

## U.S.-AUSTRIA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE



Federal Ministry  
Republic of Austria  
European and International  
Affairs

On February 20, 2024, the United States and Austria launched a new “Professional Development and Cultural Exchange” program that gives young Austrians and Americans the chance to work in each other’s countries for up to one year. This new initiative is groundbreaking in that for the first time, it will allow young people coming from vocational programs to participate, as well as those who are enrolled in or have completed university studies. The program creates new opportunities to provide professional development and cultural exchange opportunities for young Austrians, who will bring with them cross-cultural perspectives and experiences that can enhance the whole workforce.

### Who is eligible to participate in the exchange?

The program participant (“exchange visitor”):

- Must be an Austrian citizen between 18-30 years old.
- Must be currently enrolled in or have graduated from a dual-vocational education program in the past 12 months OR be enrolled in or have completed an Austrian post-secondary education program within the past 12 months.
- Must have a working knowledge of English, as demonstrated at the visa interview.
- Must not be accompanied by dependents.
- Must successfully apply for a U.S. J-1 (“Exchange Visitor”) visa at any U.S. embassy or Consulate issuing nonimmigrant visas.

### How can a business sponsor an Austrian exchange visitor?

- Host organizations (a business or non-profit organization in the U.S.) must work with a “sponsor organization,” one of the official U.S. exchange promotion entities authorized by the Department of State to administer exchange programs.
- The sponsor organization will:
  - Help develop the structured training plan.
  - Guarantee that the participant is paid no less than the minimum wage for their work in the United States.
  - Coordinate with the host organization to arrange cross-cultural activities.
  - Issue the required form DS-2019 for the participant to apply for a J-1 visa.

### What are the responsibilities of a host organization?

- **DURATION** The minimum duration of the participant's stay is 6 months, and the maximum is 12 months.
- **TRAVEL** The participant will be able to travel in the U.S. for up to two months in total.
- **TRAINING PLAN** The host business works with the sponsor organization to compile a structured training plan that provides two or more work rotations spread out evenly across the duration of the participant's stay. Each rotation should provide the participant with progressively more advanced assignments.
- **CROSS-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES** The host organization will work with the sponsor organization to arrange for the participant's participation in a minimum of two cross-cultural activities.

### What is the first step for an interested Austrian program participant ("exchange visitor")?

- Get in touch with a "sponsor organization" to find out more about potential professional development/exchange opportunities and organizations in the U.S. that host this exchange program.

### How do I find a "sponsor organization"?

- There are currently several organizations authorized by the Department of State to sponsor participants under this new program. More sponsors are in process for authorization, so check back with the websites of the [U.S. Embassy in Vienna](#) or the [Austrian Embassy in the United States](#) for updates.
- Currently authorized sponsor organizations:
  - German American Chamber of Commerce: <https://www.go-j1.com/>
  - Global Insights: <https://www.globalinsights.org/>
  - Intrax: <https://www.globalinternships.com/intrax>
  - WISE Foundation: <http://wise.wisefoundation.com/>