

# EVALUATION SUMMARY



## Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Office of Policy and Evaluation

### Impact of International Exchange Programs in Iowa

*The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the overall impact that U.S. Department of State international exchange programs have on foreign exchange visitor participants, and on U.S. communities and American volunteers who host or meet with these visitors. The evaluation focused primarily on the International Visitor Leadership Program, and the Community Connections, Sister Cities and Partners of the Americas Programs conducted in the State of Iowa.*

#### Key Findings

##### ➤ Impact on the Individual Host/Resource

- 88% of U.S. host/resource respondents believe hosting foreign exchange visitors allows them to develop international friendships and share U.S. values and beliefs with foreigners.
- 87% of respondents reported having *moderate or extensive* knowledge about the culture and country of the foreign exchange visitor(s) *after* the hosting experience, compared to 28% *before* the experience.

##### ➤ Impact on the Hosts'/Resources' Family, Friends, Colleagues

- 94% of respondents shared information about their hosting experience with family, friends and/or colleagues.
- 89% believe hosting allows them and their family to help improve the image of the United States in foreign countries.

##### ➤ Developing and Sustaining International Relationships

- 96% reported the hosting experience helps them learn about and better appreciate foreign countries and cultures.
- 76% of all respondents have maintained contact with at least one foreign exchange visitor they hosted.

##### ➤ Impact on Individual Foreign Exchange Visitor

- Foreign exchange visitor respondents reported gaining a better understanding of the United States and its people and culture (98%), and the State of Iowa and its people and culture (95%), as a result of their program participation.
- 81% of respondents reported they were *highly likely* to have future contacts/collaborations with individuals/organizations from Iowa *after* their visit, compared to just 7% *before* their visit to Iowa.

##### ➤ Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy and Leveraging of U.S. Department of State Funding

- 99% of respondents believe hosting promotes mutual understanding among Americans and foreigners.
- For every State Department dollar allocated in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 in support of these programs, an additional \$10.30 was leverage by Iowan citizens, private organizations, and state and local government agencies in monetary and in-kind contributions. *This \$1.00 to \$10.30 ratio is the most conservative baseline calculation.*

**Project Information:** T.E. Systems, Inc. (TES) of Falls Church, Virginia conducted the evaluation in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State and several grantee partner organizations in Iowa. From July 2004 to December 2004, a survey was completed by 489 of 1,316 volunteer hosts/resources in Iowa, resulting in a 37% response rate. In addition, a survey was completed by 43 of 54 foreign exchange visitors, resulting in an 80% response rate. TES also conducted 27 interviews with program administrators and hosts/resources and five focus groups with hosts/resources.

**Program Information:** U.S. Department of State international exchange programs bring together foreign exchange visitors and Americans for opportunities to exchange information, ideas, knowledge, practices and training experiences. These exchanges also provide opportunities for visitors to spend time in the homes of American hosts to enhance their personal and cultural experiences. These exchanges are designed to promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people of other countries. More program information is available at <http://exchanges.state.gov>.

**Contact Information:** For more information, or to request a copy of the 263-page, two-volume report, please contact the Office of Policy and Evaluation at (202) 453-8808, by mail at 301 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, Room 336, Washington, DC 20547, or by email at [pdevaluations@state.gov](mailto:pdevaluations@state.gov). Results of other program evaluations are available at <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/evaluations>.