



# International Visitor Leadership Program Outcome Assessment

## Executive Summary

January 2006

The Office of Policy and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) contracted with ORC Macro to conduct an independent evaluation of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). This evaluation focused on the outcomes of the IVLP among alumni from Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine who participated in the program during the period from 1996 through 2001. The objective of the outcome assessment was to determine the impact of the IVLP exchange experience on the professional lives of alumni, their affiliated organizations and home countries, and to ascertain—in quantitative and qualitative terms—the effectiveness of the program in achieving its legislative mandate of increasing mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.

### ***Overall Assessment of the International Visitor Leadership Program***

The International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) is a professional exchange program of several weeks that yields long-lasting effects in terms of improving foreign participants' perceptions of the United States and the American people, increasing participants' understanding of democratic values and principles, and promoting mutual understanding between participants and their U.S. counterparts. These conclusions are supported by the results of this assessment.

IVLP alumni respondents reported that the program increased their understanding of the United States to a great or moderate extent:

- 88% - United States, in general
- 86% - Americans, in general
- 76% - U.S. government institutions
- 74% - Daily life in the United States
- 71% - U.S. values and culture

97% of IVLP alumni respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the IVLP helps achieve the legislative goals of increasing mutual understanding between Americans and people of other countries and developing friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries.

91% reported communicating more accurate information about the United States to other people in their home country based on the knowledge they gained during their IVLP experience in the United States.

IVLP alumni respondents reported more favorable views of the American people and the U.S. government as a direct result of their IVLP exchange experience:

- 73% - More favorable view of Americans
- 65% - More favorable views of the U.S. government

IVLP alumni respondents strongly agreed or agreed with statements on democratic values:

- 99% - Citizens should have equal rights
- 99% - Rule of law is fundamental to democracy
- 98% - Free and fair elections are cornerstones of democracy
- 97% - Individuals and organizations have the right to free speech

*Thanks to the IVLP, I have managed to understand many things better, understand Americans better. So, I started to feel a great sympathy for the United States because I was able to see many things from a different perspective. These I would say are the major results. (University Faculty, Russia, 1997)*

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) is designed to build mutual understanding between the United States and other countries through carefully designed visits that support U.S. foreign policy goals and reflect the participants' professional interests. Officials at the U.S. embassies and consulates abroad select foreign program participants who are established or potential leaders and opinion makers in a variety of professions, including government, business, education, the media, the arts, social services and scientific fields. Program participants visit Washington, D.C., and two or three other cities during their 2 to 4 week programs in the United States. They meet and confer with their U.S. professional counterparts and gain an appreciation of the ethnic, cultural, political, and socio-economic diversity of the United States. Participants are often hosted by American families and participate in cultural activities during their stay in the United States.

The IVLP brings over 4,000 foreign visitors per year to the United States. Since its inception in 1940, more than 135,000 foreign nationals have participated in the program. The Office of International Visitors in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) manages the program. The Office of International Visitors works under cooperative agreements with private, not-for-profit national program agencies (NPAs) and the National Council for International Visitors (NCIV) and its associated community-based Councils for International Visitors (CIVs) located throughout the United States. The NPAs and CIVs are largely responsible for handling programmatic and logistical arrangements for each IVLP project and within each city and community visited by IVLP participants.

## LEGISLATIVE AND PROGRAM GOALS

The principal legislative goal of the International Visitor Leadership Program, like all ECA exchange programs, is to promote mutual understanding. The authorizing legislation for all ECA exchange programs is the *Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961*, also known as the *Fulbright-Hays Act (the Act)*. The goals of the Act are to:

- Increase mutual understanding between people of the United States and people of other countries;
- Strengthen ties that unite people of the United States and other countries;
- Promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement; and
- Assist in the development of "friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world."

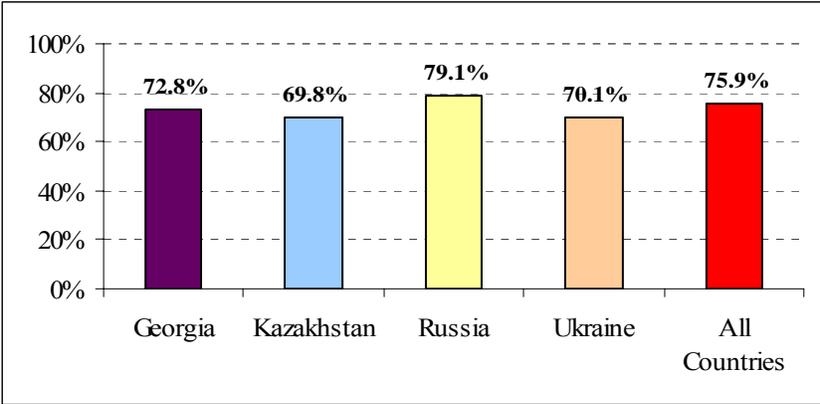
In addition, the *Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act of 1992* (FREEDOM Support Act or FSA) funded nearly all IVLP participants from Eurasia during the study period of 1996 to 2001. The general purpose of FSA is to support economic and democratic reform and development in the independent states of the former Soviet Union.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

ORC Macro, through its Moscow-based subcontractor, the Institute for Comparative Social Research (CESSI), conducted 827 in-person interviews and 4 focus groups with IVLP alumni from November 1, 2004 through March 2, 2005. Two critical political events in the region provide a context for these interviews. Georgia's Rose Revolution in late 2003/early 2004 and Ukraine's Orange Revolution in late 2004 brought about new presidents and democratic governments committed to reform. These events put an additional focus on the region and the long transition toward democracy after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. While this is a post-program participation outcome assessment only, it provides an opportunity to examine changes in perceptions and their impacts at a critical period for the study countries.

The country distribution of alumni interviews in the sample, which was proportional to the universe of alumni per country, was: Russia 514 (62 percent), Ukraine 150 (18 percent), Kazakhstan 88 (11 percent), and Georgia 75 (9 percent). IVLP alumni from the four study countries were very willing to participate in the interviews. The overall response rate of 76 percent testifies to the longstanding regard that alumni have for the IVLP. Response rates for each country were comparable.

**Response Rates by Country**



**SUMMARY OF STUDY FINDINGS**

The study findings strongly demonstrate that the IVLP is a program with a profound and long-lasting impact on alumni. Participants return to their home countries with an increased understanding of the United States, the American people, U.S. institutions, and a deeper understanding of democracy and how it works. They take new or enhanced ideas back to their countries and are motivated to apply them, come up with even more new ideas, and implement them. They gain additional responsibilities in their profession and apply the knowledge gained during their IVLP experience in the United States.

IVLP program alumni overwhelmingly share their exchange experience with their family, friends, and colleagues; therefore, the multiplier effect of the IVLP has an even greater impact in a country than the absolute numbers of participants would suggest. Since those selected for participation are either in leadership positions, or are emerging leaders and opinion makers, they have opportunities to influence others and implement change that generally exceed the reach of many citizens.

The assessment was designed to measure the success of the IVLP in meeting its goals at each of the four program outcome levels that are common to ECA-sponsored exchange program assessments. These outcomes and the corresponding program goals are outlined in the table on the next page. The study findings are presented according to the four levels of program outcomes.

Program Outcome Levels	Program Goals
Level One: Alumni Satisfaction	Overall assessment of the program experience
Level Two: Professional and Cultural Learning (Knowledge Gains)	Increase learning and understanding of the United States including its size and diversity, culture and values, government roles and policies, people, and institutions
Level Three: Effects on Behavior (Applying Knowledge)	Alumni application of knowledge and impacts on behavior in professional and community roles as an opinion influencer and leader
Level Four: Linkages, Ties and Institutional Changes (Networking)	Impact of contacts, networks and enduring ties with American institutions, citizens, and professional counterparts from home and the United States

Before presenting the summary of study findings according to the four levels of program outcomes, it is important to note first that the study findings demonstrate the IVLP's success in meeting the goals of the Fulbright-Hays Act, its authorizing legislation.

Overall, the study results indicate that *more than 90 percent of alumni respondents agree that the IVLP helps achieve the four broad goals of the Fulbright-Hays Act* (stated earlier in this summary). In particular, the IVLP is strongly succeeding in meeting its legislative mandate to promote mutual understanding. In Eurasia—and no doubt elsewhere—it has a critical, positive impact on U.S. national interests. As one alumni respondent succinctly stated:

*The program helps to develop friendly relations between the countries, expand borders, to promote better understanding. (Business Executive, Kazakhstan, 2000)*

### Program Outcome Level One: Alumni Satisfaction

*Outcome 1—Alumni are satisfied with the exchange experience and express interest in future contact with the United States*

IVLP alumni respondents experienced a well-planned and rich program—one that alumni find highly valuable professionally and allows them to achieve their individual goals for their visit to the United States.

#### **Alumni were very satisfied or satisfied with components of the IVLP, including:**

- 98% -- Administration
- 97% -- Content
- 96% -- Variety of experiences
- 94% -- Relevance to professional or academic development

98% of alumni felt their IVLP exchange experience to be moderately or very valuable for their professional life.

98% of alumni felt their IVLP exchange experience helped them understand their project theme and enhanced their knowledge of it.

*...everything was meticulously planned and well thought out. In terms of professional activities, we have been shown everything we might need and even more than that. (Education Administrator, Russia, 1998)*

*Since I was involved in the program, the knowledge I got has given me a basis for a deeper understanding and re-evaluation of my position in the organization. It has helped me see the management process as a whole in a new way. I came to have a more democratic management style and to give my subordinates more opportunities to make their own decisions. (Business Executive, Russia, 2001)*

## **Program Outcome Level Two: Professional and Cultural Learning (Knowledge Gains)** *Outcome 2—Increased understanding of U.S. institutions, fundamental norms and values*

IVLP alumni respondents almost unanimously agreed that the program enhanced their understanding of the United States. As a result of their IVLP visit to the United States, respondents indicated that they generally changed their perceptions of the United States and its institutions, people, society, culture and values.

### **Alumni strongly agreed or agreed with statements on democratic values:**

- 99% -- Citizens should have equal rights
- 99% -- Rule of law is fundamental to democracy
- 98% -- Free and fair elections are cornerstones of democracy
- 97% -- Individuals and organizations have the right to free speech
- 95% -- Independent media is important
- 93% -- Voting is important
- 92% -- Democratic principles enhance workplace

### **IVLP changed alumni understanding of the United States to a great or moderate extent:**

- 74% -- Daily life in the United States
- 71% -- U.S. values and culture
- 68% -- Voluntary community service
- 62% -- U.S. democracy

### **IVLP increased understanding and appreciation of the United States and Americans to a great or moderate extent:**

- 88% -- United States, in general
- 86% -- Americans, in general
- 83% -- U.S. diversity
- 83% -- Size and diversity of regions in the United States
- 76% -- U.S. government institutions
- 75% -- Civil and human rights
- 60% -- U.S. relationship with home country
- 56% -- Role of the United States in the international arena
- 50% -- U.S. foreign policy

*But what strikes me most is that democracy is not in conflict with the law but derives from it. (Education Administrator, Russia, 1996)*

*I visited a meeting of the town council, people can attend it. A person has a right to react negatively and to express his opinion. And government will listen to him and then solve the problem in quiet atmosphere. All meetings are broadcast live on a special channel. Now I understand that it is control over the power, the priority of society's interests over the state's interests. It boggles the mind. (NGO Executive, Kazakhstan, 1996)*

*We had known that the level of democracy in America was high, ...but the level of democracy that I saw and felt astonished me. (Journalism Executive, Ukraine, 2001)*

*I now perceive America, after this visit, as a unique nation that is really poly-cultural. I did not realize that before. I did not imagine that it was at all possible to succeed like that, having different cultures within one nation. Nevertheless, despite their differences, they co-exist very well. (University Faculty, Russia, 1997)*

**Program Outcome Level Two: Professional and Cultural Learning (Knowledge Gains)**  
**Outcome 3—Increased trust in the U.S. government, Americans, and U.S.-based information sources**

Trust of the U.S. government, Americans and U.S.-based information sources is high among IVLP alumni. Alumni also indicate that IVLP had a direct, positive impact on their willingness to trust Americans. IVLP alumni also trust most information from U.S.-based media sources.

71% of alumni respondents strongly agreed (20%) or agreed (51%) that the United States is a trustworthy partner for their country.

77% of alumni felt their IVLP exchange experience increased their willingness to trust Americans to a great extent (31%) or a moderate extent (46%).

**Alumni “mostly trust” information they receive from the following U.S. media sources:**

- 92% -- Professional U.S. websites
- 87% -- U.S. Embassy or Consulate in home country
- 86% -- Professional U.S. press and publications
- 85% -- U.S. television news
- 85% -- U.S. government websites
- 78% -- U.S. government radio news
- 58% -- U.S. private radio news

**Program Outcome Level Two: Professional and Cultural Learning (Knowledge Gains)**  
**Outcome 4—More favorable views of the U.S. government and the American people**

The majority of IVLP alumni respondents indicated that their exchange experience resulted in more favorable views of both the U.S. government and the American people.

**IVLP changed views of the U.S. government:**

- 65% -- More favorable view (15% much more favorable, 50% more favorable)
- 34% -- No change

**IVLP changed views of the American people:**

- 73% -- More favorable view (28% much more favorable, 45% more favorable)
- 26% -- No change

**Alumni perceptions of Americans became more positive after the IVLP exchange experience.**

The following results illustrate that most alumni agreed or strongly agreed with numerous positive characteristics of Americans:

- Friendly -- increased from 84% before visit to 98% after visit
- Trustworthy -- increased from 78% before visit to 95% after visit
- Cooperative -- increased from 83% before visit to 94% after visit
- Compassionate -- increased from 79% before visit to 88% after visit
- Religious/spiritual -- changed from 78% before visit to 87% after visit
- Concerned about people from other countries -- increased from 58% before visit to 72% after visit
- Arrogant -- decreased from 36% before visit to 19% after visit

*My views of the United States have changed for the better. I have come to understand American foreign policies better. I now know that Americans wish peace and happiness throughout the world. They are always ready to listen to others, to understand others, and so on. So, my views have changed for the better. (Media Executive, Ukraine, 2000)*

*Americans are a very good-natured and interesting people. They are open and friendly, you can sense it in the streets and everywhere. This is a very pleasant and positive side of those people. (Business Executive, Georgia, 1999)*

*Maybe what I liked most was this equality between people and the absence of arrogance. (Business Executive, Ukraine, 1996)*

**Program Outcome Level Three: Effects on Behavior (Applying Knowledge)**  
***Outcome 5—Increased participation and/or responsibility (leadership role) in work, school/university, community, or civil society***

Most alumni applied their knowledge or experience obtained during their IVLP exchange in the workplace and in other ways that influenced many people, thereby demonstrating a strong multiplier effect. Many of the workplace changes reinforced democratic values.

**Specific work-related changes initiated by IVLP alumni respondents based on their knowledge gained during their IVLP exchange experience:**

- 64% -- Introduced new ideas and knowledge
  - 56% -- Introduced new initiatives, new ways of doing things
  - 53% -- Introduced new policies or procedures
  - 29% -- Increased volunteer activities/community service
  - 25% -- Tried to influence public opinion about the United States through the media
  - 24% -- Established new exchanges
  - 23% -- Introduced new curricula, pedagogical method, educational standards
  - 22% -- Founded NGO or other organization
- (Multiple responses were permitted.)

*My visit has affected my professional activities; I have become more democratic in my attitude. I think that if people communicate more freely they would be able to resolve many of their problems. (Health Program Administrator, Kazakhstan, 2000)*

*We saw in practice what I knew in theory. When working on the draft law on consumer rights' protection, we studied the U.S. legislation relating to the subject. During my IVLP visit I was able to see in practice how this legislation works. I mean, right after [my return] this law was passed by Russian legislators, me and my team were offered a job at the government agency responsible for enforcement and conciliatory measures relating to consumer rights' protection. So my IVLP visit was very useful. (Government Agency Head, Russia, 2000)*

**Program Outcome Level Three: Effects on Behavior (Applying Knowledge)**  
*Outcome 6—Concrete actions taken to apply knowledge gained in institutions, community groups, government, or civil society organizations*

IVLP alumni respondents overwhelmingly reported that their IVLP experience enhanced their ability to communicate and apply accurate information about the United States. A significant majority also indicated the program enhanced their ability to contribute to the development of their country or community.

**The IVLP enhanced alumni abilities to share information about the United States and apply the knowledge gained to other people in their country and to contribute to their home country to a great or moderate extent:**

- 91% -- Communicated more accurate information about the United States
  - 68% -- Contributed to social and civil development in their home country
  - 51% -- Contributed to political processes in their home country
  - 46% -- Contributed to economic development in their home country
- (Multiple responses were permitted.)

**Program Outcome Level Three: Effects on Behavior (Applying Knowledge)**  
*Outcome 7—Alumni explain or interpret their experiences for others in their home country*

Alumni universally shared and interpreted the information and knowledge they gained during their IVLP visit with their professional colleagues, and their family and friends, as would be expected. In addition, a significant majority also shared information and knowledge with people in their community and publicly, reaching a wider audience. Only a very small number of alumni reported not sharing their IVLP experiences at all.

**Alumni directly shared their new information and knowledge gained during their IVLP visit to a great or moderate extent with:**

- 99% -- Family and friends
- 99% -- Professional colleagues
- 85% -- People in community
- 72% -- Other people in home country

**About 85% of alumni also shared their new information and knowledge at work and publicly in a variety of ways, including:**

- 53% -- Giving media interviews
- 36% -- Writing newspaper articles
- 34% -- Giving presentations
- 18% -- Writing academic books

*I've been using my IVLP experiences ever since I returned from the U.S. We brought a lot of hand-out materials, both soft and hard copies; I keep these in my office library. And I know that these materials are in demand. On my return I produced a thick report, and I've had quite a few occasions to share my experience with the staff of my department – it was the biggest department*

*in the agency. I also delivered reports... [to] representatives of influential consumer groups, officials from various ministries and departments responsible for consumer rights protection. ...So I shared my IVLP experience with them too because although we were all familiar with the theory, being able to see how this theory is implemented in real life is quite another thing. (Government Agency Head, Russia, 2000)*

## **Program Outcome Level Four: Linkages, Ties and Institutional Changes (Networking)** **Outcome 8—Increased personal, professional and institutional collaboration and linkages**

Most alumni respondents have maintained contact with fellow IVLP alumni from their visit to the United States. Smaller proportions of alumni have maintained contact with their U.S. professional contacts and hosts, and with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in their home country – most of those who do not have these contacts would like to establish them in the future.

### **IVLP alumni respondents reported that they have remained in contact with:**

- 74% -- Other members of their IVLP group from their home country
- 30% -- U.S. Embassy/Consulate staff
- 20% -- Other IVLP alumni from their home country
- 16% -- Other Department of State exchange program alumni from their home country
- 14% -- U.S. professional contacts and hosts

### **Among the 49% of alumni respondents who established or continued professional collaborations that grew out of their IVLP exchange experience:**

- 77% -- Collaborated with professional contacts from their home countries
- 62% -- Collaborated with U.S. professional contacts

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The International Visitor Leadership Program is a professional exchange program of several weeks that yields long-lasting effects in terms of alumni professional development, improving alumni perceptions of the United States and the American people and culture, increasing their understanding of democratic values, and enhancing their roles as influencers and opinion makers in their countries. This retrospective outcome assessment yielded compelling results, all of which demonstrate that the IVLP is a strong and effective exchange program. The IVLP is highly valued by the foreign alumni and their comments about the program are overwhelmingly positive.

Above all else, IVLP alumni have gained a far better appreciation of democracy and the rule of law. Based on the study results, there is no doubt that alumni believe democracy and the rule of law can and should thrive in their countries, but they recognize it will take time. They have also applied democratic principles to their own professions and jobs based on practices they saw applied in the United States. IVLP alumni have also shared new knowledge and ideas gained during their IVLP experience in the United States—with their colleagues, family, friends, students, and others in their community and home country. They have kept in touch with one another and forged ongoing relationships with some of the institutions they were introduced to during their IVLP visit.

Accompanying all that they have acquired and accomplished is a trust and appreciation for the United States that is strong and lasting. This appreciation is even strong enough to overshadow disagreements with parts of American foreign policy. Their appreciation is based on the friendliness and openness they observed among Americans during their U.S. visit, and the candor they saw even among Americans in positions of power and leadership. They gained an admiration for U.S. institutions and the roles of NGOs and non-profit organizations. They saw a civil society in action while visiting the United States and are motivated to emulate it within their own sphere of influence in their home country.

The State Department has long praised the success and impact of the IVLP in terms of the number of alumni who go on to obtain high-level positions in their countries, such as heads of government and chiefs of state. However, in the past 10 years alone, there have been tens of thousands of IVLP alumni worldwide (several thousand of these in the four study countries), who have achieved noteworthy positions with influence in a smaller sphere; together they make a difference in their home countries. Indeed, the power of the multiplier effect stimulated by the IVLP is strong and evident.

The legislative and program goals of the IVLP have been and continue to be met based on the results of this assessment. This success of the IVLP is a great testimony to those at the State Department who are responsible for managing it and who do so with great results. This includes the staff in ECA's Office of International Visitors in Washington, D.C., as well as the program administrators at the U.S. embassies and consulates around the world. It also includes the non-profit national program agencies (NPAs) in Washington, D.C. that help administer the program, as well as the network of over 90 Councils for International Visitors (CIVs) responsible for programming participants in cities and towns across the United States. And, of course, it includes the IVLP participants and alumni from all over the world and the Americans who meet with them in their offices, host them in their homes and generally welcome them in the United States. Each and every one of these contributors to the IVLP is committed to and responsible for making the IVLP the extremely successful exchange program that it is.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the interviews with IVLP alumni and program administrators, ORC Macro makes the following recommendations to make the program even more effective:

- Maintain the IVLP at the highest possible levels in Eurasia. The region is still in transition to democracy and all of the countries can benefit from the IVLP.
- Build standard performance and outcome measures into the IVLP in order to continually measure the program's effectiveness and so that other in-depth evaluation designs can be considered.
- Provide preliminary schedules of the IVLP project to prospective visitors further in advance of their pre-program orientation so they can be better prepared for their IVLP experience in the United States.
- Provide follow-up funding for alumni activities to further foster and reinforce alumni interest in, and connections with, the United States and its institutions, and with Americans.
- U.S. embassies and consulates should increase and expand their outreach activities and events for IVLP and other State Department exchange program participants and alumni in the home country.
- U.S. embassies and consulates should make a concerted effort to maintain contact with, and current contact information for, IVLP and other State Department exchange program alumni (especially e-mail addresses), and develop a systematic process for updating this information.

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### CONTACT INFORMATION:

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