

Thank you for your interest in the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program sponsored by the Belgian-American Chamber of Commerce. The following will provide you with basic information concerning governance of the program, as well as the requirements for host companies and interns/trainees.

### **Governance**

Our program is governed by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) which authorizes us to issue a Certificate of Eligibility, known as the DS-2019. These DS-2019 forms allow Belgian interns and trainees to receive a J-1 visa and be admitted to the United States as an “Exchange Visitor” under section 101 (A) (15) (J) of the Immigration and Naturalization Act.

### **Company Requirements**

- DOS requires that participating companies be affiliated with our organization for the entire duration of the training period. To participate in the BACC’s Exchange Visitor Program, companies must become members of their local chapter (New York, Atlanta), paying dues covering the full calendar year of the training/internships program. Please contact your local BACC chapter for further membership information.
- The hosting company in the U.S. must be well established and sufficiently structured to provide a valuable training opportunity. Site visits must be conducted if host companies have fewer than 25 employees OR less than 3 million dollars annual revenue and not previously participated successfully in the BACC J-1 visa program. Additionally, ALL host organizations will now need to provide a Dun & Bradstreet number, a Tax Identification Number (EIN), as well as proof of a Workman's Compensation Insurance Policy.
- Since the spirit of both the Intern and Trainee Programs is to enhance the intern/trainee’s techniques, the training/internship should involve assignments that will develop practical knowledge of their chosen field. The nature of the internship/training must correspond to the intern/trainee’s academic or professional background. Please note that government institutions and teaching facilities do not qualify as a host company.
- Another important component is cultural exposure. Although we expect host companies to provide cross-cultural activities, which may include company functions, outings to sporting or cultural events, etc., trainee participation in BACC activities is encouraged when possible.
- Host companies are also asked to provide the intern/trainee with a maintenance allowance to cover living expenses during the training period. The amount paid to the participant by the host company should be comparable to that paid to other individuals having similar education and work experience. In all cases, the host company must pay at least the prevailing minimum wage as determined by the United States Department of Labor. The amount of stipend and any benefits due the intern/trainee must be stated in writing, and a copy must be provided to the intern/trainee.

- The host company also is required to provide interns/trainees, prior to their arrival in the U.S., with an orientation manual which should contain useful information about the intern/traineeship, the company's geographical region including housing, transportation, living expenses, medical centers, schools, libraries, banks, recreation centers, emergency assistance, etc. The BACC will supplement company materials with program regulations and general information on U.S. culture and practices.

### **Participant Requirements**

- Participants may either be in the Intern or Trainee category.
- Participants must be Belgian nationals and at least 18 years old (applies to both programs).
- Participants in the Intern program must be registered full-time at a university, college or superior school and have completed at least two years of study in a relevant field to the training. He can also be graduated within the last 12 months.
- Intern program applicants must also submit a statement from their university, indicating that the internship in the U.S. is either a required or recommended component of the student's degree.
- Trainee program participants must have completed their studies with a university or superior school degree and have at least one year of professional work experience in a field relevant to the training.
- If the applicant does not have a degree, he/she must have at least five years of professional work experience in a field relevant to the training.
- All interns and trainees are required to secure health and accident insurance that should cover them from the time they leave their home country to their return at the end of the internship or training period. Minimum acceptable insurance is as follows:
  - a) Medical and accident insurance up to \$50,000 per injury or illness
  - b) Preparation and transportation of remains to home country of at least \$7,500
  - c) Expenses associated with evacuation in the amount of at least \$10,000
  - d) Deductible is permitted if not in excess of \$500

U.S. regulations also require that all insurance policies must be underwritten by an insurance corporation having one or more of the following ratings:

- A.M. Best rating of "A-" or above;
- Insurance Solvency International, LTF (ISI) rating of "A-" or above;
- Standard & Poor's Claim-paying Ability rating of "A-" or above;
- Weiss Research, Inc. rating of "B+" or above;
- Backed by the full faith and credit of the government of the exchange visitor's home country; or
- Be covered by one of the following: health benefits program offered on a group basis to employees; a federally qualified health maintenance organization; or an eligible competitive medical plan as determined by the Health Care Finance Administration.

The intern/trainee may be insured by the host company's insurance group, a personal insurance policy or through a plan sponsored by the BACC (see enclosed brochure). If a company or intern/trainee uses their own policy, they are required to submit proof of insurance and verify that this coverage meets the minimum requirements established by the DOS as listed above (see Insurance Verification form).

### **How to begin**

The process to obtain a J-1 visa through our program begins once a qualified host company and candidate have agreed on a valid internship/training position.

A company questionnaire must be filled out along with several other documents. (Please contact us for application materials). The intern/trainee will be provided with documents that he/she must fill out in addition to providing his/her résumé and a copy of the first ten pages of his/her passport. Passports must be valid for 6 months after completion of the training period. This applies to all programs. Both company and intern/trainee must complete their respective documents and return them to the BACC with a check for the appropriate amount (based on the program type and duration of training) payable to the BACC (New York Chapter) representing the program's administrative fees as listed below (Either the host company or trainee may pay the fee.):

#### **Intern**

**\$500.00 for 0-6 months**

**\$1,000.00 for 6 months – 1 year**

#### **Trainee**

**\$800.00 for 0-6 months**

**\$1,000.00 for 6 months-1 year**

**\$1,200.00 for 1 year-18 months**

Once the intern/trainee and company have submitted their documents, we will consider the application complete and will begin review. If there is no need for further documentation or clarification and if both company and intern/trainee meet all requirements, the BACC will issue the DS-2019 to the intern/trainee which will allow him/her to obtain the J-1 Visa.

We thank you for your interest in our Exchange Visitor program and look forward to working with you in the future. Please do not hesitate to contact us at [info@belcham.org](mailto:info@belcham.org) if you have any questions.

Tamara Zouboff  
Executive Director