



Outcome Assessment of International Exchange Programs in Iowa

Executive Report

June 2005

Purpose of the Outcome Assessment

The Office of Policy and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of State's (DOS) Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) contracted with T.E. Systems, Inc. (TES) in September 2003, to conduct an outcome assessment of DOS exchange programs operating in the State of Iowa—specifically, the *International Visitor Leadership Program*, the *Community Connections (Business for Russia) Program*, the *Sister Cities Program of Des Moines*, the *Partners of the Americas grant* and selected *Office of Citizen Exchanges grant projects*. This outcome assessment documents and reports on the overall results, or outcomes, that these exchange programs have on the local hosts/resources of these programs and their communities, and on a small sample of foreign exchange visitors participating in these programs. This assessment expands upon a previous U.S. community impact study conducted in the Greater Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area.

Overall Assessment of the Programs

Hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors participating in U.S. Department of State (DOS) exchange programs proved to be a very positive experience for hosts/resources in the areas of Ames, Des Moines and Iowa City, Iowa. DOS programs help the U.S. Government to promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries in a cost-effective manner. These conclusions are supported by the following study results.

- Host/resource respondents believe hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors:
 - 98.8% - Promotes mutual understanding among Americans and foreigners.
 - 95.6% - Helps them learn about and better appreciate foreign countries and cultures.
 - 93.1% - Helps them learn more about the perspectives of foreign exchange visitors.
 - 92.1% - Allows foreigners to share their values and beliefs with them.
 - 88.7% - Promotes peaceful relations between the United States and other countries.
 - 87.7% - Allows them to share U.S. values and beliefs with foreigners.
 - 87.5% - Helps them develop friendships with people all over the world.
- Host/resource respondents believe hosting also benefits their families:
 - 88.9% - Allows them and their family to help improve the overall image of the United States in foreign countries.
 - 88.0% - Gives them and their families the opportunity to serve our country by being hospitable to foreign exchange visitors.
 - 60.6% - Helps them educate their children about other countries and cultures.
- 97.6% of foreign exchange visitor respondents reported gaining a better understanding of the United States and its people and culture, and 95.3% gained a better understanding of the State of Iowa and its people and culture as a result of their program participation.
- For every federal dollar allocated in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 by the U.S. Department of State to support these exchange programs, an additional \$10.30 was generated, or leveraged, by host/resource respondents and their families, friends, and colleagues in monetary and in-kind contributions. Iowan citizens and organizations contributed over \$10 million towards activities associated with DOS exchange programs.
- 97.7% of host/resource respondents believe the DOS exchange programs should continue receiving federal funding.

This evaluation also assesses the degree to which the DOS exchange programs have reached the overarching legislative goals of the Fulbright-Hays Act, which enables the U.S. Government to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. The goals of the Fulbright-Hays Act are to:

- Increase mutual understanding between people of the United States and people of other countries.
- Strengthen the ties that unite people of the United States with other nations.
- Promote international cooperation for education and cultural advancement.
- Assist in the development of “friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world.”

Project Information

From July 2004 to December 2004, TES administered a 20-page survey to 1,316 hosts/resources in Iowa. The survey response rate was 37.2%. TES also administered an 8-page survey to 54 foreign exchange visitors in Iowa. The survey response rate was 79.6%. TES interviewed exchange program administrators from the U.S. Department of State’s Office of International Visitors, Office of Citizen Exchanges, and Office of Policy and Evaluation in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), hosts/resources in Iowa, and the staff members of the seven ECA partner organizations in Des Moines, Ames, Iowa City, and their surrounding areas in Iowa. Mr. Tomás Esterrich was the Contract and Senior Project Manager, Mr. Earl Bautista was the Project Manager and Senior Research Associate, and Ms. Leslie Esterrich-Betancourt, Ms. Michelle Bauer and Ms. Nilda Anderson were the Focus Group/Interview Moderators.

Information on International Exchange Programs

The *International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP)* is managed by the Office of International Visitors in the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). The program is designed to build mutual understanding between the United States and other countries through carefully designed visits that reflect the participants’ professional interests and support U.S. foreign policy goals. Participants are established or potential foreign opinion makers in a variety of professions. They come to the United States for three-week projects to meet and confer with their U.S. professional counterparts and to gain an appreciation of the ethnic, cultural, political, and socio-economic diversity of the United States. Participants are often hosted by American families and participate in cultural activities during their stay in the United States.

Annually, the IVLP brings approximately 5,000 foreign visitors to the United States to meet with their counterparts in Washington, D.C. and three additional U.S. cities. Since its inception in 1940, more than 135,000 foreign visitors (International Visitors) have participated in the program. The programmatic and logistical arrangements are handled by staff from the Office of International Visitors, the non-profit national program agencies (NPAs) and the Councils for International Visitors (CIVs) located in communities across the United States. The 95 community-based CIVs are members of the National Council for International Visitors (NCIV) based in Washington, D.C.

The CIVs involved in this study were the Iowa Council for International Understanding (ICIU) in Des Moines, Iowa and the Council for International Visitors to Iowa Cities (CIVIC) in Iowa City, Iowa. Each year, ICIU programs approximately 180 International Visitors and CIVIC

programs over 120 International Visitors. Approximately 80,000 members or volunteers of CIVs throughout the United States arrange meetings, tours, cultural activities, and home hospitality for foreign exchange visitors visiting their communities.

ECA's Office of Citizen Exchanges is responsible for managing various professional, youth, and cultural programs through grants to U.S. non-profit institutions, including community organizations, professional associations, and universities. This outcome assessment also included the following programs, which are managed by the Office of Citizen Exchanges: the Community Connections (Business for Russia) Program, Sister Cities Program of Des Moines, and Partners of the Americas.

The *Community Connections Program (Community Connections)* brings entrepreneurs, business people and other professionals to the United States from 10 countries in Eurasia—i.e., Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine—to participate in business internships, job shadowing, training and professional programming. Business internships for Russian participants comprise the *Business for Russia Program*, which is a component of the Community Connections Program.

Community Connections (Business for Russia) operates under the auspices of the FREEDOM (Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets) Support Act of 1992. Hosting organizations located throughout the United States handle all programmatic and logistical aspects of the program and coordinate the visits of each foreign visitor in their community. Since 1994, the Community Connections (Business for Russia) Program has brought more than 14,500 participants from Eurasia. Since 1996, the Iowa Council for International Understanding (ICIU) in Des Moines has hosted approximately 350 Community Connections participants. Iowa Resource for International Service, Inc. (IRIS) in Ames, Iowa, has hosted over 200 Community Connections participants since 1997. ECA's association with the Community Connections (Business for Russia) Program will end in August 2005.

The *Sister Cities Program of Des Moines (Sister Cities)*, which is partially funded by ECA, provides foreign nationals with the opportunity to meet their counterparts in American cities and promote city-to-city relationships through exchanges. The Greater Des Moines Sister City Commission administers this program on behalf of the Des Moines City Council as well as city councils of the surrounding cities of Ankeny, Clive, Johnston, West Des Moines, and Windsor Heights, Iowa. The City of Des Moines is linked with five Sister Cities—Kofu (Japan), Naucalpan (Mexico), St. Etienne (France), Stavropol (Russia), and Shijiazhuang (China).

Partners of the Americas is a nation-wide organization that was established in 1964 as a result of President John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress. The goal of Partners of the Americas is to improve the lives of people across Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States through nonpolitical, community-based activities in areas such as civil society and governance, exchanges and fellowships, gender and equality, youth and children, and agriculture and environment. The exchange activities of Partners of the Americas are partially funded by an ECA grant to the Partner of the Americas' headquarters in Washington, D.C., which then allocates the funding among its 60 chapters, such as the Iowa-Yucatan Chapter located in Des Moines, Iowa.

This outcome assessment also included the following grant projects managed by ECA's Office of Citizen Exchanges:

- *Iowa – Cherkasy, Ukraine School Partnership Program.* This grant was a two-way exchange primarily designed to monitor water quality in both Iowa and Cherkasy,

Ukraine through citizen activism at the high school level. The project was administered by Iowa Sister States.

- *Youth Sports Management Grant with Malaysia.* For this grant, members of the Iowa Amateur Athletic Union (Iowa AAU) of Des Moines and members of the Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) collaborated in hopes of spreading the idea of developing the Malaysian youth through sports. The project was administered by Iowa AAU.
- *Great Lakes Reconciliation Project: Justice & Journalism.* This grant was administered by Iowa Resource for International Service, Inc. (IRIS) to provide impetus for journalists and legal professionals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DROC), Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and Zimbabwe to work together towards reconciliation among and within those countries.
- *Building Civil Society and Peace in Nigeria.* The Iowa Resource for International Service, Inc. (IRIS) also administered this grant. IRIS worked closely with the Nigerian Strategic Empowerment and Mediation Agency (SEMA) towards the goal of reducing religious conflict in Nigeria, specifically in the states of Kaduna and Taraba.
- *African Workforce Development: Creating a Nigerian Model.* This grant's purpose was to create a link between Iowa's Department of Workforce Development and similar initiatives in the Nigerian states of Enugu and Taraba. IRIS also administered this grant.

Summary of Findings

TES, in coordination with the Office of Policy and Evaluation and in conjunction with program stakeholders, developed five project objectives and prepared research questions that provided the foundation for this study. The project's primary objectives and research questions related to the experiences of the Iowan hosts/resources and were grouped into four major themes:

- Involvement with International Exchange Programs
- Knowledge of Foreign Exchange Visitors and Countries
- Multiplier Effect of International Exchange Programs
 - Involvement of Family, Friends and Colleagues
 - Subsequent Contact with Foreign Exchange Visitors
- Expenditures and Economic Relevance

The term “multiplier effect” refers to the expansion of the hosting experience beyond the initial contact between the foreign exchange visitor and the host/resource to other people, and the initiation of additional activities. Examples of the multiplier effect include the sharing of information by the foreign exchange visitor or host/resource with family, friends and colleagues, and/or the community-at-large; the initiation of new interests, professional activities and/or institutional partnerships; or the continued collaboration between the foreign exchange visitors and the hosts/resources.

The project's secondary objectives and research questions related to foreign exchange visitors in Iowa during the data collection period and were grouped into four major themes:

- Foreign Exchange Visitors' Experience in Iowa
- Outcomes of the Exchange Program in Iowa
- Outcomes of the Exchange Program in the United States
- Future Plans as a Result of the Exchange Program in Iowa

The following presents the summary of the key study findings.

Involvement with International Exchange Programs

- Many of the major benefits of hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors coincide with the goals of the Fulbright-Hays Act. Hosts/resources agreed or strongly agreed that hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors:
 - 98.8% - Promotes mutual understanding among Americans and foreigners.
 - 95.6% - Helps them learn about and better appreciate foreign countries and cultures.
 - 93.1% - Helps them learn more about the perspectives of foreign exchange visitors.
 - 92.1% - Allows foreigners to share their values and beliefs with them.
 - 88.7% - Promotes peaceful relations between the United States and other countries.
 - 87.5% - Helps them develop friendships with people all over the world.
- Hosts/resources are extremely satisfied with their experiences hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors. Their satisfaction can be seen in how long and how often they choose to be hosts/resources:
 - 50.8% have been volunteering for at least 4 years.
 - 47.3% have volunteered at least twice during their most recent year.
- Hosts'/resources' primary personal reasons for hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors are:
 - 26.3% - To broaden their perspective.
 - 21.1% - To help improve the overall image of the United States in foreign countries.
 - 14.2% - Feel it is important that foreign exchange visitors meet "real" Americans.
- Hosts'/resources' primary professional reason for hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors is to share their professional knowledge and experience with their foreign counterparts (34.2%).
- The primary motivations to begin hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors were:
 - 24.7% - Asked by others.
 - 21.4% - Educational opportunity.
 - 18.9% - Past exchange experience.
 - 12.8% - To meet new people.
- The primary motivations to continue hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors were:
 - 32.2% - Enjoy the experience.
 - 22.2% - Educational opportunity.
 - 21.1% - Meeting new people and/or developing friendships.
 - 17.9% - Civic duty and/or promote peace.
- Of the 489 survey respondents, 80.0% are hosts/resources, while 17.6% have participated in a two-way DOS exchange program, and 2.4% consider themselves outbound visitors only.

Knowledge of Foreign Visitors and Countries

- Hosts'/resources' knowledge of foreign exchanges visitors' countries and cultures increased from no knowledge or limited knowledge (71.0%) before the visit to moderate knowledge or extensive knowledge (87.3%) after the visit.
- Hosts/resources and foreign exchange visitors typically shared information about their respective cultures, personal lives/families, professions/businesses, and politics/governments.
- Hosts/resources believe that foreign exchange visitors experience significant changes in attitudes toward the United States and Americans as a result of their participation in DOS exchange programs. Hosts/resources most often report that foreign exchange visitors realize that "real" Americans are not like those portrayed in the foreign media (i.e., wealthy, violent, and unfriendly).

The Multiplier Effect of International Exchange Programs

- 93.6% of respondents speak to family, friends, and/or colleagues regarding their experiences hosting and/or meeting with foreign exchange visitors, specifically with their friends, spouses/partners, and children.
- 87.1% of hosts/resources believe that their families, friends, and/or colleagues are either very interested or somewhat interested in meeting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors. However, just 56.9% report that their families, friends, and/or colleagues always or often directly participate in the hosting experience.
- 76.3% of hosts/resources maintain contact with at least one foreign exchange visitor after hosting and/or interacting with them, with 58.3% keeping in contact with one to five visitors. Most of the contact occurs once a year via e-mail and is personal in nature.
- Those hosts/resources who maintain business or professional contact with foreign exchange visitors generally discuss new ideas, business/professional practices and methods, and follow-up information/advice for visitors. Of the 48.5% that have discussed the development of business and/or professional partnerships or collaborations, 76.0% have found them either extremely valuable or moderately valuable. Forty-nine (11.8%) survey respondents indicated that organizational relationships or collaborations have developed as a direct result of their interaction with foreign exchange visitors.

Expenditures and Economic Relevance

The study findings indicate that the use of federal (i.e. DOS) funds not only meets the legislative goals for which they are appropriated, but also generates, or leverages, private funding by Iowan hosts/resources in support of the legislative goals.

- For every federal dollar allocated in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 and related grant project years by the U.S. Department of State to support the DOS exchange programs included in this outcome assessment, an additional \$10.30 was generated by hosts/resources in Iowa in monetary and in-kind contributions. DOS' Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs allocated \$1,034,326 in FY 2003 and related grant project years, which represents only 9.0% of the total funding and resources required to support these programs. In essence, Iowan

citizens and organizations are contributing, or leveraging, 91.0% or \$10,620,730.06 towards citizen diplomacy activities associated with DOS exchange programs in Iowa, which clearly demonstrates both the importance and support of these programs.

- 77.0% or \$9,055,710.02 of the monetary and in-kind labor contributions to administer DOS exchange programs in Iowa are made by hosts/resources, who are private citizens serving as professional resources, business internship hosts, homestay hosts, and home hospitality hosts, and by hosts’/resources’ families, friends, and colleagues (see Figure 1). The \$9,055,710.02 exceeds by far the \$1,034,326.00 in federal resources and funding provided by DOS.
- Homestay hosts provided 55.4% or \$5,015,237.63 of the monetary and in-kind labor contributions to support DOS exchange programs in Iowa, while the professional resources for one-way exchanges provided 14.3% or \$1,298,695.16.
- The average in-kind labor rates reported by survey respondents ranges from \$30.60 to \$75.60 per hour.
- In justifying the time and money spent while hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors, 40.1% of respondents believe they gain knowledge and appreciation of other countries and cultures, while 27.8% make personal relationships/friendships.

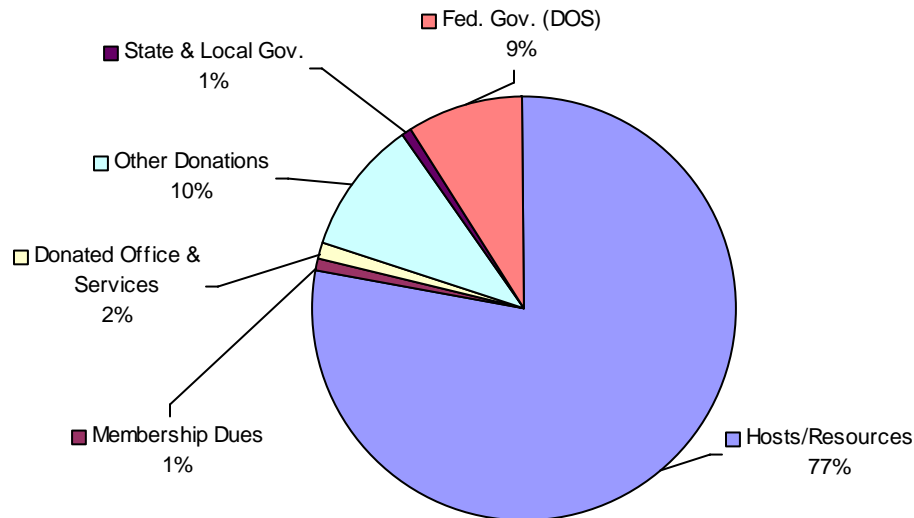


Figure 1: Source of Funding & Contributions for the Administration of International Exchange Programs in Iowa

Foreign Exchange Visitors’ Experience

Fifty-four foreign exchange visitors participated in the International Visitor Leadership Program and the Community Connections Program during the study’s data collection period. 79.6% (43 of 54) of the participants responded to the survey.

- Of the foreign exchange visitor respondents:
 - 79.1% were part of the International Visitor Leadership Program and the remaining 20.1% were part of the Community Connections (Business for Russia) Program.

- 62.8% are in the field of education.
- 41.5% are university administrators.
- 41.9% are from Russia & Eurasia/Central Asia. Another 41.9% are from North Africa/Near East/Middle East.

Foreign Exchange Visitors' Experiences in Iowa

- 97.6% of foreign exchange visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied with the program's overall experience. Foreign exchange visitors also had high levels of satisfaction with the program's administration, variety of experiences, and relevance to their professional or educational development.
- The topics hosts/resources most often shared were about Iowa's: public and private universities (79.1%), educational opportunities (76.7%), business and professional practices and policies (69.8%), diversity and cross-cultural aspects (69.8%), and agricultural/farming practices and policies (65.1%).
- In turn, foreign exchange visitors most often shared information regarding their countries' or regions': culture, society, and values (85.7%), general information (81.0%), views of global issues (73.8%), government and domestic politics (66.7%), and relations with the United States (66.7%).

Outcomes of the Exchange Program in Iowa

- The percentage of respondents that had moderate or extensive knowledge of the State of Iowa rose from 16.7% before the visit to 95.3% after the visit. Similarly, the percentage of respondents that had moderate or extensive interest in Iowa increased from 32.6% before the visit to 97.7% after the visit.
- 95.3% of foreign exchange visitors were able to gain a better understanding of the State of Iowa and its people and culture.
- 95.3% view the people of Iowa more favorably or much more favorably as a result of their program participation, and 81.4% view the State of Iowa more favorably or much more favorably.
- Only 7.0% of respondents were highly likely to have future contacts or collaborations with individuals and organizations from Iowa before their visit. This figure increased to 81.4% after their visit.
- The most important things that foreign exchange visitors reported learning about Iowa were the education system and the role of agriculture.

Outcomes of the Exchange Program in the United States

- 97.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they gained a better understanding of the United States and its people and culture.
- 81.4% view American people more favorably or much more favorably as a result of their program participation, while 65.1% view the U.S. Government more favorably or much more favorably.

- 73.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the United States government is a trustworthy partner for their countries.

Future Plans as a Result of the Exchange Program in Iowa

- Foreign exchange visitors firmly intend to sustain the personal and professional relationships they formed with Iowans, share their experiences with people in their home countries, and eventually return to Iowa.
- Upon returning to their home countries, foreign exchange visitors plan to share information primarily about aspects of the Iowan people, such as their familial ties, friendliness, and strong sense of community.
- Foreign exchange visitors envision using the knowledge and contacts they made in Iowa to achieve important goals such as establishing joint academic projects with institutions in Iowa and entering into partnerships with Iowan companies/organizations.

Conclusions

Through the focus groups, in-depth interviews, host/resource survey, and foreign exchange visitor survey, T.E. Systems, Inc. (TES) was able to:

- **Ascertain in qualitative and quantitative terms that the State Department's exchange programs are achieving their legislative and programmatic goals.**

DOS exchange programs undoubtedly meet the goals of the Fulbright-Hays Act. Hosts/resources strongly agree that DOS exchange programs promote mutual understanding among Americans and foreigners, help them learn about and better appreciate foreign countries and cultures, and help them learn about the perspectives of foreign exchange visitors. Hosts/resources also believe that the hosting experience allows foreigners to share their values and beliefs with them, promotes peaceful relations between the United States and other countries, and allows them to share U.S. values and beliefs with foreigners. Hosts/resources describe hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors as “enriching,” “eye-opening,” “wonderful and educational,” and a way to meet and make friendships with people “from far-away places.” Many hosts/resources make lifelong friends with foreign exchange visitors. The foreign exchange visitor survey revealed similar results. Foreign exchange visitors were able to gain a better appreciation of the people and culture of Iowa and the United States. At the same time, they were able to share information about their home countries, people, and cultures with their hosts/resources and other Iowans. Moreover, they are intent on maintaining the personal and professional connections they made while in Iowa.

- **Determine the impact and outcomes of the exchange programs as experienced by U.S. hosts/resources in Iowa and report on the overall impact these programs have had on the local communities in Iowa.**

Hosts/resources are significantly changed as a result of their interaction with foreign exchange visitors. Hosts/resources learn about and learn to appreciate foreign countries, foreign cultures, and the perspectives of their visitors. For example, one host/resource believes that, because of DOS exchange programs, she is “so much more aware of how other people live and the influences that cause them to be the way they are.” Hosts/resources also gain a greater appreciation of Iowa and the United States. As hosts’/resources’ friends, families, and colleagues hear about and participate in the hosting experience, they experience

similar changes. DOS exchange programs also contribute to the economic growth and prosperity of Iowa through business partnerships that have formed, foreign exchange visitors spending money in Iowa, and Iowans learning new business techniques and ideas during their interaction with foreign exchange visitors. Furthermore, several organizational, city-to-city, and state-to-state relationships or collaborations have developed between Iowa and foreign countries as a direct result of DOS exchange programs.

- **Understand the reasons and motivations behind the involvement of private U.S. organizations, local communities and Americans with international exchange activities.**

Hosts/resources generally become involved in DOS exchange programs for personal reasons. Hosts/resources' primary personal reason is to broaden their perspective. Hosts/resources also want to improve the overall image of the United States in foreign countries. The primary professional reason is to share professional knowledge and experience with their foreign counterparts. For the most part, hosts/resources began hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors because they were asked by someone (family, friend, colleague, or partner organization). However, they continue hosting and/or interacting because they enjoy the experience, consider it an educational opportunity, enjoy meeting and developing new friendships with foreign exchange visitors, and believe DOS exchange programs promote peace and understanding.

- **Gain more complete and current information about U.S. hosts/resources (host families, professionals/business resources, trainers, and other individuals involved in exchange activities).**

Iowa's hosts/resources are nearly equally split between male and female. In general, they are between the ages of 50 and 74, have lived in Iowa for 10 or more years, are in the field of education or retired, and host and/or interact with foreign exchange visitors for personal reasons, such as to broaden their perspective. Iowa's hosts/resources enjoy the hosting experience. For example, most hosts/resources have been volunteering for at least four years, take part in more than one type of interaction (i.e., host lunches/dinners, provide homestays, and provide tour/site visits or provide appointments/meetings and attend partner organization events, etc.), and are more likely to host and/or interact with foreign exchange visitors in a given year, the longer they have been hosts/resources.

- **Determine the monetary and non-monetary resources that are leveraged by the exchange programs from non-U.S. Department of State entities and resources.**

The ratio of federal (i.e., the U.S. Department of State) to non-federal resources in Iowa is \$1:\$10.30. For every federal (DOS) dollar provided to partner organizations in Iowa to administer DOS exchange programs, Iowan citizens, private organizations, and state and local government agencies contribute, or leverage, \$10.30 in support of these programs.

Overall Conclusions

The State of Iowa possesses a unique combination of three characteristics that make the interaction between foreign exchange visitors and hosts/resources different from what may occur in more urban settings. First, Iowa is home to several prominent educational institutions, including Iowa State University and the University of Iowa. This allows foreign exchange visitors and hosts/resources from a variety of professional and academic disciplines to meet and exchange ideas with one another. Several international educational exchanges and joint research projects have developed as a result of the interaction between Iowans and foreign exchange visitors.

Second, agriculture still plays an important role in Iowan life. Because of this, foreign exchange visitors are able to meet farm owners and representatives of agriculture-based companies such as John Deere and Sukup Manufacturing Company. Foreign exchange visitors and hosts/resources learn about new agricultural techniques, which may then be implemented in their respective home countries. Moreover, many business relationships have developed that have benefited foreign exchange visitors, Iowa's hosts/resources, and their states and/or countries.

Third is Iowa's culture of friendliness and openness. Foreign exchange visitors are continually amazed at how readily hosts/resources and other Iowans accept foreigners and how easy it is to access Iowa's community, business, and government leaders. Iowa's genial culture creates an environment that is truly conducive to the development of personal and professional relationships, the exchange of ideas, and increasing mutual understanding between Iowans and foreign exchange visitors.

The DOS exchange programs included in this assessment benefit foreign exchange visitors, Iowa's hosts/resources, their communities, and ultimately, the United States. Through these programs, foreign exchange visitors obtain professional knowledge that they utilize to initiate positive change in their home countries. Foreign exchange visitors also discard their stereotypes of Americans and learn what "real" Americans are about. For their part, Iowa's hosts/resources and their families, friends, and colleagues learn to appreciate foreign countries, foreign cultures, and the perspectives of their visitors. The interactions between hosts/resources and foreign exchange visitors lead to lifelong friendships, increased mutual understanding and, eventually, more stable and peaceful relations between the United States and foreign countries. In light of such outcomes, T.E. Systems, Inc. (TES) strongly recommends that these DOS exchange programs be continued and, to the highest extent possible, their funding be increased.

Highlights of Host/Resource Feedback

“[DOS exchange programs] create a force that changes the world. It continues to be an enriching, powerful and life-changing experience.... for us as well as for our visitors.”

“I think that the time and skills spent [hosting and/or interacting with foreign exchange visitors] is potentially the most rewarding of any.... activity of which I have been a part. It is unique because it provides the opportunity to talk candidly one-on-one about topics of significance. We are teachers, learners, and ambassadors.”

“It seems to me that ‘citizen diplomacy’ is a good investment of resources for our government [and] much more effective in the long run than the billions of dollars spent on defense systems. The programs in Iowa make very good use of the federal dollars received.”

“The benefits of the [DOS exchange] program[s are that they] impact international peace and understanding in a very cost effective way.”

“Any time we expose our populations to each other, we reduce the probability of the kind of misunderstandings that lead to wars.”

“I have found the experience [of hosting foreign exchange visitors] to be rewarding and educational. The interaction helps to give a better understanding of other cultures and the opportunity to explore differences as well as similarities.”

“[DOS exchange] programs provide a wonderful and educational experience. They should be continued. U.S. citizens are too isolated and have many misconceptions about internationals. [We] need any and all opportunities to clarify our misconceptions about people from other countries.”

“Everyone just learns a lot from [DOS exchange programs], from any point of view. I think people involved with the program just learn to appreciate other countries more than they would without it.”

“[DOS exchange programs are] highly satisfactory and very personally rewarding. We hear from many of our [foreign exchange] visitors after they return to their home country and some correspond with us regularly by e-mail. Some have even returned to Iowa later and visited with us again. Wonderful!”

“Great overall experience by giving host and visitors the chance to understand more about each other, and for visitors to see that Americans are not always as ‘bad’ as the press wants to make us out to be.”

“I love meeting and talking with foreign [exchange] visitors. I learn a lot from them and they learn a lot from me. It is a passion of mine to do more of this in the future.”

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about this outcome assessment, or to receive copies of this Executive Report and the full report, please contact the Office of Policy and Evaluation at (202) 619-5307, by e-mail at pdevaluations@state.gov, or by mail at State Annex 44, 301 4th Street, SW, Room 336, Washington, DC 20547.

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