



TRAINEE PROGRAM

The Swedish-American Chambers of Commerce of the United States of America

PRE-ARRIVAL GUIDE

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1. Purpose and Summary of the Exchange Visitor Program

The purpose of the U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program is to promote and foster respect and education between the U.S. and other countries by providing students and professionals the opportunity to participate in a structured training program with a U.S. company to meet specific objectives. Training in the U.S. will enable participants to improve their knowledge of American techniques, methodologies, or expertise, which will strengthen their ability to play a dynamic role in their field upon their return to the home country. Trainees will also have the chance to grow personally and develop a new perspective on their own culture and abilities. Use of the Exchange Visitor Program for ordinary employment or work purposes is strictly prohibited.

The Exchange Visitor Program also allows the trainee/intern to share his or her culture, knowledge, techniques and experience with the host company and its employees. By doing so the program benefits both parties, encouraging two-way learning in terms of professional and personal growth.

2. The SACC-USA Trainee Program

2.1 Summary

The SACC-USA Trainee Program enables people from Sweden to come to the U.S. on J-1 training visa up to 18 months. SACC-USA is authorized to assist you with the visa application and issues the form DS-2019 (Certificate of Eligibility) which is required to receive a visa. The purpose of your SACC-USA Trainee Program is outlined in the Training/Internship Placement Plan, DS-7002, written by the host company. You will train under direct supervision, and your progress and skills learned as observed by your supervisor will be provided to SACC-USA in a mid-point and a final evaluation. You are also responsible for providing SACC-USA with an evaluation of your training program and host company in a mid-point and a final evaluation.

2.2 Special Registration

If you were born in a country outside of Sweden, such as a country in the Middle East or Northern Africa and you are a male, you may be subject to Special Registration. For more information on Special Registration, visit www.ice.gov.

2.3 Networking

Take advantage of the SACC-USA network! As a trainee, you are automatically a member of the Young Professionals section of the *SACC Chamber* in the U.S region where you live.

- Be active as a SACC Young Professional and take part in local business and social events.
- You are welcome to join our Facebook group *SACC-USA Alumni and Young Professionals*.
- Feel free to create your own profile at LinkedIn.com and join our group *SACC-USA Trainee Program Network* there.

2.4 Things to Remember

- Call SACC-USA as soon as you arrive in the U.S. (202-536-1520) or email traineeprogram@sacc-usa.org.
- Submit a Check-in Form within 10 days
- Always report a new address to SACC-USA within 10 days
- Notify SACC-USA if you get seriously ill
- Contact SACC-USA if you experience problems in your training program
- Notify SACC-USA if you plan to travel domestically for more than one week
- Always send your DS-2019 to SACC-USA for travel validation if you plan to travel internationally
- Always notify SACC-USA immediately if your training program is terminated for any reason
- Submit a mid-point and a final evaluation to SACC-USA.
- At the end of your training program, please notify SACC-USA about your departure date.
- Always keep your passport, I-94 card and DS-2019 form in a secure place.
- Please remember that SACC-USA is your sponsor. You can turn to SACC-USA at any time during your training program if you have questions or comments

3. Interview at the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm

In order to get your J-1 visa, you will need to go to an interview at the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm and you will book the interview yourself. For current instructions visit their website: http://stockholm.usembassy.gov/consulate/noni_visa_index.html

Please make sure to **read the instructions carefully**. There are detailed instructions regarding your passport, photograph, additional forms, “person bevis,” etc.

To book a date for the interview, click on the link “Book an Appointment”. When you are at the interview, it is very important to ask that you receive a **multiple entry visa**.

The primary objective of the interview is for the immigration officials at the Embassy to determine that you have an established residence in Sweden and have no intention of abandoning your Swedish residence. In other words, they want to make sure that you will not try to overstay your visa and illegally reside in the U.S. after the completion of the training program. It is very important to understand that the J-1 visa is for training and you will not be working or employed in the U.S.

Home-Country Physical Presence Requirement

The Department of State requires a J-1 exchange visitor, whose program is funded in whole or in part by the home country government, to reside and be physically present in his/her country of nationality for an aggregate time of at least two years following departure from the United States before the exchange visitor is eligible to apply for a U.S. immigrant visa or work visa. The visa stamp and DS-2019 form will indicate that the two-year rule applies for persons subject to this requirement. I.e. it will say “Bearer subject to section 212E, two year rule does apply” at the bottom of the visa. Please note that this two year rule applies to immigration or work visa only. In other words, it is possible to return to the US as a tourist or student or on another J-1 visa.

4. Travel

4.1 Travel to and Entry into the United States

It is your responsibility to arrange for travel to the United States. Do not book a ticket until you have had your interview at the U.S. Embassy and have received the visa in your passport. Make sure to buy a round-trip ticket as a one way ticket might raise suspicion that you will try to overstay your visa.

You can arrive in the U.S. 30 days prior to the start of your training program. You should have arrived by the start date of the training program. You are encouraged to travel at least three days prior to the start date to overcome jetlag and become familiar with your new surroundings. If your travel plans are delayed so that you will arrive in the U.S. after the start date of the training program, your DS-2019 may expire. Therefore, it is important that you inform SACC-USA with the status of your travel. If you have not arrived 15 days after the training start date and have not notified us, your DS-2019 will be canceled.

Upon arrival in the U.S. you will need to show the immigration officer your J-1 visa and DS-2019 Form. You will receive an I-94 card coded “D/S” for Duration of Status. Contact SACC-USA immediately if your I-94 card is not coded D/S for Duration of Status. **You should always keep the DS-2019 and the I-94 in a secure place.**

4.2 Check-in Form

Please call SACC-USA at 202-536-1520 during office hours or email ck@sacc-usa.org to let us know that you have arrived safely. Within the first week of arrival, please fill out a Check-in Form and email to ck@sacc-usa.org. It is very important that we get the Check-in Form in a timely manner so that we can enter your U.S. address in the SEVIS system. Use a temporary address or the host company address if you do not know your permanent address yet and then notify SACC-USA as soon as you have a permanent address. Failure to submit the Check-in Form will result in your visa being out of status. A fee of \$198 applies to reinstatement.

4.3 Travel after Arrival in the United States

Domestic Travel

Please keep in mind that the Exchange Visitor Program is not a tourist program and you are not entitled to vacation days unless agreed upon with the host company. You must comply with all program

requirements regarding travel. Trainees/interns who plan to travel for more than one week are required to notify SACC-USA prior to their departure, so that SACC-USA is able to reach you in case of an emergency.

Sweden/International Travel

You may leave the U.S. during the program as long as you are in good standing in your program. Before leaving, you are required to notify SACC-USA of your travel plans. SACC-USA must sign your DS-2019 which proves to the immigration officials that you are in compliance with the guidelines of the program.

Without the necessary signature on your DS-2019 it will not be possible for you to re-enter the U.S.

Therefore, two weeks before a planned trip you must mail your DS-2019 to SACC-USA for validation. Do so by registered mail or other traceable delivery service and follow these instructions:

Please send the following to SACC-USA two weeks prior to leaving the U.S.:

1. DS-2019 Form
2. A check for \$15.00 to cover return mail fees or a delivery company account number
3. A letter or copy of email from your supervisor approving the travel
4. A separate sheet listing the following information:
 - a. Dates of travel
 - b. Destination
 - c. Reason for travel
 - d. Return address and telephone number for the DS-2019 (no PO Boxes!)

Always bring your passport and DS-2019 with you when travelling!

Note that any participant who leaves the U.S. for a period greater than 30 days is considered to have interrupted his or her program, resulting in the automatic cancellation of the participant's visa.

4.4 Return to Sweden at End of Program

The dates on the form DS-2019 reflect the maximum amount of time you may train with a host company. You are expected to return to Sweden at the end of your program and must report to SACC USA your exact date of departure as soon as you know this. Upon completion of the Exchange Visitor Program, your J-1 permits you to remain in the U.S. for a maximum of 30 days. Any intern/trainee who remains in the U.S. longer than 30 days risks deportation by the immigration authorities.

5. Living in the United States

5.1 Housing, Transportation & Communication

More information about living in the U.S. is outlined in the ***Orientation Guide***. The following are more general guidelines regarding housing and transportation in the U.S.:

- Unless otherwise arranged through your host company, you will need to make housing arrangements.
- Remember that there may be SACC USA Young Professionals in the area to ask for advice. This is a good time to start networking.
- It may best to stay in a hotel or hostel for the first few days while searching for housing.
- It is important to include a security deposit in your budget, often equivalent to one or two months' rent and usually required when renting an apartment. This is generally returned to you if there are no damages to the apartment when moving out.
- Keep in mind that utilities (heat, water, electricity) are often not included in the rent and will be an additional expense, so ask each potential housing provider if utilities are included in the average monthly rent.
- You can find housing alternatives in many different ways. Look in the local newspaper; ask your host company, search the web; www.craigslist.com and www.rent.com are some good websites.
- Local universities often have some kind of housing bulletin board about renting on their websites.
- Renting an apartment allows you to actually sign the lease with the landlord. One problem with leases is that they in most cases cover a one-year period. If you are staying for a shorter period of time, it may be easier to sublet. Subletting means that you legally rent the apartment from the person who has signed the original lease contract.
- Most U.S. states require that you hold an American driver license if you will be driving and staying in the U.S. for more than 3 months on a visa. More information can be found on the unofficial guide www.dmv.org.
- Larger cities such as New York, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. have comprehensive public transportation systems, but smaller cities and also many other larger cities do not generally have good public transportation systems. Find out more about public transportation at the local community website.
- For shorter term transportation you may want to rent a car. Car rental companies may require you to be above 21 or 25 years old for renting a car.
- When leasing a car and obtaining car insurance without having a U.S. drivers license, we suggest you look into www.lion-leasing.com for more information.
- The major cell phone operators are Verizon Wireless, AT&T and T-Mobile. Internet connection can be provided by these companies as well. Check with your Swedish cell phone operator if your phone works in the U.S.

5.2 Social Security Number

A social security number is compulsory if you receive a stipend that requires you to pay taxes. You do not need a number to conduct business with a bank, register for school, apply for educational tests, obtain private health insurance, apply for school lunch programs or apply for subsidized housing, but anyhow it can be useful to have a social security number. Please visit <http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.html> for information. You should wait 10 business days after your entry into the U.S. to apply for a Social Security Number.

5.3 Health Care and Insurance

You and your dependents, if any, are required to have health insurance policies for the entire duration of your training period that meets the minimum requirements stated by the Department of State. These include coverage of at least \$50,000 per accident/illness; \$7,500 for repatriation coverage; \$10,000 for medical evacuation coverage; and a deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident/illness. The insurance company must also meet the requisite rating as stated in the above reference regulation.

- If you are a student you may be covered by Student-UT through your school. Ask your school or visit www.kammarkollegiet.se for more information.
- Contact an insurance company of your choice and ask for a health and accident insurance policy for living and working abroad. The 45-day travel insurance often provided as part of a Swedish home insurance policy may not always cover training/work. Make sure you have an appropriate insurance covering training during the whole time period you are in the U.S.
- SACC-USA can refer you to a U.S. insurance company. The monthly premiums range from approximately \$40 to \$75, depending on the trainee's age and length of stay in the U.S.
- Ask for a summary of the insurance policy in English.

5.4 Non-Immigrants' Legal Rights

The William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (WWTVPRA) outlines information for non-immigrants about your rights, protections and resources pamphlet, see http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/pamphlet/pamphlet_4578.html. The pamphlet provides clear information on important issues regarding the health, safety and welfare of exchange visitor participants.

6. Finances

6.1 Salary

As an intern or trainee you will not be paid a salary.

6.2 Stipend

Host companies have the option to provide a monthly stipend, but are in no way obligated to do so. The amount of the stipend will be at the discretion of the company, but may not exceed U.S. norms. The stipend, if any, will be explicitly stated in the Offer of Training by your host company.

If a stipend is provided, the amount for the entire training period is listed under item 5 of your DS-2019.

6.3 Funds for Initial Period

Until everything is arranged with social security number and stipend, you need to have enough money for the first several weeks up to two months. Rent deposit, utilities, telephone and other living expenditures have to be covered until you receive the first stipend.

6.4 Banking

Ask your Swedish bank to make sure that your debit or credit card will work in the U.S. It is also a good idea to bring a back-up card. There are usually fees associated with withdrawing money through an ATM (cash machine) so you do not want to withdraw small sums often, but keep in mind that there may be a daily maximum withdrawal. Ask your Swedish bank for a card with no or low fees on the Swedish end. Even if you have a Swedish debit card, you should probably use it in the U.S. as if it is a credit card, i.e. when purchasing something in a store; indicate “credit” rather than “debit” as your Swedish access code may not work. Be prepared to carry your passport for identification.

If you receive a stipend from your host company, it will either be deposited into your bank account or you will receive a check. In either case you need to open a bank account. There is usually a fee if you withdraw money through an ATM (cash machine) that does not belong to your U.S. bank. See *Orientation Guide* for more information on banking.

6.5 Taxes

J-1 trainees are subject to federal, state and local tax on U.S. income, including the stipend received from their host company. J-1 trainees and their host companies are not required to pay Social Security, Medicare or FUTA (unemployment tax) on any money paid to a J-1 trainee, unless the trainee has been present in the U.S. for any part of two of the preceding six calendar years. See the *SACC-USA Tax Manual* available on the SACC-USA Trainee Program website for more information. In order to pay taxes, you need a Social Security Number. Make sure that your host company deducts taxes from your stipend and provides you with a W-2 form. Further information regarding the appropriate forms and other details can be found at www.irs.gov.

7. Evaluations

Please submit to SACC-USA a mid-point and a final evaluation of your training program and host company. The evaluation forms are available for online submission at www.sacc-usa.org/trainee/for-trainees.

8. SACC-USA Contact Information

Responsible Officer SACC-USA

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**CONTACT SACC-USA BY
TELEPHONE OR E-MAIL
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
AFTER YOUR ARRIVAL.**

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