



friendship force  
INTERNATIONAL

## 2017/18 Policies and Guidelines for Clubs and Exchanges

As approved by the FFI Board of Directors October 2016

The policies and guidelines contained in this document have been approved by the FFI Board of Directors to govern all Friendship Force exchange activity. Additional information and instruction can be found on the FFI website ([www.thefriendshipforce.org](http://www.thefriendshipforce.org)) or by contacting the FFI staff at [support@friendshipforce.org](mailto:support@friendshipforce.org) (Note: All fees are quoted in US dollars.)

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## Part A: Policies

### I. Friendship Force Clubs

#### a. Organization

Friendship Force clubs are chartered by Friendship Force International (FFI) for the purpose of promoting the Friendship Force mission in a local community or region by organizing groups to welcome individuals from other parts of the world (host inbound) and participate in traveling to visit others (travel outbound). This process of hosting and traveling are called “exchanges.” Each club is an independent organization. While the actual organizational structure may vary according to the traditions and legal requirements of a region, all clubs are expected to have written bylaws<sup>1</sup> and be based on volunteer leadership that is selected by the club. Clubs are expected to be familiar with and follow the FFI club and exchange policies, as well as the policies on appropriate use of the logo and other registered materials.

#### b. Club Affiliation Fees and Charter Renewal

For a club to remain active, a Charter Renewal Form will need to be submitted annually to FFI that includes the current club officers that acknowledge and accept current FFI policies. The annual club affiliation fee, preferably a single payment by the club for all club members, is due with the charter renewal form.

The Charter Renewal Form for the current year should be sent to FFI no later than January 15, along with the club affiliation fee of US \$15 per individual. This should be based on membership numbers at the end of December for the preceding year.

Failure to comply will result in the denial of exchange assignments for the following assignment cycle.

#### c. Activities

In addition to conducting regular inbound and outbound exchanges, Friendship Force clubs are encouraged to promote the Friendship Force mission in their regions and to plan a wide range of local activities for their members to keep them building friendships throughout the year. This includes social events for club members as well as programs that link the membership with other international activity in the community.

In addition to regular exchanges and local activities, clubs may also participate with other clubs in supplemental exchange activity; however, these should be scheduled only after the official international exchanges for the year have been confirmed.

#### d. Membership

A member of Friendship Force is defined as a person that pays the annual affiliation fee, and is

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<sup>1</sup> Bylaws are in your organization’s operating manual. They define:

- Size of the board and how it will function
- Roles and duties of club officers
- Rules and procedures for holding meetings, electing and/or appointing officers
- Other essential club governance matters

familiar with and adheres to the mission and philosophy of Friendship Force International. Clubs may set further criteria for club membership according to their bylaws.

## **II. Friendship Force Exchange Programs**

A Friendship Force exchange program is a cultural experience between travelers (ambassadors) and hosts. The hosts will introduce the ambassadors to their culture through organized activities and sightseeing tours, but especially through home hosting and sharing of everyday experiences. Friendship Force exchange programs are assigned each year by FFI based on a variety of factors, including club history, preference, and availability of counterpart clubs. It is intended that the hosting capacity for each assigned exchange week be fulfilled.

Each exchange operates under the leadership of volunteer exchange directors appointed by the clubs and in accordance with the Exchange Policies set by Friendship Force International. Acceptance as an ambassador on an exchange program is by application to an exchange director. The exchange director is responsible for recruiting and preparing ambassadors and hosts for the exchange program experience.

Any person under the age of 18 who is not accompanied by a parent must have a designated guardian during any Friendship Force experience.

### **a. International Club-to-Club Exchanges**

An international club-to-club exchange is a one-week (5-7 nights) program between clubs from different countries.

### **b. Domestic Club-to-Club Exchanges**

Domestic club-to-club exchanges are authorized up to 7 nights, and are only between clubs within a country and, therefore, are not available in countries where there is only one club. They may not be conducted across a national border to a club in a neighboring country. These should be scheduled after clubs have confirmed their regular international exchanges for the coming year.

### **c. EU and Schengen Exchanges**

EU and Schengen exchanges are for clubs located in the combined territories of the European Union (EU) and of the Schengen area and are limited to four nights. Clubs are not authorized to plan multiple club visits as part of the same exchange. Clubs wishing to have multiple hosting opportunities on one exchange may do so by requesting a two-week regular international club-to-club exchange. These should be scheduled after clubs have confirmed their regular international exchanges for the coming year.

### **d. Stopover Exchange**

A stopover exchange is a 1-4 night homestay provided by a host club to an exchange delegation transiting the area while traveling to or from a regularly scheduled international club-to-club exchange.

### **e. Global Exchanges**

Global exchanges are designed to attract ambassadors from anywhere in the world. They will often have a specific theme or a focus on cultural understanding. Global exchange durations can vary, and may not always include home-hosting.

If any of the above type of exchanges are organized outside of the regular FFI exchange planning cycle or process, all participating clubs must register the exchange with FFI prior to departure. Failing to report and comply with these policies will result in all clubs involved being denied exchange assignments for the following exchange cycle.

### III. Exchange Fees

#### a. 2017 FFI Ambassador Fee Schedule

Exchange Type	FFI Fees (USD)
International Club-to-Club Exchanges*	\$165 per week for exchanges from the USA
	\$140 per week for exchanges from all other countries
Domestic Club-to-Club Exchanges**	\$10 per night
EU and Schengen Exchanges	\$10 per night
Stopover Exchange	\$20 per night
Global/Special Exchanges	Fee varies

\*Domestic ambassadors from within the host country applying to participate on an international club-to-club exchange must pay according to the international club-to-club FFI fee.

\*\*International ambassadors from outside the host country applying to a domestic club-to-club exchange must pay according to the international club-to-club FFI fee.

#### b. FFI Ambassador Exchange Director Discount (NEW)

The Ambassador ED will receive a pro-rated discount of the FFI Fee if 75% or more of the hosting capacity is reached. For the ED who recruits ambassadors that fill 75% or more of the hosting capacity, FFI prorates the ED discount according to the following schedule:

- 100% of hosting capacity: ED receives a 100% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee
- 95% of hosting capacity: ED receives a 95% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee
- 90% of hosting capacity: ED receives a 90% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee
- 85% of hosting capacity: ED receives an 85% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee
- 80% of hosting capacity: ED receives an 80% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee
- 75% of hosting capacity: ED receives a 75% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee

The FFI Ambassador Exchange Director Discount is contingent upon compliance with the **Fill-the-Seat** policy outlined below.

#### c. Fill-the-Seat Policy

If an exchange is not full at 100 days prior to departure, the exchange must be listed on the FFI online exchange catalog. A full exchange is one in which the number of ambassadors matches the hosting capacity of the host club. For multi-club exchanges, the hosting capacity of the smaller club will determine the overall

hosting capacity. Domestic and EU and Schengen exchanges are excluded from this policy.

**d. Host Club Program Fee:**

- i. To pay the cost of the group activities, host clubs will receive a Host Club Program Fee of \$150USD per ambassador (including the ED) for all standard 5-7 night international club-to-club exchanges. The fee can be used to pay for welcome and farewell parties/dinners, and for other group activities that provide the ambassadors with an excellent cultural orientation to the host city and region. The fee can also be used, at the host club's discretion, to enable the hosts to participate in these activities. The costs of activities outside the home (those not planned by the host club) should be paid by the ambassadors. Following the exchange, if requested, the Host ED will present a post-exchange accounting of the actual expenses to FFI.
- ii. The Host Club Program budget should be presented to the Ambassador ED and FFI prior to the exchange with sufficient time for the Ambassador ED to market the exchange.
- iii. The Host Club Program Fee should not cover the cost of transporting ambassadors from their arrival site to the host community and returning them to their departure sites or for any tour arrangements prior to or following the exchange week. If the Host ED is asked by the Ambassador ED to assist in these arrangements, the costs should be agreed to in advance and should be designated "transfer and/or tour costs." Transfer and tour costs are not considered part of the Host Club Program Fee, and should be treated separately with payment and accounting details arranged between the Ambassador and Host EDs.
- iv. For some clubs the basic Host Club Program Fee may be an amount over the recommended \$150 fee and approved by FFI. This is due to the cost of standard tours in their city and the transportation necessary to provide for the ambassadors during the exchange. The Ambassador ED must be notified of this situation early in the exchange planning process, be provided with a detailed breakdown of all costs over the recommended \$150, and agree to the amended proposed Host Club Program Fee.
- v. Host Club Program Fees are normally transferred directly from the ambassador club to the host club in a mutually acceptable manner, unless otherwise authorized by FFI. The Host Club Program Fee is non-refundable if an ambassador cancels from the exchange less than 60 days prior to departure and the fee must therefore be transferred to the host club together with the fees for the participating ambassadors. In the event that the ambassador club fails to pay for all confirmed ambassadors, FFI will advance the fees to the host club and collect them from the ambassador club.
- vi. For all other exchange types and shorter stays, the Host Club Program Fee will be set on a case-by-case basis, to be worked out and agreed upon by the Ambassador and Host EDs.

## **IV. Exchange Cancellation**

**a. Ambassador Cancellation**

If an ambassador cancels more than 60 days before departure, FFI will refund all FFI Ambassador Program Fees and Host Club Program Fees. There is no refund of the FFI Ambassador Program Fees or Host Club Program Fees if an ambassador cancels less than 60 days before the exchange. Ambassadors are encouraged to file for a refund through their travel insurance; FFI will assist ambassadors with this process and provide any necessary documentation.

**b. FFI Cancellation**

FFI reserves the right to cancel an exchange if it believes that conducting the exchange could lead to

unnecessary risk or danger on the part of the ambassadors. In some cases cancellation may be due to the failure of the host club to provide an adequate program for the visiting ambassadors. In such cases, FFI will work with the Ambassador ED to develop a suitable alternative itinerary for the ambassador delegation. In addition, if FFI cancels any exchange, all FFI Ambassador Program Fees and Host Club Program Fees will be fully refunded to the ambassadors.

## **V. Travel Insurance**

All Friendship Force ambassadors are required to secure adequate travel and medical insurance to cover emergencies during their exchanges. This requirement can be fulfilled in one of the following ways:

- a) through the ambassador's existing insurance policy if it covers international travel,
- b) through the policy offered by FFI on our website, or
- c) by purchasing a separate travel insurance package.

The Ambassador Application and Agreement form includes the following statement: "I hereby agree to secure adequate travel and medical insurance for the duration of the exchange." At the discretion of the ED, an insurance waiver form may be signed by an ambassador and notarized for those who choose not to secure insurance.

## **VI. Payment Procedures**

All transactions must include full information to identify both the source (club name or exchange name) and the purpose (club fees, Ambassador Program Fees, etc.) of the payment.

Payments must be made in US dollars (USD) and can be made one of four ways:

### **A. Check**

Payment may be made by check on a US account in US dollars and sent to the following mailing address:

Friendship Force International  
260 Peachtree Street NW  
Suite 402  
Atlanta, GA 30303 USA

### **B. Wire Transfer**

Bank wire transfers may also be used. Contact your FFI Regional Support Manager for further information if you would like to make a wire transfer.

### **C. Credit Card**

Payment may be made by credit card (Visa, MasterCard or American Express) on the FFI website. Please note an extra fee of 3% applies to payments made by credit card. This fee corresponds to bank charges for credit card transactions. This 3% processing fee applies to credit card payments of fees related to participation in all types of exchanges as well as participation in FFI World

Conferences, but does not apply to credit card payments for Legacy Fund donations or Club Affiliation fees. *(Note: Clubs in the USA can help to save FFI the 3% credit card charge by paying their club affiliation fee by check.)*

D. Regional Banking Arrangements

In Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, separate banking arrangements have been made, and payments should be made according to the procedures established by FFI for these countries. Please check with your FFI Regional Support Manager for details.

## VII. Exchange Evaluation

Within 30 days of the completion of the exchange, each Ambassador ED and Host ED shall complete and send to FFI a final Exchange Evaluation using a form provided by FFI. If there are substantial negative comments, FFI will contact the club(s) involved and will work with them to implement corrective action.

The results of the evaluation may be taken into account by FFI in determining future assignments for the club. Clubs with consistently excellent exchanges will be given priority in their choice of future exchanges. On the other hand, clubs with consistently poor evaluations will be closely monitored by FFI. If the issues are not resolved, FFI may suspend exchange activity until such time as the club can demonstrate its ability to carry out Friendship Force exchanges.

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## **Part B: Exchange Guidelines**

### **I. Exchange Monitoring and Oversight**

To ensure that Friendship Force exchanges provide high quality cultural experiences for all ambassadors and hosts, FFI will monitor each exchange's planning and recruiting. This includes:

- (a) the timely appointment of all EDs and selection of exchange dates,
- (b) the timely confirmation of a final itinerary and price,
- (c) recruitment of qualified ambassadors and hosts, and
- (d) payment of fees according to FFI guidelines.

Eight and six months prior to the exchange Ambassador EDs will be asked to submit to FFI current information regarding exchange details, recruiting progress, names and ages of the prospective ambassadors, and the status of the payment of fees.

This information can be useful in determining if the exchange is progressing properly or if additional support is needed from the ambassador club, other clubs and leaders in the region, or from FFI. In most cases, early intervention for an exchange experiencing difficulty can lead to a successful exchange.

If, however, it is determined that the ambassador recruiting is not satisfactory, FFI may cancel or reschedule the exchange and reassign the hosting assignment to another club from the waiting list that is maintained by FFI.

If at any time you have any questions you can always call the FFI head office in Atlanta at US +404 522-9490 and ask to speak with a Regional Support Manager. Or visit our website at [www.friendshipforce.org](http://www.friendshipforce.org)

### **II. Earned Seat for the Ambassador Exchange Director**

It is appropriate for an Ambassador ED to "earn" part or all of the basic cost of the Friendship Force exchange (including supplemental exchanges) that he or she is leading. Providing some or all of the exchange cost as an "earned seat" recognizes the responsibility associated with leading an exchange and can also motivate the ED to recruit a full exchange. Each club should adopt a written policy regarding the "earned seat." This policy should be publicized within the club so that all members are aware of the policy. EDs should price their exchanges in accordance with the club policy. Any member of one club that joins another club's exchange will be expected to accept the governing policy of the Ambassador ED's club. An "earned seat" can include some or all of the following:

- (a) travel costs to and from the host community,
- (b) travel and tour costs that are a required part of the exchange,
- (c) Host Club Program Fees.

### **III. Ambassador Exchange Committee Fee**

Up to \$25 per person may be added to the cost of an exchange to be retained by the ambassador exchange

committee. These fees cover the costs of administering the exchange at the local level and are collected and retained by the club, not by FFI. These fees can be non-refundable if the ambassador fails to participate in the exchange or the exchange is cancelled, please refer to Ambassador ED for details.

## **IV. Exchange Directors**

Exchange Directors (EDs) provide the leadership required for successful exchanges. The EDs for club exchanges are selected by the local club and report to FFI for exchange planning purposes. EDs for specialized exchanges are appointed by the clubs or by FFI. An Exchange Director Manual is provided by FFI to guide the planning and leading of the exchange. Clubs should take the appointment process very seriously, as the success of the exchange depends primarily on the quality of exchange leadership. Preference should be given to individuals with proven leadership ability and prior experience in exchange planning.

### Responsibilities of the Exchange Directors

- i. Both the Ambassador and Host Exchange Director should work with the FFI staff to list the exchange on the FFI online exchange catalog. The Ambassador ED should request advertisement of an exchange on the website as soon as there is any awareness the club(s) cannot fill the exchange with their own membership.
- ii. The Ambassador Exchange Director must receive and respond to inquiries and applications that come from the online catalog.
- iii. The Ambassador Exchange Director should accept or reject applicants according to his/her own judgment.
- iv. The Ambassador Exchange Director is not required to fill every space, only to make an effort toward that end by listing the exchange on the FFI website, as in accordance to the Fill the Seat policy.
- v. Should an Ambassador or Host Exchange Director decide to cancel the exchange, he or she is free to do so but must contact FFI first, before cancelling the exchange on his/her own. An acceptable reason for an Ambassador ED to cancel would be a safety concern. Insufficient ambassadors or the inability to recruit an ED are not acceptable. These issues should be reported to the Regional Support Manager as soon as possible so that they can attempt to reassign the exchange to another club.

## **V. Ambassadors and Hosts**

### **a. Recruitment Deadline and Forms**

A list of ambassadors should be sent to the host club(s) and FFI 60 days before the exchange departs. The Ambassador and Host Application and Agreement forms must be completed and signed by each ambassador and host. The respective EDs retain these forms.

### **b. Recruitment and Selection:**

The Ambassador ED should recruit as many qualified applicants as can be accommodated by the host club(s), while maintaining a waiting list. The ambassador recruitment goal is the maximum number the host club can

host.

EDs should look both within the club membership and to the broader community for the most qualified ambassadors and hosts. FFI provides an online exchange catalog on [thefriendshipforce.org](http://thefriendshipforce.org) where EDs can publicize their exchange openings if they choose. The outbound ED should request advertisement of an exchange on the website as soon as there is any awareness the club(s) cannot fill the exchange with their own membership. Many regions also offer regional recruitment tools.

Prior membership in a club should not be a requirement to apply for an exchange, but clubs may, if they choose, ask new participants to become a club member when joining their first exchange. Care should be taken to screen all applicants and to accept only those who understand the goals of the organization and who fit the health and mobility requirements of the exchange. Clubs should avoid a “sign-up” process that suggests to applicants that acceptance on exchanges is automatic.

## **VI. Filling an Exchange**

Exchange Directors are encouraged to set definite dates and confirm program activities early in their planning process well ahead of the 100 days deadline of the Fill-the-Seat policy. Applicants will be more likely to commit when they can see an itinerary of activities.

Ambassador Exchange Directors are encouraged to promote their exchange regionally and are welcome to give top priority to applicants from their own region if they choose. Contact your field representative or Regional Support Manager for more information.

### **a. Accepting Ambassadors from Other Communities**

The increased promotion of exchanges via email and the online catalog, along with travel flexibility, make it possible for ambassadors from anywhere in the world to join an exchange. As a result, Ambassador EDs are increasingly looking outside their own communities for qualified applicants to fill their exchange. Since these candidates cannot attend workshops or meet face-to-face with the ED, other techniques are needed to ensure that only qualified candidates are accepted on the exchange. EDs wishing to recruit ambassadors from outside their community should follow these guidelines:

The current ambassador application includes the following statement: "In the event the applicant is not able to meet in person with the Exchange Director, you will be asked to provide references and other supporting documentation." This enables the ED to request references as needed to support the application.

The ED should correspond with the applicant via email and also speak with him/her on the phone, or via Skype. If the applicant is in a different country, the ED may request assistance from FFI in making direct contact to interview the applicant. The ED should have several conversations or emails with the candidate, including a detailed discussion regarding the exchange and why the candidate is interested in participating. Suggested interview guidelines are provided on the FFI website in the Club Resources section, under “Documents.”

If, after discussing the exchange with the applicant, the ED wants to consider him/her for the exchange, the ED should obtain at least one written reference for the applicant. This should be from the applicant’s Friendship Force club president, other suitable club reference, or previous Exchange Director. Clubs that are asked to

provide references must be honest in responding to the ED's questions. The applicant may also be asked to provide one or more non-Friendship Force references who may be contacted by the ED. In the case of an applicant who is not currently a member of a Friendship Force club, at least two references should be obtained. If a non-club member lives in a community that has a club, they may also be asked to meet in person with a leader of the local club.

The ED should provide applicants from outside his/her community with all of the same material that is provided the local applicants at the exchange participation workshops. To facilitate this process and to provide an additional means for pre-exchange communication, the ED may want to establish an interactive email, online or social media forum (such as Facebook) with all the ambassadors participating in the exchange.

## **VII. Health and Mobility**

Friendship Force exchanges are intended to be inclusive, welcoming people of all ages and backgrounds to participate. This includes children, adolescents, elderly participants and those with disabilities. However, applicants with special requirements can be accepted only if the Host ED agrees in advance that the host club can meet those special requirements. This is to protect the safety and comfort of the ambassador as well as the host club.

It is important to recognize that the level of physical activity required for a Friendship Force exchange according to the hosting situation as well as the program itinerary.

Therefore, the Ambassador ED shall abide by the following guidelines to ensure that he/she accepts only those candidates who can meet the physical requirements of the exchange. If an ED has any questions regarding these policies, he/she should discuss them with the appropriate FFI staff for clarification and guidance.

The Host ED shall provide the Ambassador ED information describing the level of physical activity that will be required during the exchange, including the amount of walking as well as the living conditions and type of transportation that will be used during the exchange. (FFI provides a checklist on our website to assist in this process.)

The Ambassador ED will provide this information to the ambassador applicants in writing prior to their acceptance on the exchange. The ED shall consider each applicant's ability to perform the physical requirements of the exchange when deciding whether or not to accept that applicant on the exchange.

If the Ambassador ED wants to accept an applicant who cannot meet the physical requirements or who has special needs, the Ambassador ED must first consult with the Host ED. If the Host ED agrees that the host club can accommodate that applicant safely and comfortably, then the Ambassador ED may accept the applicant.

The Ambassador ED shall remind all applicants to take seriously the questions on the ambassador application regarding their health. These questions are for their own safety and must be completed honestly. If an ED discovers that an ambassador did not provide full and truthful information, that person may be removed from the exchange at his/her own expense.

Because exchanges have differing physical requirements, the Ambassador ED shall not automatically accept club members for an exchange. Only applicants who are able to demonstrate to the ED their ability to fulfill the physical requirements of the exchange shall be accepted.

If the Ambassador ED has concerns regarding an applicant's ability to fulfill the physical requirements of an exchange, he or she may ask the applicant to provide references pertaining to the applicant's physical abilities. At the discretion of the ED, this could include a requirement to provide a doctor's statement supporting the applicant's ability to carry out the requirements of the exchange. In such cases, the ED should provide the doctor an accurate statement regarding the type of activities and the expected living conditions on the exchange. NOTE: This provision is to protect the health and safety of the ambassador applicant.

**Host Capabilities:** While the question of physical activity applies primarily to the ambassador applicants, Host EDs shall also ensure that only qualified hosts are selected for the exchange. Since hosts are often expected to participate in various exchange activities, as well as provide a variety of individual activities for the ambassadors, only those capable of performing these activities shall be selected as hosts. Furthermore, if the host is required to drive the ambassador during the exchange it is essential that only those who are fully qualified to carry out this responsibility are accepted. Host clubs are encouraged to use day hosts and other support as needed to assist hosts who may have limitations.

## **VIII. Visas**

Clubs in some countries encounter difficulties obtaining visas for their outbound exchanges. As a result, the regular FFI planning procedures may need to be modified for their exchanges. It is important for the host club to recognize that these difficult situations are often the ones where the Friendship Force mission is most needed. Therefore, host clubs are encouraged to accept exchanges with clubs from these countries and to work with FFI and the ambassador club to carry out the exchange.

It is the responsibility of the Ambassador Exchange Director to determine what visas will be required, if any, to travel to the host club(s). This should be done as soon as the exchange is assigned. If there is the expectation that obtaining visas will be a problem, the following steps should be followed:

The Ambassador ED should meet with Embassy or Consular officials of the host country as soon as possible to determine what steps are required to apply for visas.

FFI and the host clubs should respond promptly to any requests for documentation regarding the Friendship Force experience. However, the ambassador club should not expect that individual host families will be able to issue private invitations that include guarantees of financial support.

The Ambassador ED should thoroughly screen all applicants for the exchange and reject any who may be a risk for not returning home. This is very important because any violations will make it difficult or impossible for future Friendship Force ambassadors to receive visas for that country.

The Ambassador ED should ensure that all qualified applicants apply for their visa interview as soon as possible in order to avoid last-minute decisions.

Host clubs should recognize that visa decisions are beyond the control of the ambassador club and that often the decision is made at the last minute. In such situations, the host club is encouraged to keep open the possibility of hosting the exchange but to avoid making firm commitments until the visas have been issued. In some cases this may mean waiting until just before the exchange to make the final hosting and program arrangements.