

SCDE Exchange Visitor Program

Standards and Application Procedures for Sponsors to Obtain a No-Objection Letter in South Carolina

I. Application Instructions to Prospective Sponsors

Before starting the application process to receive a no-objection letter from the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), please read the information detailed in this document regarding standards and application procedures. Prospective Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors (EVPS) seeking to place Exchange Visitors (EVs) in South Carolina public school systems must obtain a no-objection letter from the United States Department of State (USDOS) in order to sponsor educators on a J-1 visa. For more information about the federal application process to become an EVPS, please visit the [J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program](#) webpage.

Sponsors who have received approval from the USDOS and are approved in another state must also obtain a no-objection letter from the SCDE to place EVs in South Carolina public school systems.

II. Introduction

Each applicant that seeks to collaborate with a public school system in South Carolina must submit a business plan for review to the Division of Educator, Community, and Federal Resources, Office of Educator Services. The business plan submitted must describe how the applicant will meet all standards, and indicate the evidence that the applicant will maintain to verify compliance with all requirements. As part of the application process, the applicant must provide at least three letters of reference in support of the applicant's business plan.

A review team comprised of staff familiar with budgeting, staffing, certification, classroom instruction, and employee benefits will review each plan for compliance with requirements of the established standards. If the SCDE issues a no-objection letter based on careful review of the submitted business plan, the entity may then collaborate with school systems for placement of EVs in the schools. Once the EVPS begins placing EVs in South Carolina, the entity must provide evidence of compliance with all program standards upon request by the Office of Educator Services.

III. Business Standards

The business plan must describe how the applicant will meet each of the business and contractual standards outlined below, and indicate the evidence that the entity will maintain for verification purposes.

In developing the business plan, an applicant must:

- A. Provide documentation that the entity has obtained a no-objection letter from the United States Department of State (USDOS) to sponsor teachers on an Exchange Visitor Teacher Program.
- B. Document that EVs meet and follow all requirements of the J-1 Cultural Exchange Visa and South Carolina certification requirements. Information regarding the screening requirements may be found in USDOS regulations [\[22 CFR 62.10\(a\)\]](#). In the business plan, the applicant must:
 - 1. Document the process used to determine EV English proficiency.
 - 2. Ensure that the individual EV has a minimum of two years teaching experience in the academic area or grade level to which they will be assigned, and that the EV is employed as a teacher in the home country at the time of selection.
 - 3. Ensure that each individual EV qualifies for a South Carolina International certificate based on an equivalent educational and employment background. EVs cannot be employed in South Carolina school systems without appropriate South Carolina state certification. All EVs must have the United States equivalent of at least a Bachelor's degree and a teacher preparation program.
 - 4. Include a process for maintaining documentation of each EV's cultural exchange activities and for making documentation available at the request of the SCDE.
- C. Demonstrate a process for obtaining the Social Security number for each EV and providing a copy of each EV's Social Security card to the SCDE upon request.
- D. Outline in detail the costs to school systems for placing EVs. The SCDE policy does not allow EVs to be charged placement and/or renewal fees by their J-1 sponsor companies. Instead, these fees are the responsibility of the school districts that will host EVs. The business plan must provide evidence of:
 - 1. Salary for each EV equivalent to the compensation of a similarly positioned US counterpart based on degree and experience level.
 - 2. Benefits for each EV to include costs for Federal Insurance Contributions Act, insurance, sick and annual leave, and travel.
 - 3. Transition and support services as outlined below.
- E. Execute contracts with the employing school systems. The business plan must include a copy of a proposed contractual agreement. Such contracts with school systems must be entered into on an annual basis and must include the following:
 - 1. A procedure for the guaranteed removal of an identified EV at the school system's request.
 - 2. A procedure for securing a replacement EV, if available, if the school system requests a replacement from the EVPS.
 - 3. A policy for the refund of a school system's incurred costs if an EV is removed or if the individual resigns and a suitable replacement is not available or is not requested by the school system.
 - 4. A policy for employment and compensation which ensures that each EV is employed in a full-time position as a classroom teacher and is paid directly by the employing school system.

IV. Service Standards

The business plan must provide documentation of the support and assistance that will be provided to each individual EV. A collaborative partnership with each school system is essential to ensure the successful transition of each EV to the United States and South Carolina. To promote maximum support for the EVs, the applicant must demonstrate in the business plan services for the initial and ongoing support of each EV and employing school system. Services provided must include the following supports, at minimum:

- Pre-arrival and in-country orientations;
- Health, disability, life and repatriation insurance;
- One roundtrip travel fare;
- Arrival pick-up in host country;
- Instructional services and orientation;
- Driving instruction, training and testing, including obtaining a South Carolina driver's license;
- Securing a bank account for the individual;
- Transportation to host community and temporary lodging upon arrival in host community;
- Housing-location assistance;
- Local transportation assistance;
- Arrival and transition services such as local support personnel (local mentor/advisor program);
- Initial and ongoing visitations with every participating teacher and school system;
- Immediate problem-solving assistance, including 24-hour emergency support for the exchange visitor and school system, and follow-up;
- Legal, financial, and tax information for the teachers and school systems;
- Placement collaboration with the employing school system, and staff development assistance with exchange visitors; and
- Professional development programs related to content areas, South Carolina standards document, advanced degrees, professional enrichment, and local board initiatives.

V. Renewal Standards

Effective June 30, 2018, no-objection letters issued by the SCDE will be valid for a period of three years. Beginning with the 2018–19 school year, the SCDE will implement a cyclical review process of EVPS starting with entities that place the highest number of first year EVs in South Carolina public school systems. An EVPS will be notified of its review status by September 30 of the school year in which the review will be conducted. If renewed, the entity's no-objection status will be valid for three years. The SCDE reserves the right to conduct intermittent reviews. Failure by an EVPS to comply with and maintain documentation of the requirements outlined in this document may impact the no-objection status of an EVPS and result in notification to the USDOS.

Conclusion

Once the SCDE issues a no-objection letter the applicant may be eligible to partner with local school systems for EV placement. The Office of Educator Services will maintain a list of entities with current no-objection status and will make the list available to interested school systems and other parties.

For additional information on the Exchange Visitor Program Application Procedures and Standards for Sponsors to Obtain a No-Objection Letter in South Carolina, interested individuals may contact one of the following coordinators of the SCDE Exchange Visitor Program:

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