with applying for their Social Security Number. If your company is unable to assist, you may wish to prepare a brief document identifying the nearest Social Security Office and transportation options to reach this office.*

## TAXES

The J-1 Visa is a non-immigrant visa. Therefore, BridgeUSA participants are not subject to Social Security, Medicare, or Federal unemployment taxes. As such, these taxes should not be withheld from participant paychecks. All participants are, however, subject to federal, state, and city income tax withholdings. For further information, please refer to chapter 8 of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Publication 519 "U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens" for proof of these exemptions.

Every participant with any U.S. source of income is required to file a U.S. federal income tax return (Form 1040NR-EZ or 1040 NR) as well as file a state income tax return.

*Best practice: Make arrangements to send W-2 forms electronically to participants who have departed the U.S.*

## PARTICIPANT HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

Any incident that affects a participant's health, safety, and welfare should be brought to Cenet's attention immediately.

In rare cases, problems or conflicts may occur. If this happens, please follow your company's procedure to document the concerns and take corrective action. Please communicate this information to Cenet for the participant's file.

If there is any change to their program participation, please notify Cenet immediately.

## CULTURAL EXCHANGE

A key goal of the Fulbright-Hays Act, which authorizes these programs, is that participants will return to their home countries to share their experiences.

As a host employer partner, we ask that you assist with ensuring participants are actively engaged in cross-cultural activities with Americans so they can ultimately share their experiences and increased knowledge of the United States and their substantive fields at home. Cultural activities can be offered through you, the host employer, as well as sought out by the participant on their own.

Allowing for a flexible schedule whenever possible ensures that participants can take full advantage of the cultural activities available to them. Cenet encourages participants to explore their surroundings and participate in local events, such as:

- Seeing an American movie at a theatre
- Attending festivals or parades
- Visiting museums, universities, or historical monuments
- Participating in outdoor activities (e.g., hiking, camping, swimming)
- Volunteering at a charitable activity
- Attending a sporting event
- Participating in Exchange Day (typically in early August)

A few examples of cultural activities host employers may choose to facilitate include:

- Thanksgiving meals
- Holiday parties
- Visits to local attractions or sporting events
- Staff team building activities

If you have coordinated any cultural activities for your exchange visitors, please send details and/or photos to Cenet. If you are aware of your exchange visitors partaking in interesting cultural activities on their own, please encourage them to share this information with Cenet as well.

*Best practice: Keep an electronic record of photos and details of the activities offered to participants. These records can be used to showcase your role as a host employer in facilitating and providing cultural exchange opportunities to your participants.*

## CULTURE SHOCK/ADJUSTMENT

Culture shock is frequently experienced by people both traveling and living abroad. People are creatures of habit, and transplantation to another country results in a loss of those cues that guide daily actions and decisions. Regardless of tolerance, broad-mindedness, and empathy for the new culture, the loss of familiar cues will result in some degree of frustration.

The initial period of adjustment can be hard on exchange visitors. Encourage patience and understanding from individuals in direct contact with participants during this period of adjustment. Please contact Cenet for further guidance, if needed.

## HOUSING

Host employers are not required to provide housing to participants. However, placements which include housing are considered safer and more appealing to participants as it eliminates the stress of them having to locate their own accommodations. Therefore, Cenet generally prioritizes placements where housing is arranged by the host employer.

If you can arrange housing, all details should be communicated to the participant prior to arrival. This includes rent payments and schedules, deposit amounts and stipulations, and a summary of items included and those for which the participant will be responsible (e.g., bed linens, dishes).

*Best practice: If you are unable to provide/arrange housing, Cenet recommends that you provide your participants with the addresses and contact information of two or three safe and affordable short-term, furnished rental properties near the company.*

## TRANSPORTATION

Easy to use and safe transportation options are key to a successful program. Access to transportation ensures that participants can arrive for their scheduled shifts on time and that they have access to cultural activities in their time off. Provide participants with information regarding local transportation options. This can include bus routes and schedules, reliable taxi companies, and host employer-provided shuttle services.

Transportation options are especially important for participants placed at companies located in more rural areas. Participants should have regular access to off-site activities and nearby towns during their programs.



*Best practice: Some host employers have begun to offer successful bicycle rental programs where participants rent bikes directly from the host employer for a fee. The bicycles are then returned at the end of the season and can be rented to next year's participants.*

## MONITORING & CHECK-INS

Cenet will reach out periodically and ask you to confirm that your participants are still on site and completing their programs at your company. Please attempt to respond to these emails within three business days. Open communication between Cenet and host employers is key to program success.

Cenet also monitors participants during their time in the U.S. The Department of State requires that Summer Work Travel participants maintain at least monthly contact with their sponsors; Cenet makes this easy by sending participants a check-in message at the start of each month. Reminders will be sent, as needed, throughout the month. If a participant has failed to respond by later in the month, we may contact you for assistance with reaching the participant in order to keep their program in good standing.

## EVALUATIONS

Department of State regulations require periodic evaluations for each Trainee and Intern Program participant. Evaluations must be submitted to Cenet at the completion of each 6-month training period. Host employers will receive an email when an evaluation is due. Evaluations must be electronically signed by the supervisor and the participant. Employers are expected to submit completed evaluations within 10 days of receiving an evaluation request from Cenet. Failure to complete evaluations in a timely manner may result in Cenet discontinuing placements at a host employer.

## SITE VISITS

Site visits may be necessary to approve the placement of participants at a host employer. Site visits are a regulatory requirement for Trainee and Intern host employers that earn less than \$3 million annually and have fewer than 25 full-time employees. Cenet may also require a site visit based on information found during the vetting process.

Additionally, Cenet may arrange to visit host employers while participants are on site. In this case, Cenet will contact you prior to the visit to plan and ensure you are available for the visit.

Be aware that any time you have a participant on site, you may be visited by Department of State officials. They may contact you beforehand to schedule a visit, but they also conduct unannounced visits.

## TRAVEL DURING THE PROGRAM

Some participants will choose to travel outside of the country for various reasons during their program and then return to the U.S. to complete their program. If eligible, the participant must receive a travel validation from Cenet to safely re-enter the country. This is a simple process, but it can take a couple of weeks due to shipping time.

The participant must ship the following information to Cenet:

- Original DS-2019 form
- A letter from the supervisor stating that the time off has been approved by the company and confirming the travel dates (or the supervisor can email this to Cenet directly)
- A pre-paid, self-addressed FedEx/UPS envelope for return shipment

Travel validations remain effective for one year after they have been completed. However, each time a participant leaves the United States, Cenet must be informed and an approval letter must be provided. Please also be advised that Cenet policy does not allow for participants to travel outside of the U.S. for more than 30 days at a time.

## DEPARTURE

Participants can remain legally employed until the end date listed on their DS-2019 form. Participants are allowed a 30-day grace period after their end date, but this time is to be used for domestic travel and departure arrangements, not employment. Prior to departure, speak with participants about the best way for them to receive their final paycheck and W-2 form.

# Summer Work Travel Program

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Summer Work Travel Program is overseen by the United States Department of State. The purpose of this program is to promote cultural understanding by providing participants a chance to experience American culture and to learn more about the country and its people as well as to share their own culture with Americans. The work component of the program is meant to offset the cost of program fees for the participant. This allows a broader group of individuals to participate and brings a richer diversity to the program.

Summer Work Travel participants must be foreign nationals between the ages of 18 and 28 who are currently enrolled students at an accredited post-secondary school and are actively pursuing their degree.

## PROGRAM DURATION

The maximum program duration is four months. The participant's individual program dates are shown on their Form DS-2019; the end date listed here is the last legal date of employment. Program dates are determined by various factors, including the specific country dates approved by the Department of State, the participant's university vacation dates, and the participant's availability.

## DOCUMENTATION

Cenet is required to confirm that the offered position meets all Department of State guidelines. In addition, the host employer must submit the following paperwork for sponsor review:

- A completed Cenet job offer form
- A current business license
- Certificate of workers' compensation insurance
- Any additional documentation requested by Cenet

Per program regulations, all positions must be seasonal in nature. If necessary, we may ask host employers for additional documentation to verify the seasonality of the position.

## DISPLACEMENT OF AMERICAN WORKERS

Program sponsors are required to verify that BridgeUSA participants are not displacing American workers. Supervisors will be asked to indicate on the job offer form what methods they use to advertise positions to American applicants (e.g., job websites, newspaper listings, social media posts, university job fairs). Cenet will collect evidence of advertisements posted online. We may also follow up with you for actual documentation of your open position listings.

## POSITION CONFIRMATION

Cenet must confirm each participant's position prior to application approval. Cenet will send an email asking the supervisor to confirm the names of the participants they have hired and the employment conditions. This communication is sent via email so we have the confirmation recorded in writing. It also establishes an open line of communication between Cenet and the supervisor, which is vital to a successful program.

*Best practice: Answering emails from Cenet within three business days establishes reliable communication and allows Cenet to move quickly through the application process.*

## SCHEDULE AND WAGE

All positions must meet the following guidelines:

- Participants will receive a minimum average of 32 hours per week.
- Participants must not be scheduled for overnight shifts.
- Participants must earn at least minimum wage, in addition to earning the same wage as their American counterparts in the same position.
- Overtime pay must be provided in accordance with federal requirements.

## APPLICATION APPROVAL & DS-2019 ISSUANCE

Upon acceptance to the program, participants are provided with their DS-2019 form, a “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status.” It officially identifies Cenet as the program sponsor, describes the purpose of the program, and lists the exact dates permitted for participation. It also indicates the participant’s authorized host employer in the U.S.

## PRE-ARRIVAL PREPARATION

Sending a welcome email to participants before they arrive in the United States can be extremely beneficial to the employer and participant. Suggested content for welcome emails includes, but is not limited to, the following items listed below.

- Introduce yourself and other important contacts
- Outline the goals and values of your company
- Set expectations for the participant’s employment performance
- Provide the housing address and pertinent information, if applicable
- Provide arrival instructions, including pickup times and locations, if applicable

*Best practice: Managing expectations is key for a successful program for both the participant and host employer. Be clear and realistic about the nature and responsibilities of position duties (e.g., schedule, overtime availability, location/atmosphere of the host city).*

## PARTICIPANT ARRIVAL

Keep in mind that participants are young adults who often are traveling on their own for the first time. Living in a foreign country can be a difficult adjustment. The transitional time after arrival can be crucial to the success of a program. Making a participant feel welcome and secure is oftentimes the most important thing you can do for them as an employer. Cenet has the following recommendations for ensuring a smooth arrival:

- Arrange to pick up the participant from the airport or bus station. Being there on time to welcome the participant and remove any stress from the participant’s travel is a great first impression.
- Host a “break the ice” luncheon or gathering so the participant can meet their new colleagues and become familiar with them prior to beginning their actual scheduled duties.
- Provide the participant with a community fact sheet and/or calendar of local events.

- Give advice on public transportation, the most affordable grocery stores, best local restaurants, etc.

All participants must notify Cenet within 72 hours of arrival in the United States; this can be done via their Cenet portal ([login.cenet.org](http://login.cenet.org)). This arrival notification allows Cenet to activate the participants' health insurance as well as to inform the Social Security Administration and the U.S. Department of State of their entrance to the country. Cenet is required to enter this information into the SEVIS government database. If participants do not report their arrival within 10 days, they will be entered as "No Show" in SEVIS; this could have negative effects on their current and future visa status. You should stress to your participants that they will be considered missing and their programs will be terminated if they do not report their arrival and maintain contact with Cenet. Furthermore, the Social Security Number cannot be issued until after they are activated in SEVIS.

## SECOND JOBS

Summer Work Travel Participants can hold a second job if they wish. However, their priority must be to their primary host employer as listed on their DS-2019. In addition, the second job must be vetted and approved by Cenet PRIOR to the participant commencing employment there. If you are aware of one of your participants working at a second location, please inform Cenet so that we can take the proper steps and ensure the participant remains in compliance with program rules.

## HOST EMPLOYER OBLIGATIONS

- Ensure that the working conditions listed on the job offer are followed throughout the program.
- Contact Cenet immediately in the event of any emergency involving participants or any changes in employment status.
- Abide by all federal, state, and local occupational health and safety laws.
- Abide by all program rules and regulations set forth by Cenet, including the completion of all mandatory program monitoring.
- Provide continuous on-site supervision by experienced and knowledgeable staff.
- Ensure the participant will not displace any full-time or part-time American workers.
- Ensure the participant intends to enter the U.S. for the purpose of cultural exchange and intends to return home upon the conclusion of the program.
- Respond to Cenet communication within three business days.

# Trainee/Intern Program

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Training and internship programs are designed to allow foreign college and university students or recent graduates to come to the United States to gain exposure to U.S. culture and to receive hands-on experience in U.S. business practices in their chosen occupational field. Cenet can sponsor trainees and interns in the following fields:

- Arts and Culture
- Management, Business, Commerce, and Finance
- Information Media and Communications
- The Sciences, Engineering, Architecture, Mathematics, and Industrial Occupations
- Hospitality and Tourism

A **Trainee** must be a foreign national who:

- Has a degree or professional certificate from a foreign post-secondary academic institution and at least one year of prior related work experience in his or her occupational field outside the United States; OR
- Has five years of work experience outside the United States in the occupational field in which they are seeking training

An **Intern** must be a foreign national who:

- Is currently enrolled in and pursuing studies at a foreign degree- or certificate-granting post-secondary academic institution outside the United States; OR
- A graduate from such an institution no more than 12 months prior to their Exchange Visitor Program start date.

## PROGRAM DURATION

The participant's individual program dates are shown on their Form DS-2019; the end date listed here is the last legal date of employment. If there is a change to the participants' program end date, please notify Cenet immediately.

The maximum duration of participation for interns is 12 months. The maximum program duration for trainees is 18 months, except for those in hospitality or agriculture programs, who are limited to 12 months. Please contact Cenet at least one month prior to the program end date if you wish to request an extension to the participants' program (within the overall maximum term).

## DOCUMENTATION

Cenet is required to confirm that the training/internship program meets all Department of State guidelines. In addition, the host employer must submit the following paperwork for sponsor review:

- Cenet host employer information and agreement forms
- Certificate of worker's compensation insurance
- Any additional documentation requested by Cenet



## DISPLACEMENT OF AMERICAN WORKERS

Program sponsors are required to verify that BridgeUSA participants are not displacing American workers. Supervisors will be asked to confirm this on the training plan.

## SCHEDULE AND WAGE

All positions must meet the following guidelines:

- Participants should be scheduled between 5 a.m. and 11 p.m. (not scheduled overnight).
- Participants must receive at least 32 hours of training each week.
- Participants must not be scheduled more than 40 hours per week on a regular basis to allow time for cultural exchange outside of training.
- Participants should earn the same wage as their American counterparts in the same position.
- Overtime pay must be provided in accordance with federal requirements.

## APPLICATION APPROVAL & DS-2019 ISSUANCE

Upon acceptance to the program, participants will be provided with their DS-2019 form, a “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status.” It officially identifies Cenet as the program sponsor, describes the purpose of the program, and lists the exact dates permitted for participation. It also indicates the participant’s authorized host employer in the U.S.

Host employers receive an email notification when participants are issued their DS-2019 form. New host employers are required to complete an orientation call with a Cenet staff member. This brief meeting (*10-15 minutes*) allows us to review trainee/intern program rules, regulations, and expectations with the host employer and to answer any questions the host employer may have for Cenet.

## PRE-ARRIVAL PREPARATION

Sending a welcome email to participants before they arrive in the United States can be extremely beneficial to the employer and participant. Suggested content for your welcome email is below.

- Introduce yourself and other important contacts
- Outline the goals and values of your company
- Set expectations for the participant’s training performance
- Provide the housing address and pertinent information, if applicable
- Provide arrival instructions, including pickup times and locations, if applicable

*Best practice: Managing expectations is key for a successful program for both the participant and host employer. Be clear and realistic about the nature and responsibilities of position duties (e.g., schedule, location/atmosphere of the host city).*

## PARTICIPANT ARRIVAL

Before participants leave home, they should research the area in which they will be living as well as plan their transportation from the airport to their host employer and/or housing. Participants are also required to contact their host employer before they leave home and provide them a detailed description of their travel plans. Some host employers assist with transportation, while others may not. It may be useful to create a document to outline the various transportation options available from your local airport.

All participants must notify Cenet within 72 hours of arrival in the United States; this can be done via their Cenet portal (login.cenet.org). This arrival notification allows Cenet to activate the participants' health insurance as well as to inform the Social Security Administration and the U.S. Department of State of their entrance to the country. Cenet is required to enter this information into the SEVIS government database. If participants do not report their arrival within 10 days, they will be entered as "No Show" in SEVIS; this could have negative effects on their current and future visa status. You should stress to your participants that they will be considered missing and their programs will be terminated if they do not report their arrival and maintain contact with Cenet. Furthermore, the Social Security Number cannot be issued until they are activated in SEVIS.

## SECOND JOBS

Trainees and interns may only be employed by the host employer that provided the DS-7002 Training/Internship Placement Plan. They are NOT allowed to hold a second job or to change their host employer.

## PROGRAM EXTENSIONS

Participants can remain legally employed until the end date listed on their DS-2019 form. To request a program extension, the participant must initiate the process at least one month prior to program expiration. Once the process has started, all paperwork must be submitted and the invoice paid at least two weeks prior to the expiration.

In addition to the written request from the participant, Cenet must also receive the following documentation to consider a program extension for eligible participants:

- Written request from the host employer. The letter must include the extension dates as well as information on how the requested extension would benefit the participant.
- Mid-term evaluation.
- Updated DS-7002 Training/Internship Placement Plan for the requested duration of extension, completed and signed by both the participant and the supervisor(s).

If approved, Cenet will issue an updated DS-2019 with the participant's new program end date.

## HOST EMPLOYER OBLIGATIONS

- Provide a DS-7002 Training/Internship Placement Plan for the intern or trainee that matches the qualifications of the participant and also reflects your unique company culture and training opportunities.
  - The training phases should showcase a progressing acquisition of skills and experiences throughout the program.
  - Trainees and interns should be engaged in skilled tasks only. Duties should not involve more than 20 percent clerical work.
  - The intern or trainee must be supervised and evaluated by the host employer throughout the course of the program. Interns must receive supervision on a daily and weekly basis. Trainees must receive supervision monthly and include supervisory tasks and/or leadership roles.
  - The host employer is responsible for ensuring participants have access to opportunities to experience American culture both in and outside of training. Cultural activities must be unique to each phase; these cannot be work related.

- The training plan provides transparency for both the host employer and the participant prior to arrival; it is essential these plans are followed during the program. Should a training plan require changes after arrival, please contact Cenet.
- Hospitality and Tourism training and internship programs of 6-12 months should have at least 3 departmental or functional rotations (excluding the orientation phase). An orientation phase should be no longer than two weeks.
- Contact Cenet immediately in the event of any emergency involving participants or any changes in employment status.
- Abide by all federal, state, and local occupational health and safety laws.
- Abide by all program rules and regulations set forth by Cenet, including the completion of all mandatory program monitoring and evaluations.
- Have sufficient resources, plant, equipment, and trained personnel available.
- Provide continuous on-site supervision and mentoring by experienced and knowledgeable staff.
- Ensure that trainees and interns obtain skills, knowledge, and competencies through structured and guided activities, such as classroom training, seminars, rotation through several departments, on-the-job training, and attendance at conferences and similar learning activities, as appropriate in specific circumstances.
- Ensure the participant will not displace any full-time or part-time American workers to fill a labor need.
- Ensure the participant intends to enter the U.S. for the purpose of practical training or internship and intends to return home upon the conclusion of the program.

## EVALUATIONS

Mid-term and end-term evaluations must be submitted for each participant. Cenet will provide an email notification when evaluations are due asking you to login to Cenet's online system to complete the evaluation form. Timely submission of the evaluation forms, as well as a timely reply to any Cenet correspondence, is expected and appreciated.

# Camp Counselor Program

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Camp Counselor category was created to diversify the opportunities for participation in educational and cultural exchange programs. The program promotes international understanding by improving American knowledge of foreign cultures while enabling participants to increase their knowledge of American culture. Participants are intended to serve as counselors and should have direct responsibility for the supervision of groups of American youth and of activities that allow them regular interaction with campers.

## PROGRAM DURATION

Participants must be available for a minimum of 3 weeks during the time period of May 1 to September 21. The maximum program duration is four months. The participant's individual program dates are shown on their DS-2019 form; the end date listed is the last legal date of employment. Program dates are determined by various factors, including a camp's specific needs and a participant's availability.

## DOCUMENTATION

Cenet is required to confirm that the offered position meets all Department of State guidelines. Therefore, all camps must be:

- Accredited;
- A member in good standing of the American Camping Association;
- Officially affiliated with a nationally recognized non-profit organization; OR
- Have been inspected, evaluated, and approved by the sponsor

In addition, the camping facility must submit the following paperwork for sponsor review:

- A completed Cenet Camping Facility Information Form
- A current business license
- Certificate of workers' compensation insurance
- Any additional documentation requested by Cenet

## DISPLACEMENT OF AMERICAN WORKERS

Program sponsors are required to verify that participants are not displacing American workers. Supervisors will be asked to indicate on the Cenet Camping Facility Information Form what methods they use to advertise positions to American applicants (e.g., job websites, newspaper listings, social media posts, university job fairs). Cenet will collect evidence of advertisements posted online. We may also follow up with you for actual documentation of your open position listings.

## SCHEDULE AND WAGE

All camp counselor positions must meet the following guidelines:

- Participant duties should include direct responsibility for the supervision of groups of American youth and of activities that allow them regular interaction with campers. (It is understood that some non-counseling chores are an essential part of camp life for all counselors, but this should not make up the majority of a counselor's duties at camp.)
- Participants should receive time off where they can partake in off-camp cultural activities.

- Participants should receive the same compensation package as that of their American counterparts in the same position.

## APPLICATION APPROVAL & DS-2019 ISSUANCE

Upon acceptance to the program, participants are provided with their DS-2019 form, a “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status”. It officially identifies Cenet as the program sponsor, describes the purpose of the program, and lists the exact dates permitted for participation. It also indicates the participant’s authorized camping facility in the United States.

## PRE-ARRIVAL PREPARATION

Sending a welcome email to participants before they arrive in the United States can be extremely beneficial to the employer and participant. Suggested content for welcome emails includes, but is not limited to, the following items listed below.

- Introduce yourself and other important contacts
- Outline the goals and values of your camp
- Set expectations for the participant’s employment performance
- Provide details about the housing arrangements at camp
- Provide arrival instructions, including pickup times and locations, if applicable

*Best practice: Managing expectations is key for a successful program for both the participant and host employer. Be clear and realistic about the nature and responsibilities of position duties (e.g., schedule, location/atmosphere of the camp).*

## PARTICIPANT ARRIVAL

Keep in mind that many participants are young adults who are most likely travelling on their own for the first time. Living in a foreign country and adapting to life at camp can be a difficult adjustment. The transitional time after arrival can be crucial to the success of a program. Making a participant feel welcome and secure is oftentimes the most important thing you can do for them as an employer. Cenet has the following recommendations for ensuring a smooth arrival:

- Arrange to pick up the participant from the airport or bus station. Being there on time to welcome the participant and remove any stress from the participant’s travel is a great first impression.
- Host a “break the ice” luncheon or gathering so the participant can meet their fellow counselors and become familiar with prior to the arrival of campers.
- Provide the participant with a community fact sheet and/or options for off-camp activities.

All participants must notify Cenet within 72 hours of their arrival to the United States; this can be done via their Cenet portal ([login.cenet.org](http://login.cenet.org)). This arrival notification allows Cenet to activate the participants’ health insurance as well as to inform the Social Security Administration and the U.S. Department of State of their entrance to the country. Cenet is required to enter this information into the SEVIS government database. If participants do not report their arrival within 10 days, they will be entered as “No Show” in SEVIS; this could have negative effects on their current and future visa status. You should stress to your participants that they will be considered missing and their programs will be terminated if they do not report their arrival and maintain contact with Cenet.

Furthermore, the Social Security Number cannot be issued until after they have activated their SEVIS.

### INTERNET ACCESS

Cenet requires that participants have at least weekly access to their email throughout their time at camp. Participants are required to complete monthly check-ins, and all program information from Cenet goes to their email. We understand that camps often do not have Wi-Fi access, but we appreciate any efforts you can make to ensure that participants are able to check their email on a regular basis.

### SECOND JOBS

Camp Counselor Participants may only be employed by the camping facility listed on their DS-2019. They are not allowed to hold a second job or to transfer to another host employer.

### HOST EMPLOYER OBLIGATIONS

- Ensure that the working conditions listed on the job offer are followed throughout the program.
- Contact Cenet immediately in the event of any emergency involving participants or any changes to their employment status.
- Abide by all federal, state, and local occupational health and safety laws.
- Abide by all program rules and regulations set forth by Cenet, including the completion of all mandatory program monitoring.
- Provide continuous on-site supervision by experienced and knowledgeable staff.
- Ensure that the participant will not displace any full-time or part-time American workers.
- Ensure the participant intends to enter the U.S. for the purpose of cultural exchange and intends to return home upon conclusion of the program.
- Respond to any Cenet communication within three business days.

# APPENDIX: COMMONLY USED TERMS



**BridgeUSA (formerly Exchange Visitor Program):** Includes all J-1 Visa exchange programs, including Summer Work Travel, Trainee, Intern, and Camp Counselor categories.

**Customs and Border Protection (CBP):** A Department of Homeland Security agency that secures the borders of the United States, including airports, land borders, and seaports. When entering the country, participants go through inspections with CBP officers and must present proper documentation.

**Department of Homeland Security (DHS):** A federal agency whose missions include preventing terrorism and enhancing security, managing U.S. borders, administering immigration laws, securing cyberspace, and ensuring disaster resilience.

**Department of State:** A federal agency that issues visas at U.S. Consulates and Embassies and offers participant-specific information on its websites. The Department of State also manages the Exchange Visitor Programs within the United States.

**Exchange Day (formerly J-Day):** Exchange Day is a nationwide celebration of the power of international exchange. International exchange participants come together with their American hosts to "eat, play, and give" -- to share cultural diversity and American customs, to give back to their communities, and to have some fun. Exchange Day is also an opportunity to raise awareness of the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) and spread the word about the power and breadth of cultural exchange. Cenet will email participants and host employers if Exchange Day events are scheduled in their areas.

**Exchange Visitor (BridgeUSA participant):** A nonimmigrant in J-1 Visa status. This classification is for individuals approved to participate in work- and study-based Exchange Visitor (BridgeUSA) Programs. All J-1 nonimmigrants must be sponsored by an organization that is designated by the Department of State.

**Form DS-2019, "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status":** This is a document produced through SEVIS and created by the participant's U.S.-based sponsor organization. The participant needs this document to attend their visa interview, enter the U.S., and show eligibility for employment at your company.

**Form DS-7002, "Training/Internship Placement Plan":** This is a Department of State-issued form that outlines a participant's program. The primary purpose of the DS-7002 is to demonstrate that the trainee/intern will be under continuous supervision and will progress through stages of professional development during his or her program.

**Form I-515A, "Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor":** A form issued by U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the port of entry to students or exchange visitors who arrive without all of their required documents. The Form I-515A allows participants to temporarily enter the United States, and they have 30 days to submit the missing information to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) before their status is terminated.

**Fulbright-Hays Act:** Officially known as the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, the act enables the U.S. Government to increase mutual understanding between the American people and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the

educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations, and the contributions being made toward a peaceful and more fruitful life for people throughout the world; to promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement; and thus, to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the U.S. and other countries of the world.

**Grace Period:** The 30-day period following the end date listed on a participant's DS-2019 form which can be used for departure arrangements and domestic travel.

**I-94, "Arrival and Departure Record":** A participant's record of admission to the U.S., created electronically in the U.S. Customs and Border Protection system. The participant needs to take this record with them to the Social Security Office when applying for their Social Security Number.

**Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE):** A Department of Homeland Security agency that promotes homeland security and public safety through the criminal and civil enforcement of federal laws governing border control, customs, trade, and immigration. Through the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), ICE helps secure the foreign student visa system.

**J-1 Visa:** A nonimmigrant visa issued by the United States Department State to exchange visitors participating in cultural exchange programs.

**Port of Entry:** An arrival point at a U.S. international airport, seaport, or land border crossing, where a U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer will determine whether participants can enter the United States.

**SEVIS:** The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is a database used by the U.S. Government to track the arrival, enrollment, and departures of international exchange visitors.

**Site of Activity:** The physical, geographic host employer location where an exchange visitor participates in his or her exchange program.

**Sponsor:** A legal entity designated by the Secretary of State to conduct an exchange visitor program.

**Terminating Records:** Participants are subject to the Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program regulations and to the rules specified by their sponsors. Participants found to be in violation of program regulations and/or sponsors' rules may be terminated from the program. Other grounds for termination include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Failure to pursue the exchange activities for which the participant was admitted to the United States;
- Inability to continue the program;
- Willful failure to maintain insurance coverage as required under 22 CFR 62.14; and
- Unauthorized employment [22 CFR 62.40].

Participants who are terminated from their exchange programs are expected to leave the United States immediately.

**Travel Validation:** The endorsement needed for a participant to travel internationally during their program and return to complete the remainder of their program.

**Visa Status:** A visa is used solely for the purpose of entry and reentry. It does not determine the length of time an individual may remain in the United States legally. Upon entry to the U.S., participants are issued a Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record. The Form I-94 indicates the length of time an individual may remain in the U.S. Participants will see the notation “D/S” or “Duration of Status” marked on their Form I-94. This indicates that they may remain in the U.S. for the duration of their program and a 30-day grace period if they are following the rules governing the Exchange Visitor Program.