



# Hosting Global Talent: Temporary J-1 Visa Programs

Sue Riesgraf: Training Coordinator – MAST International

# What is a J-1 Visa?

- Temporary training visa, not a standard work visa
- Under U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program
- Provides international students and young professionals with opportunity to gain hands-on experience and exposure to American culture
- Primary goal: Promote exchange of ideas and "mutual understanding" between nations (soft form of diplomacy)
- J-1 participants cannot displace American workers or be used for "unskilled labor"



# Best Categories for Crop Consulting



## Intern

- Enrolled full-time in a foreign post-secondary academic institution OR graduated within the last 12 months
- Duration: Up to 12 months

## Trainee

- Degree/certificate plus at least 1 year of related work experience outside the U.S.; OR at least 5 years of work experience in the field if no degree
- Duration: Up to 18 months (maximum: 12 months practical experience, 6 months classroom component)

# Roles Within a Training Program

- Three-way partnership between:
  - **Sponsor Program** (ex: MAST, TOP, CAEP...)
  - **Host Organization** (U.S. farm or business that serves as the “training site”)
  - **Participant** (Intern or Trainee)
- Develop and agree to follow a DS-7002 Training/Internship Placement Plan that outlines training goals and cultural opportunities



# Sponsor Program

- Designated by U.S. Department of State
- Issue paperwork needed to apply for J-1 visa
- Maintain government records and ensure regulatory compliance
- Confirm that both participant and host are having a good experience; help solve problems that may arise
  - Check-ins via evaluations, site visits, phone calls, etc.



# Host



- Provide practical training, including rotation through different areas of the business, etc.
- Ensure exposure to cultural activities
- Have sufficient staff to provide continuous, on-site mentoring and supervision
- Provide housing (can charge)
- Pay fair wage, withhold proper taxes, carry worker's comp or equivalent insurance

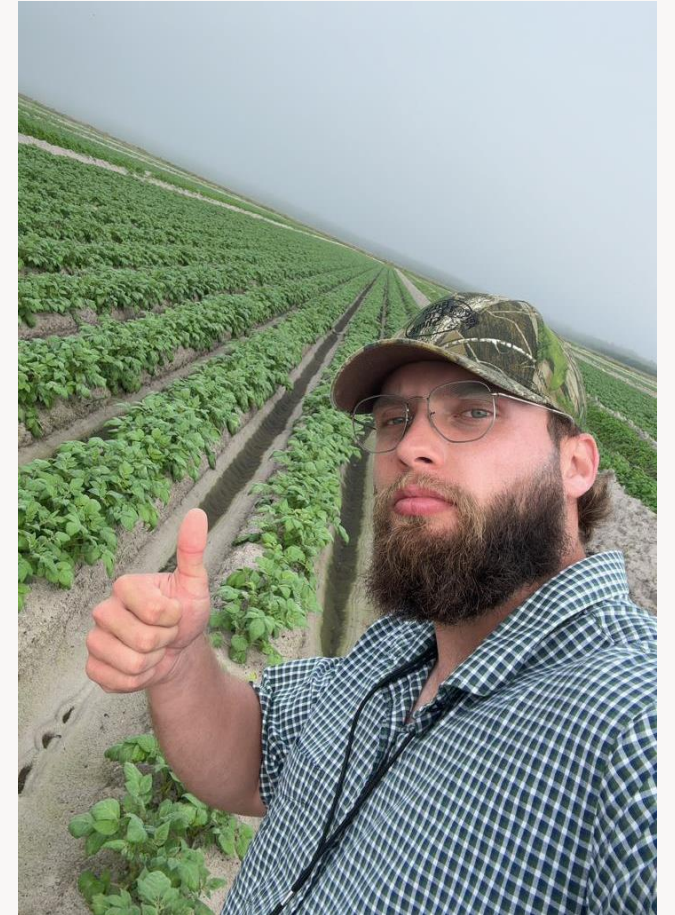
# Intern or Trainee

- Possess a sufficient level of English
- Motivated to improve practical knowledge and skills
- Interested in learning about American culture and lifestyle
- Maintain an intent to return home after the program



# Sourcing Participant(s)

- International partners of sponsor programs: Universities, tech schools, private recruiters
  - Select and screen applicants, assist with visa process, help problem solve if needed
- Direct applicants: friends of friends, found sponsor online or on State Dept. website
- Host finds, or host and applicant connect-often through industry connection



# After the J-1 Program

- Goal of visa is for them to return home to impart new knowledge and skills
- While it's possible to change to a different type of visa while on a J-1, it is discouraged by State Department and sponsor programs
- Can repeat a J-1 program
  - Trainees must wait two full years; Interns could repeat right away if still a student or within 12 months of graduation
  - New program must teach more advanced skills or be in a different field of expertise



# Strategic Benefits for Crop Consulting



- **Mitigating Labor Shortages:** Access a motivated pool of educated talent specifically for high-demand seasons
- **Unique Perspectives:** Bring in knowledge of international farming techniques, pests, or technologies from other global regions
- **Global Connections:** Build a network of "brand ambassadors" who return home to their local agricultural sectors, potentially opening future international market opportunities
- **Cultural Enrichment:** Expose domestic staff to new cultures and diverse problem-solving approaches

# More Information and Next Steps

- Initial Action: Identify a designated sponsor program to begin the vetting process
- Sponsor may have qualified applicants for you to review, or may serve as the “middle-man” to help bring a participant who is already connected to a host
- Timeline: Expect 6–8 weeks for visa process from recruitment to arrival



# Resources

- **J-1 Exchange Visitor Programs:** [j1visa.state.gov](http://j1visa.state.gov)
- **MAST International:** [mast.cfans.umn.edu](http://mast.cfans.umn.edu)
- **Sue Riesgraf:** [riesg003@umn.edu](mailto:riesg003@umn.edu)





UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA