The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) creates lasting connections between the United States and countries of the world through people-to-people exchange programs to advance U.S. foreign policy. ECA builds networks through academic, professional, youth, sports, cultural, and private exchanges.

Exchange programs connect, engage, and inspire people. Barriers that often divide us, like politics, language, ethnicity, religion, and geography, break down. Participants develop new skills, explore ways to create positive change in their communities, and establish the trust needed for a more secure, prosperous, democratic and just world.

ECA advances twenty-first century priorities, including entrepreneurship, education, climate change, alternatives to violent extremism, and democratic values.

600,000+ hours volunteered each year by Americans for exchange programs

1940
Dr. Aurelio Espinosa Polít, S.J.
Ecuadorian writer, and professor was the first DoS-sponsored exchange participant

1961
Fulbright-Hays Act solidified the role of the U.S. government in implementing exchange programs

55,000+ participants are on exchange programs funded by the State Department annually

395 heads of foreign governments

88 Pulitzer Prize winners

77 Nobel Prize winners

74 members of the U.S. Congress

31 heads of international organizations

12 ambassadors to the United Nations

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50 states host ECA participants, all of whom support the local economy during their stay

10,000+ American exchange participants travel abroad each year

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