

**Code of Practices
Principles and Criteria for Quality Exchange Programs**

**With Indicators
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Introduction

International Exchange-Trainee (EP) programs seek to promote the best technical and intercultural experience possible by establishing a worldwide standard of recognized and accepted Code of Practices or Principles and Criteria for Quality Exchange Programs.

The Code of Practices or Principles and Criteria (P&C) apply to all exchange programs worldwide. They are to be incorporated into the evaluation system and standards of all organizations seeking to participate in international agricultural exchanges. The P&C are a complete package and to be considered as a whole, and their sequence does not represent an ordering of priority. It is expected that Exchange-Trainee Programs actively seek to meet and exceed each Principle.

The P&C should be used in conjunction with national and international laws and regulations; and should complement, not supplant, other initiatives that support quality exchange programs.

Differences and difficulties of interpretation of the P&C can be addressed in national standards. These standards may be developed in each member country and will be evaluated by those involved and affected on a case-by-case basis.

The P&C can be used to promote quality Exchange-Trainee Programs and to increase public awareness of the importance of how to evaluate and assess international agricultural exchange programs.

The P&C may also provide guidance to policy makers on these issues, including improving exchange program legislation and policies.

Structure to P&C: Principle, Criteria, and Indicators are organized into the following hierarchy:

Principle: Overall broad category.

1.1 **Criteria:** Elements of concern and/or consideration

- **Indicator:** Elements that could be observed, documented, or through interviews, would *indicate* the EP is making efforts to address the Criteria.

Principles:

Principle #1: Compliance with Laws & Treaties

Principle #2: Rights and Responsibilities

Principle #3: Screening

Principle #4: Training Plans

Principle #5: Intercultural Exchange

Principle #6: Program Support

Principle #7: Monitoring and Assessment

Principle #1: Compliance with Laws & Treaties: Exchange programs shall respect all applicable laws of the country in which they occur, and international treaties and agreements to which the country is a signatory.

- 1.1. Exchange programs shall respect all national and local laws and administrative requirements.
 - Interviews with public officials and others, and observation in the field, indicate that the EP is meeting national, state/provincial and local laws and regulations.
 - EP can access and/or provide a list of relevant laws and administrative requirements.
 - Any EP compliance issues with laws are, or are being, resolved expeditiously with designated government authorities.
- 1.2. In signatory countries, the provision so of all binding international agreements such as ILO Conventions, shall be respected.
 - EP is aware of applicable international conventions and provides guidance so that participants meet the intent of such conventions.
 - EP demonstrates willingness to meet requirement, intent, and spirit of applicable agreements.
- 1.3. All applicable and legally prescribed fees, royalties, taxes and other charges shall be paid.
 - EP is up to date in payment of local taxes, fees, etc.
- 1.4. Program participants shall be protected from physical, sexual, and mental abuse or harassment.
 - EP has a written harassment policy.
 - Participant agreements address harassment and outline procedures to deal with harassment.
 - EP staff has been trained and/or has access to resources that can assist when harassment issues arise.
- 1.5. Fair labor laws and employment practices shall protect program participants.
 - Wages and other benefits (housing, food) are fair and consistent with (not lower than) prevailing local standards.
- 1.6. Program participants shall be protected from unsafe machinery and work practices.
 - Worker safety conditions meet legal requirements.
 - If documented, there is not a higher than normal accident rate.
 - Safety equipment is provided and used.
 - Safe work practices are taught and enforced.
- 1.7. Program participants shall be adequately covered by personal accident and health insurance and workman's compensation that meets and/or exceeds laws and/or industry standards.
 - EP documents that adequate personal health and accident as well as Medical Evacuation and Repatriation coverage is effective at the time of arrival in the host country.
 - Worker's compensation is fair and consistent with (not lower than) prevailing local standards.
 - EP has written emergency procedures and staff trained in emergency protocols.

- 1.8. Program participants shall be informed of, and abide by, relevant personal and public security issues and requirements.
- EP provides participants with documents outlining security issues and risks.
 - EP has provides guidance to participants in regard to minimizing risks.
 - EP has established procedures in the event of security emergency.
 - EP has staff trained to explain, guide, and help resolve security emergencies.

Principle #2: Rights and Responsibilities: Program Participants rights and responsibilities shall be clearly defined and documented.

- 1.1. Program participants shall have a signed agreement detailing the conditions of their program prior to arrival in the host country.
- EP updates program information annually.
 - Program information is available to the general public.
 - Participant agreements are detailed, signed, and dated prior to arrival in the host country.
 - Participant agreements include, at minimum:
 - Training Plan
 - Program Start and End Dates
 - Participant Contact Information
 - Starting Wages and Work Hours
 - Vacation & Time-Off
 - Details clarifying Room and Board
 - Visa Regulations-Rules governing participation in the EP
 - Program Policies governing participation in the EP
 - Personal Health and Accident Insurance Coverage
- 1.2. Program participants shall have all financial information detailed prior to arrival in the host country.
- EP updates program information annually.
 - Program information is available to the general public.
 - Participant receive detailed information that includes, at minimum:
 - Wages & Benefits
 - Program Deposits, Fees, and Refund Policy
 - Budget of Estimated Expenses & overall cost to participate in the EP
 - Fees charged & services provided by EP Partner in home country
- 1.3. Hosts shall have a signed agreement detailing the conditions of their participation in the Exchange Program.
- Host agreements are detailed, signed, and dated prior to participant's arrival.
 - Host agreements include, at minimum:
 - Training Plan
 - Program Start and End Dates
 - Participant Contact Information
 - Starting Wages and Work Hours
 - Vacation & Time-Off
 - Details clarifying Room and Board
 - Worker's Compensation Coverage
 - Visa Regulations-Rules governing participation in the EP
 - Program Policies governing participation in the EP
- 1.4. Exchange Programs shall have written agreements with their partners abroad that outline at minimum the fees charged and services provided to both participants and partner organization.
- Written agreements are available to the general public on request.

- Program participants are aware of partner agreements.
- 1.5. Appropriate mechanisms shall be employed to resolve disputes in regard to all aspects of participation in activities abroad.
- Conflicts and disagreements are resolved or being addressed in a systematic and legal manner.

Principle #3: Screening: Participants shall be screened for participation in the exchange.

- 1.1. Participants shall be screened in the home country by a qualified organization or individual with a good reputation.
- Agreement exists between partner organizations outlining screening process and EP requirements.
 - Staff is trained appropriately, has international experience, and understands their subject.
 - Communication between partner organizations is clear and prompt
 - Participants have a high success rate
 - Appropriate feedback mechanisms are in place to improve screening process
- 1.2. Screening shall verify and document that each applicant meets or exceeds program qualification requirements.
- Participant's documentation outlines qualifications, goals, and motivation
 - Interviews and references verify qualifications, goals, and motivation
 - Verification of no criminal record
 - Screener documents qualifications for sponsoring organization
 - Screener verifies that applicant has been presented with, and understands, the conditions, responsibilities, and regulations that will govern his/her time abroad
- 1.3. Where foreign language competency is required, a national fluent in the language or a native speaker shall do screening.
- Personal and/or phone interview verifies that participant can carry on a conversation and answer questions in the language required
 - Interviewer documents language ability for sponsoring organization
- 1.4. Screening shall verify that the participant will return to the home country and is not an intending immigrant abroad.
- Interviews and references indicate that the participant is going abroad appropriate purposes and intends to return home
 - Applicant has not previously applied for immigrant status in another country
- 1.5. Hosts shall be qualified and of good character.
- Interviews and field visits indicate that the host is appropriate for the EP.
 - Hosts can provide a list of personal, business, and financial references.
 - Any compliance issues and/or conflicts with laws, regulations, personnel, safety, or financial institutions are, or are being, resolved expeditiously.
 - Independent, qualified professional verifies good safety record.
 - Host is financially solvent.
 - Host has documented commitment to intercultural and exchange values.
 - Host has sufficient resources, equipment & facilities to provide quality on-the-job training & work experience.
 - Host has documented record of positive employee relations.
 - Host is a good communicator and problem solver

- 1.6. Organizations and Individuals sponsoring inbound and/or outbound exchange activities shall be qualified and of good character.
- Interviews with public officials, exchange organizations, and past participants indicate that the Organization/Individual is qualified and of good character.
 - Interviews with public officials, exchange organizations, and past participants indicate that the Organization/Individual is meeting and/or shows a willingness to incorporate the *Principles & Criteria* into their operating procedures.
 - Staff has documented exchange experience
 - Fees for services provided are reasonable and consistent with local standards
 - Copies of all agreements with participants are provided partner organization.
 - Organization/Individual participates in local, national, and/or international exchange organization conferences and activities.

Principle #4: Training Plans:

Individualized training plans shall be written, implemented, monitored, and evaluated. The objectives of each participant's program, and the means of achieving them, shall be clearly stated.

Training Plans:

- Set a framework for training in the minds of hosts and trainees.
 - Need to be flexible and broad-based.
 - Provide an educational component to the training experience.
 - Help establish a basis for placement decisions.
 - Provide a record/documentation of the experience.
 - Can be a basis for a letter of reference.
- 1.1. Hosts shall provide an individualized, detailed training plan for each participant prior to confirmation of placement.
- Training Plans have, at minimum, the following components:
 - Business/farm description
 - Statement of goals and objectives of the training
 - Skills to be imparted to the trainee
 - Production calendar
 - Training syllabus or general chronology of training/activities
 - Description of how trainee will be supervised and evaluated
 - Training Plan matches Trainee Placement Request
 - Trainee and Host have a copy of Training Plan
 - Individual Training Plans are on file with the EP
- 1.2. Trainees shall develop specific learning objectives for their program.
- Learning Objectives are documented, signed and dated by both host and trainee.
 - Host, Trainee, and EP each have copy of Learning Objectives.
- 1.3. Appropriate mechanisms shall be employed to document progress and overall achievement of learning objectives.
- Interviews and on-site observations with participants and hosts indicate that learning objectives are being accomplished.
 - Participants document their program in writing.
 - EP and Host maintain copies of documents.
 - A combination of the following is used and documented

- Initial adjustment survey
- Individual learning objectives
- Competency statements
- Periodic progress reviews
- Site visits
- Phone contact
- EP sponsored gatherings and/or workshops
- End of program evaluations

Principle #5: Intercultural Exchange. Program participants shall be actively involved in intercultural activities throughout their program abroad.

- 1.1. Participants shall have information on available local and regional cultural activities
 - Cultural resource materials are made available to participants prior to arrival.
- 1.2. Hosts shall provide and/or encourage cultural involvement
 - Observation and interviews indicate host provides a positive environment for improving language.
 - Hosts are aware of trainee's culture, needs and religious beliefs
 - Communication, phone calls & reports document intercultural involvement.
- 1.3. EP shall provide participants with and/or facilitate opportunities for trainee group contact
 - EP written materials promote intercultural exchange as part of the program.
 - EP offers participants special opportunities, such as:
 - Seminars and Workshops
 - Recreational and Adventure Trips
 - Retreats for social interaction and feedback.
 - EP documents participant's cultural/intercultural activities.

Principle #6: Program Support: EP shall provide the support necessary to assure optimal learning and exchange opportunities for participants.

- 1.1. Programs shall employ full time, qualified staff
 - Staff development is on going.
 - Staff have international exchange and/or work experience
 - Interviews and field observations indicate that participants, hosts, and partner organizations are satisfied with the quality of services and support provided.
- 1.2. EP shall operate an efficient business.
 - Staff development is on-going
 - Staff is competent in problem solving and conflict resolution skills
 - Clear, timely & culturally appropriate communication
 - Timely notification to partners and participants in regard to:
 - Travel arrangements: departures and arrivals
 - Program changes: Policy & fees
 - Emergencies and Illnesses
 - Unexpected situations that may effect participants or program quality
 - Financial resources are sufficient to meet obligations and provide services promised.
 - Procedural manual is available and up-to-date
 - Promotional and descriptive information is clear, easily accessible, and up-to-date.

- Internal evaluations are documented and used effectively for program development.
- 1.3. Programs shall have documented emergency procedures and appropriate mechanisms in place in event of concerns or emergencies
- Emergency procedures are documented
 - Staff is trained in emergency and first-response procedures
 - Participants and Hosts know what to do in the event of an emergency.
- 1.4. Program participants shall be provided, at minimum, with:
- Pre-Arrival Information Package includes, at minimum:
 - Confirmation of placement, start/end dates, wages & program fees
 - Detailed Training Plan
 - Intercultural adaptation and relevant cultural materials
 - Emergency Telephone & Contact Information
 - Insurance Verification & Policy Information
 - Information on clothing and what to bring
 - Arrival Orientation covers, at minimum
 - Placement details (wages, work hours, time off, responsibilities)
 - Host & participant expectations
 - Visa Regulations
 - Program Policies & Guidelines
 - Occupational Safety & Emergency Procedures
 - Intercultural and Cultural Adaptation
 - Rights and Responsibilities
 - Living and working in the host country
 - Security issues, risks, and measures to minimize risks
 - Post Arrival support is adequate to monitor and assure participants and hosts have a successful and rewarding experience.
 - Site Visits
 - Phone Contact
 - Reports
 - Taxes
 - Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution
 - Established procedures for placement changes
 - Pre-Departure Information is provided that includes, at minimum:
 - Reverse cultural shock
 - How to prepare for departure (closing bank accounts, etc)
 - Post-Departure support is part of on-going program
 - Alumni contact is facilitated with prospective participants and program partners
 - Alumni groups formed
 - Alumni newsletters/website/retreats

Principle #7: Monitoring and Assessment: Monitoring and evaluation shall be conducted to assess the quality of participants training and intercultural experience; the effectiveness of the exchange program; and the impact of the exchange on participants.

- 1.1 Appropriate mechanisms shall be employed to periodically monitor and annually evaluate Hosts.
- References are obtained for each host

- Participants evaluate hosts and recommend them for future trainees
 - Staff and/or qualified individuals visit and observe host operation.
 - Monitoring and evaluations are based on a combination of written reports, interviews, and field observations
 - EP does not rely solely on once source of information when monitoring and evaluating hosts, participants, or partner organizations
 - Host evaluations are documented and on-file
 - Historical host data is summarized and accessible.
- 1.2 Appropriate mechanisms shall be employed to provide periodic performance feedback to Hosts and Participants.
- Feedback mechanisms are documented and on going.
 - Performance feedback is documented
- 1.3 Participants shall provide evaluations of hosts, learning objectives, and overall satisfaction with Program.
- Written evaluations are on file for each host & participant
 - Field-Visits/Observations are documented
 - Interviews and phone conversations are documented
 - Annual program summaries are tabulated and available
- 1.4 Appropriate mechanisms shall be employed to periodically monitor, evaluate and provide constructive feedback to program partners:
- References are obtained from other exchange programs.
 - Participants evaluate sending and receiving organization
 - Feedback is based on a combination of written reports, interviews, and field observations.
 - Annual summaries of participant satisfaction and accomplishment of learning objectives are shared between partners.
- 1.5 Appropriate mechanisms shall be employed to document and incorporate monitoring and assessment results into program development.
- Feedback and program development mechanisms are documented.
 - EP can show specific examples and explain how evaluations have enabled program development and increased quality of: services, hosts, trainees, and program partners.