

Code of Practice or Principles & Criteria

in Rural Exchange Programs ~ October 2002, draft 2

Aim

The international network of Rural Trainee Exchange Programs (REP) aims to promote the "best technical & intercultural experience possible" via an accepted worldwide "Code of Practice" or set of "Principles & Criteria" (C of P or P&C). The C of P or P&C will be incorporated into an evaluation system to measure the standards of any REP seeking to be seen as a "quality" program.

The C of P or P&C are a complete package to be seen as a whole.

The sequence they are listed here does not represent any order of priority.

It is intended that participating REPs will actively seek to "meet & exceed" each Principle.

The C of P or P&C are to be used in conjunction with all relevant laws, regulations & treaties; & aim to complement other initiatives supporting the objective of ensuring "quality" REPs.

Any differences & difficulties of interpretation of the C of P or P&C can be addressed in national standards.

Where needed, these standards will be developed by participating REPs in each country.

The C of P or P&C are designed to ~

- be used to "ensure & promote" good quality rural "work experience - cultural exchange" opportunities are widely available to youth
- to provide a way to evaluate REPs, then
- increase public awareness of the importance of doing this in choosing a program

The C of P or P&C may also be a useful guide to policy makers on these issues, including more effective legislation & government policy as these may impact the operation of exchange programs.

The system used in these C of P or P&C is ~ **Principle, Criteria & Indicators**, laid out as ~

Principle ~ Overall theme

1.1 **Criteria** ~ Detail of issue or concern

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

The agreed **Principles** to measure REP "quality" are ~

1. **Compliance with Laws, Regulations & Treaties**
2. **Rights & Responsibilities**
3. **Screening**
4. **Training Plans**
5. **Intercultural Exchange**
6. **Program Support**
7. **Monitoring & Assessment**

Principle #1: Compliance with Laws, Regulations & Treaties:

Exchange programs shall respect all applicable laws & regulations of the country in which they operate, & any international treaties or agreements to which their country is a signatory.

1.1. REPs shall respect all national & local laws & administrative requirements.

- Interviews with public officials & others, & observation in the field, indicate that the REP is meeting national, state/provincial & local laws & regulations.
- REP can access &/or provide a list of relevant laws & administrative requirements.
- Any REP compliance issues with laws are, or are being, resolved quickly with appropriate government authorities.

1.2. In signatory countries, the provisions of all applicable international treaties or agreements, such as ILO Conventions, shall be respected.

- REP is aware of applicable international conventions & provides guidance so that participants meet the intent of such conventions.
- REP demonstrates willingness to meet requirement, intent & spirit of applicable agreements.

1.3. All applicable & legally prescribed fees, royalties, taxes & other charges shall be paid.

- REP is aware of & up to date in payment of local taxes, fees, etc.

1.4. Program participants shall be protected from physical, sexual & mental abuse or harassment.

- REP has a written harassment policy.
 - Participant agreements address harassment issues & outline procedures to deal with harassment.
 - REP staff has been trained &/or have access to resources that can assist when harassment issues arise.
- 1.5. Fair labor laws & employment practices shall protect program participants.
- REP is aware of appropriate local wage award conditions
 - Wages & other benefits (housing, food) are fair & consistent with (not lower than) prevailing local standards.
- 1.6. Program participants shall be protected from unsafe machinery & work practices.
- Worker safety conditions meet legal requirements.
 - If documented, there is not a higher than normal accident rate.
 - Safety equipment is provided & used.
 - Safe work practices are taught & enforced.
- 1.7. Program participants shall be adequately covered by personal accident & health insurance & workman's compensation that meets &/or exceeds laws &/or industry standards.
- REP documents that adequate personal health & accident as well as Medical Evacuation & Repatriation coverage is effective for entire time in the host country.
 - Worker's compensation is fair & consistent with (not lower than) prevailing local standards.
 - REP has written emergency procedures & staff trained in emergency protocols.
- 1.8. Program participants shall be informed of, & abide by, relevant personal & public security issues & requirements.
- REP effectively makes participants aware of security issues & risks.
 - REP provides guidance to participants in minimizing risks.
 - REP has established procedures in the event of security emergency.
 - REP has staff trained to explain, guide, & help resolve security emergencies.

Principle #2: Rights & Responsibilities:

Program participants rights & responsibilities shall be clearly defined & documented.

- 1.1. Program participants shall have a signed agreement detailing the conditions of their program prior to arrival in the host country.
- REP updates program information at least annually.
 - Program information is available to the general public.
 - Participant agreements are detailed, signed & dated prior to arrival in the host country.
 - At minimum, participant agreements &/or placement advices include detail of:
 - Participant & Host Contact Information
 - Program Start date & length
 - Training Plan
 - Training Allowance (wage) & Work Hours
 - Holidays & Time-Off
 - Room & Food arrangements
 - Appropriate Visa Regulations & Rules
 - Program Policies governing participation in the REP
 - Health & Accident Insurance Coverage requirements & arrangements
- 1.2. Program participants shall have all financial information before arrival in the host country.
- REP updates program information at least annually.
 - Program information is available to the general public.
 - At minimum, participants receive detailed information of:
 - Training Allowance (wage) & conditions
 - Program Deposits, all Fees, & Refund Policy
 - Budget of Total Estimated Expenses of participation in the REP
 - Fees charged & services provided by Partners in home & host country
- 1.3. Hosts shall have a signed agreement detailing the conditions of their participation in the REP.
- Host agreements are detailed, signed & dated prior to participant's arrival.
 - At minimum, Host agreements include detail of:

- Training Plan
 - Program Start & length
 - Participant Contact Information
 - Training Allowance (wage) & Work Hours
 - Holidays & Time-Off
 - Details of Room & Food
 - Worker's Compensation Coverage
 - Appropriate Visa Regulations-Rules
 - Program Policies governing participation in the REP
- 1.4. Exchange Programs shall have written agreements with their partners abroad, at minimum, outlining all fees charged & services provided to both participants & partner programs.
 - 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 regarding all aspects of participation in activities abroad.
 - Written policies exist for conflict resolution for all stakeholders at each stage of the exchange process including realistic & fair appeal mechanisms
 - Conflicts & disagreements are resolved or being addressed in a systematic, timely & legal manner.

Principle #3: Screening:

Hosts & 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 of known effectiveness & good reputation.
 - Agreement exists between partner programs outlining screening process & REP requirements.
 - Staff have appropriate training, knowledge & international experience.
 - Communication between partner programs is clear & prompt
 - Placements have a high success rate
 - Appropriate feedback mechanisms are in place to improve screening process
- 1.2. Screening shall verify & document that each applicant meets or exceeds program qualification requirements.
 - Participant's documentation outlines qualifications, goals, & motivation
 - Interviews & references verify qualifications, goals, & motivation
 - Verification of no criminal record
 - Screener documents qualifications for sponsoring organization
 - Screener verifies that applicant has been presented with, & understands, the conditions, responsibilities, & 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 &/or phone interview verifies that participant can carry on a conversation & 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 & is not an intending immigrant abroad.
 - Interviews & references indicate that the participant is going abroad with appropriate purposes & intends to return home
 - Applicant has not previously applied for immigrant status in another country
- 1.5. Hosts shall be qualified & of good character.
 - Interviews & field visits indicate that the host is appropriate for the REP.
 - Hosts can provide a list of personal, business, & financial references.
 - Any compliance issues &/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 & 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, delegator & problem solver
- 1.6. Programs sponsoring inbound &/or outbound exchange activities shall be qualified, financially well managed & of good character.
- Interviews with public officials, exchange organizations, & past participants indicate that the Organization/Individual is qualified & of good character.
 - Interviews with public officials, exchange organizations, & past participants indicate that the Organization/Individual is meeting &/or shows a willingness to incorporate this C of P or P & C into their operating procedures.
 - Staff have documented exchange experience
 - Fees for services provided are reasonable & consistent with local standards.
 - Copies of all agreements with participants are provided partner program.
 - Organization/Individual participates in local, national, &/or international exchange organization conferences & activities.

Principle #4: Training Plans:

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

Training Plans:

- Set a framework for training in the minds of hosts & trainees.
 - Need to be flexible & 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 & 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 & evaluated
 - Training Plan matches Trainee Placement Request
 - Trainee & Host have a copy of Training Plan
 - Individual Training Plans are on file with the REP
- 1.2. Trainees shall develop specific learning objectives for their program.
- Learning Objectives are documented, signed & dated by both host & trainee.
 - Host, Trainee, & REP each have copy of Learning Objectives.
- 1.3. Appropriate mechanisms shall be employed to document progress & overall achievement of learning objectives.
- Interviews & on-site observations with participants & hosts indicate that learning objectives are being accomplished.
 - Participants document their program in writing.
 - REP & Host maintain copies of documents.
 - A combination of the following is used & documented
 - Initial adjustment survey
 - Individual learning objectives
 - Competency statements
 - Periodic progress reviews
 - Site visits
 - Phone contact
 - REP sponsored gatherings &/or workshops
 - End of program evaluations

Principle #5: Intercultural Exchange:

Program participants shall be actively involved in intercultural activities while on their program abroad.

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

Principle #6: Program Support:

REP shall provide the support necessary to assure optimal learning & exchange opportunities for participants.

- 1.1. Programs shall employ full time, qualified staff
 - Staff development is on going.
 - Staff have international exchange &/or work experience
 - Interviews & field observations indicate that participants, hosts, & partner organizations are satisfied with the quality of services & support provided.
- 1.2. REP shall operate an efficient business.
 - Staff is competent in problem solving & conflict resolution skills
 - Clear, timely & culturally appropriate communication
 - Timely notification to partners & participants in regard to:
 - Travel arrangements: departures & arrivals
 - Program changes: Policy & fees
 - Emergencies & Illnesses
 - Unexpected situations that may effect participants or program quality
 - Financial resources are sufficient to meet obligations & provide services promised.
 - Procedural manual is available & up-to-date
 - Promotional & descriptive information is clear, easily accessible, & up-to-date.
 - Internal evaluations are documented & used effectively for program development.
- 1.3. Programs shall have documented emergency procedures & appropriate mechanisms in place in event of concerns or emergencies
 - Emergency procedures are documented
 - Staff is trained in emergency & first-response procedures
 - Participants & 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 & relevant cultural materials
 - Emergency Telephone & Contact Information
 - Insurance Verification & Policy Information
 - Information on clothing & 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 & Cultural Adaptation
- Rights & Responsibilities
- Living & working in the host country
- Security issues, risks, & measures to minimize risks
- Post Arrival support is adequate to monitor & assure participants & hosts have a successful & rewarding experience.
 - Site Visits
 - Phone Contact
 - Reports
 - Taxes
 - Problem Solving & 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 & program partners
 - Alumni groups formed
 - Alumni newsletters/website/retreats

Principle #7: Monitoring & Assessment:

Monitoring & evaluation shall be conducted to assess the quality of participants training & intercultural experience; the effectiveness of the exchange program; & the impact of the exchange on participants.

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