



U.S.-Russia Volunteer Initiative

Application Instructions



DEADLINE: May 15, 2006

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The goal of the U.S.-Russia Volunteer Initiative (USRVI) is to engage both Russian and American citizens, organizations, and businesses in cooperative volunteer activities through short-term bilateral exchanges. USRVI provides a unique opportunity for young people interested in promotion of Healthy Lifestyles and/or Community Development to volunteer for approximately eight weeks in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and/or governmental service centers throughout Russia and the United States. Volunteers will be placed with organizations working to promote Healthy Lifestyles and/or Community Development.

Those selected will be offered pre-service training and orientation in Moscow prior to beginning their volunteer assignments. Immediately after completing their assignments, volunteers will be invited to a capstone conference in Washington, D.C. with their counterparts in order to share their experiences. Volunteers will also have the opportunity to collaborate with their Russian home/host organizations in developing follow-on projects after returning home.

USRVI program activities will focus on the following two program fields and targeted sub-fields:

Healthy Lifestyles

- a. Tobacco, alcohol and drug prevention
- b. Prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- c. Nutrition, health and physical fitness

Community Development

- a. Youth and student governance
- b. Children with disabilities
- d. Assistance to vulnerable groups
- e. Development of volunteerism

FINANCIAL PROVISIONS OF THE PROGRAM

- Round-trip travel from volunteer's home city to their host city;
- Visa processing;
- Limited accident and sickness insurance;
- Housing and monthly living allowance; and
- Pre-service training, orientation, and capstone conference.

USRVI is funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and is administered by IREX (the International Research & Exchanges Board). In Russia program assistance is also provided by the Russian Union of Youth (RUY).

ABOUT IREX

IREX (the International Research & Exchanges Board) is an international nonprofit organization providing leadership and innovative programs to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Volunteer applicants should:

- Be available to participate in the program between late September and late November 2006 (final dates to be determined).
- Be available for semi-finalist interviews in mid-June [Note: Russian semi-finalists must be available to travel to Moscow for in-person interviews; American semi-finalists must be available for phone interviews].
- Be a US or Russian citizen and currently hold a valid, active international passport.
- Be between the ages of 20 and 30 at the time of the application deadline.
- Be able to receive and maintain a Russian or US visa.
- Submit a completed application with all required documents by the application deadline.

Current IREX employees and consultants and their immediate families (spouses, parents, children, and siblings) are not eligible to compete in any IREX-administered grant programs, either as individuals or as the responsible party representing an institutional applicant.

IREX does not discriminate against grant applicants because of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability or any other protected characteristic as established by US law.

IREX reserves the right to verify all of the information included in the application. In the event that there is a discrepancy, or information is found to be false, the application will immediately be declared invalid, and the applicant ineligible.

SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Selection for USRVI is conducted as a merit-based open competition. All applicants will be notified of their status in late June 2006. The selection committee will use the following criteria to evaluate applications (not in order of importance):

- Commitment to public service, including prior volunteer experience and understanding of the importance of community development, and/or promotion of healthy lifestyles;
- Leadership experience and potential;
- Potential impact on the development of volunteerism in Russia
- Experience working or volunteering in any of the sub-fields indicated in Program Overview;
- Maturity and flexibility in adapting to a foreign environment;
- Knowledge of English/Russian language.

GENERAL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Please answer all questions on the application in English. Include your full, legal name as spelled on your international passport, and in the order indicated in the application. Do not translate name spellings. (For example write Mariya and not Mary.) Include complete contact information (including postal index codes for all addresses and country and city codes for all phone and fax numbers). Do not translate street or city names into English, only into the English alphabet. (For example, write Prospekt Mira instead of Peace Avenue.) Do not leave a space blank. If a question does not apply to you, enter N/A (not applicable). Type your full name and country of citizenship in the top right corner of each page.

References (Question 11)

Please provide the name and current contact information for three individuals who can evaluate your prior experience and your commitment to public service. Friends or relatives **should not** be included as references.

Previous Experience (Questions 12-14)

Example:

Institution	Department	Type of Degree	Date of graduation
Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia	International Relations	Diplom	06/2003
Brown University, Providence, RI	History	Bachelors	Expected 05/2005

Language Evaluation (Question 15)

Knowledge of the host country’s language is critical to the success of the USRVI exchange. It is important that each applicant has at least a working knowledge of the host country language, particularly for Russian applicants, as it is highly unlikely that staff at the host organization in the US will speak or understand Russian. Therefore, it is imperative that Russian applicants have a strong command of the English language, both everyday speech and professional vocabulary. Although American applicants are not required to speak Russian at the time of the application, applicants with Russian language knowledge will receive preference during finalist selection and finalists with no or little previous knowledge of Russian will be encouraged to obtain basic familiarity with the language prior to beginning program activities in September 2006.

American applicants should rate their knowledge of Russian and Russian applicants should rate their knowledge of English.

1. **Fluent:** Native fluency or the equivalent.
2. **Good:** Able to handle the language with almost complete ease, though with a foreign accent or lack of complete control of idiomatic speech.
3. **Fair:** Able to read at least half as fast as native language, understand ordinary native speech, and carry on an exchange of ideas, although haltingly.
4. **Poor:** Able to read with difficulty, understand slow speech, use language to get around but not as a means of exchanging ideas.
5. **Beginning:** Would need to study the language at an elementary level.

Essay One (Question 18)

The first essay (1-2 pages, typed) should address the following:

- Your general volunteer experience, including the impact you feel you have made on your local community through your volunteer work. How does your previous volunteer experience qualify you for this program?
- Your professional and volunteer experience related to the program fields and the targeted sub-fields (listed in Program Overview).
- Description of a task, event, or activity from your volunteer experience and how you applied specific skills (i.e. public relations, outreach, fundraising, budgeting, volunteer management, event planning, program development, etc.) to achieve a successful outcome.
- The type of work you would like to conduct during your USRVI exchange. What are your expected goals and outcomes? How you plan to integrate your experiences and newfound knowledge into your professional and volunteer work after the conclusion of the exchange program. How will this volunteer exchange benefit you professionally and personally?

Essay Two (Question 19)

The second essay (1-2 pages, typed) should address the following:

- What leadership qualities do you possess?
- Specific example from your previous experience (your school, community, workplace, volunteer organization, etc.) that illustrates your leadership capacity and potential.

Essay Three (Question 20)

The third essay (1-2 pages, typed) should address the following:

- Why do you want to participate in USRVI? What previous experience do you have with the culture of your potential host country that will help with cultural adaptation?
- What previous life experiences have prepared you to live and work in a foreign culture for two months? Please detail any experience you have traveling, living and/or working abroad.

Program Sub-Fields (Question 22):

This question asks you to evaluate the extent of your experience with the particular sub-fields indicated in the Program Overview on page 1. Please rate your cumulative experience with each of the fields, even if you have no experience with a particular field listed. This information will assist us with host placements. Please use 0-4 scale and the scale explanation below:

- 4 – Extensive experience, 3+ years
- 3 – Significant experience, 1-2 years
- 2 – Good experience, 3 - 12 months
- 1 – Some experience, less than 3 months
- 0 – No experience

Individual Skills (Question 23):

Based on your academic, professional and volunteer experience, please rate yourself with respect to the skills and activities indicated in this question using 0-4 scale (0 being ‘no familiarity/experience’ and 4 being “strong familiarity/experience”). Feel free to use the additional space provided to indicate other specific skills/activities not listed in this question. Please be as objective as possible.

Resume (Question 24)

A resume, not to exceed two pages, must be submitted with this application. The documents must be in English and include the most current data on your education, volunteer and work experience, publications, and honors.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Applications for the US-Russia Volunteer Initiative (USRVI) must be received by **Monday, 5:00 pm EST, May 15, 2006**. Applications should be submitted by e-mail to **USRVI@IREX.ORG**. Please provide an electronic signature on the last page of the application. If you are unable to do so, please fax the last page with your signature to IREX/DC, at (202) 628-8189, or IREX/Moscow at (495) 956-0977. Applicants should keep a copy of their submission for their records.

QUESTIONS?

Contact: Oksana Jensen, Program Officer, at IREX usrvi@irex.org or 202-628-8188.