

As J-1 Host Organizations, Businesses Can Hire Qualified Foreign STEM Students, Graduates

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The Biden-Harris Administration has taken steps to enhance the ability of U.S. STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) businesses to hire qualified foreign students and graduates as exchange visitors. Interested STEM businesses could become Host Organizations for J-1 Visa Exchange Visitors.

In a statement released by the White House, STEM talent is identified as “critical to the prosperity, security, and health of the Nation.” The ability of the U.S. to attract global talent in the past, [according to the announcement](#), “has spurred path-breaking innovation” leading to new jobs, new industries, and new opportunities for Americans. American businesses are looking for ways to find more STEM talent.

The Early Career STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Research Initiative allows STEM businesses to act as hosts to exchange visitors by proactively reaching out to recruit foreign STEM graduates for various temporary programs, including internships and training. These exchange programs are meant to bring emerging leaders to the United States to make lasting international connections and to transform U.S. operations through international exchange.

STEM employers [interested in becoming a J-1 Host Organization](#) can contact BridgeUSA, a program within the Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. BridgeUSA reviews the opportunity and connects the employer/host organization with an appropriate approved J sponsor. The [list of sponsors includes](#) exchange visitor groups, universities, and other business groups. The J sponsor recruits and screens candidates for the employer/host. Once the STEM employer/host identifies the best candidate match, the J sponsor issues the necessary documents to the candidate so that the STEM graduate can apply for a J visa at a U.S. consulate abroad. The exchange program can be fully funded by the employer/host organization, or the funding can be hybrid in nature, with the STEM graduate paying some of the funding cost. As with other J programs, [some participants in the program will become subject to the two-year home residence requirement](#).

The Early Career STEM Research Initiative is part of the Biden administration’s plan to encourage STEM graduates to join the U.S. economy. Other initiatives have included adding new degree fields to the STEM list, making STEM students in J-1 status eligible for 36 months of OPT (instead of 18), and [broadening eligibility for O visas and National Interest Waivers](#) for those in STEM fields.

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