



friendship force
INTERNATIONAL

2016 Club and Exchange Policies

As approved by the FFI Board of Directors October 2015

The policies and procedures contained in this document have been approved by the FFI Board of Directors to govern all Friendship Force exchange activity. Additional information and instruction can be found on the FFI website (www.thefriendshipforce.org) or by contacting the FFI staff in Atlanta, Georgia. (Note: All fees are quoted in US dollars.)

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1. Friendship Force Clubs

A. Organization: Friendship Force clubs are chartered by FFI for the purpose of promoting the Friendship Force mission in a local community or region by organizing inbound and outbound exchanges. Each club is an independent organization, not a branch of FFI. While the actual organizational structure may vary according to the traditions and legal requirements of a region, all clubs are expected to have written bylaws and be based on volunteer leadership that is selected by the club membership.

Strong leadership is vital to the success of any club, but the long term strength of the club also requires a system for periodic change in leaders. Clubs that do not have an effective system for rotating their leadership will encounter great difficulties when a long-time leader finally steps down. It is highly recommended, therefore, that the club change key leadership roles on a regular basis. Even with a rotation system it is possible to retain the experience and guidance of a founding or long serving club leader through honorary positions that the club can establish for this purpose.

Clubs are expected to follow the FFI club and exchange policies, including the policies on the appropriate use of the logo and other registered materials.

B. Club Affiliation Fees and Charter Renewal:

To remain active, a Charter Renewal Form should be submitted annually to FFI that includes agreement by the current club officers to accept current FFI policies. The annual club affiliation fee, preferably a single payment by the club for all club members, is due with the charter renewal form.

The Charter Renewal Form for 2016 should be sent to FFI no later than January 15, 2016, along with the club affiliation fee of US \$15 per individual and US \$25 per family. This should be based on membership numbers at the end of 2015.

For payment procedures, see page 8.

C. Activities: In addition to conducting regular inbound and outbound exchanges, Friendship Force clubs are encouraged to promote the Friendship Force mission in their regions and to plan a wide range of local activities for their members to keep them involved throughout the

year. This includes social events for club members as well as programs that link the membership with other international activity in the community.

In addition to regular exchanges and local activities, clubs may also participate with other clubs in supplemental exchange activity, including domestic exchanges, EU and Schengen interclub visits or stop over hospitality (*see page 8 for more details*). ***As supplemental activities, these should be scheduled only after the official international exchanges for the year have been confirmed.*** It is also the responsibility of each club to follow the policy guidelines for arranging supplemental activities and for paying the appropriate fees.

2. Standard Friendship Force Exchange Programs

A. Club Exchanges: Friendship Force club exchanges are assigned each year by FFI based on a variety of factors, including club history, preference and availability of counterpart clubs. The exchange goal is usually 20 to 25 people (*ambassadors*) who travel to a host community in another country for a one-week (*5-7 nights*) homestay experience. If requested, and if hosting is available, second and third week homestays may be added.

Acceptance as an ambassador on an exchange is by application, with ambassadors and hosts carefully selected to ensure compatibility with the program. The ambassador club traveling on an outbound exchange is responsible for recruiting and preparing local citizens (*ambassadors*) for the homestay experience. The host club is responsible for recruiting and preparing citizens (*hosts*) from the community who will open their homes to the visiting ambassadors.

Each exchange operates under the leadership of volunteer exchange directors appointed by the clubs and in accordance with the Exchange Policies (*pages 11-12*) set by Friendship Force International.

i. **Special Exchanges:** In addition to the basic club-to-club exchange, several other formats are now being offered.

a. Themed Exchanges add a special focus to the homestay experience. Themes may be related to shared interests (*hiking, biking, quilting, wine making, cultural events, cross-*

cultural discussion forums and multi-generational groups), education (*teachers or students*), humanitarian projects, language learning, etc. The ambassador ED works with FFI and the counterpart club to design a unique itinerary and then recruit ambassadors who share an interest in the theme. The ambassadors may be from one or several clubs, or the exchange may be open to applicants from anywhere.

b. Global Exchanges are designed to attract ambassadors from anywhere in the world. Often they will have a specific theme or a focus on cultural understanding. Increasingly, global exchanges are organized entirely by the host club, with ambassador recruiting taking place via Internet marketing provided by FFI.

c. Discover Exchanges provide a comprehensive itinerary that combines short homestay experiences with travel and cultural activities in the region. The destinations are often regions targeted by FFI for new club development.

3. Partnership and Contract Programs

From time to time FFI will offer exchanges based on a partnership agreement with another organization. Each such program has its own set of policies, procedures and fees.

A. Homestay.com: An alternative to hotel stays. FFI has partnered with Homestay.com to offer a more Friendship Force-like homestay experience in more cities and countries around the world, as an alternative to staying in a hotel. Homestay.com has 18,000 active hosts around the world who stay in their home with guests and enjoy the connections they make through home hospitality. All hosts have been screened for security and a commitment to global good.

Because Homestay.com hosts receive payment for hosting, this partnership agreement is seen as an alternative to hotel stays where no FF hospitality exists. For the same reason, Homestay.com is not seen as a complement to FF hosting as part of the same exchange since it would create two classes of hosts and ambassadors, with unequal host

involvement, and lesser benefits to the ambassadors, in the exchange.

The Homestay.com policy opposes the mix of FF-hosted and Homestay.com-hosted ambassadors on the same exchange but encourages the use of Homestay.com hospitality for a full group of ambassadors on the same exchange in the following situations: extension opportunities, pioneer exchanges (experimental exchanges) and NextGen exchanges, options that are considered best-suited for this price-conscious and people-friendly alternative to staying in a hotel.

Until further evaluation, the application of this policy must be confined to these domains. This new partnership will be subject to a review in 2017.

4. Standard Exchange Fees and Budgets

A. FFI Ambassador Fee: Any activity between clubs that involves providing overnight hosting is considered an official Friendship Force program. An appropriate FFI fee is charged for each such activity, based on policies adopted by FFI's Board of Directors. The fees are used to support the exchange activity and also to provide the funding needed to maintain FFI as a strong international organization. A full explanation of FFI finances can be found in the [Club Resources](#) section of the FFI website, on the [Documents](#) page under "Reports."

B. Fees for Club to Club Exchanges: Each ambassador pays an FFI ambassador fee for a Friendship Force experience. *FFI ambassador fees are due to FFI 60 days before the exchange departs.* For regular international club to club exchanges in 2016 the FFI ambassador fee is \$165 per week (5-7 nights) for exchanges outbound from the USA and \$140 per week from all other countries.

C. Fees Applying to International Club to Club Exchanges Involving Ambassadors from within the Host Country: To the extent possible, these exchanges should be filled with Ambassadors from the country assigned to the match by FFI staff. However, frequently, this is not possible for a variety of reasons. When this is the case, the ED shall post the exchange on the FFI catalog, per FFI policy, within 100 days

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of the exchange date, or sooner if it is evident that the exchange will not be filled by the assigned club.

As these exchanges are the foundation of FFI and are designed to promote cultural understanding among countries/cultures outside the host country, every effort should be made to fill the exchange with Ambassadors from outside the host country.

If however, it becomes evident to the ED that this is not possible, the exchange may be opened up to clubs/Ambassadors from within the host country. FFI fees for ALL Ambassadors participating in the exchange will be based on the standard fee for International Exchanges.

D. Fees for Special Exchanges: The fees for special exchanges include all activities that are part of the formal exchange program as well as the FFI fees. Each exchange is unique: total fees will vary according to the length and cost of the program. The various costs are developed by the ED, in conjunction with and approved by FFI and presented as a comprehensive price.

E. Fees for Supplemental Exchanges: See page 6.

F. Payment Procedures: See page 8.

G. Earned Seat for the Ambassador Exchange Director: It is appropriate for an ambassador ED to “earn” part or all of the basic cost of the Friendship Force exchange (*including supplemental exchanges*) that he or she is leading. Providing some or all of the exchange cost as an “earned seat” recognizes the responsibility associated with leading an exchange and can also motivate the ED to recruit a full exchange. Each club should adopt a written policy regarding the “earned seat.” This policy should be publicized within the club so that all members are aware of the policy. EDs should price their exchanges in accordance with the club policy. Any member of one club that joins another club’s exchange will be expected to accept the governing policy of the Ambassador ED’s club.

H. FFI Ambassador Program Fee: The Ambassador ED will receive a pro-rated discount of the FFI Ambassador Program Fee if there are at least fifteen fully-paid ambassadors on the exchange. There will be a full waiver of the FFI fees for the ED if there are at least twenty fully paid ambassadors. *[In the event the host club has set a hosting limit below 20, the full fee waiver will be applied if the exchange is full.]*

I. Other ED Allowances/Fees: Depending on the ambassador club’s policy, an “earned seat” can include some or all of the following: (a) *travel costs to and from the host community,* (b) *travel and tour costs that are a required part of the exchange,* (c) *Host Club Program Fees.* It is not appropriate to include optional and personal expenses including passport, visa fees, etc.

J. Ambassador Exchange Committee Fee: Up to \$25 per person may be added to the cost of an exchange to be retained by the ambassador exchange committee. These fees cover the costs of administering the exchange at the local level and are collected and retained by the club, not by FFI. These fees are non- refundable if the ambassador fails to participate in the exchange or the exchange is cancelled.

K. Host Club Program Fee: The host club is responsible for providing an interesting cultural program for the ambassadors. In addition to planned group activities, the host ED should ensure that the ambassadors have sufficient time with their hosts and also for the ambassadors to explore the area on their own. The costs of activities outside the home (*those not planned by the host club*) should be paid by the ambassadors.

i. To pay the cost of the group activities, host clubs will receive a Host Club Program Fee of \$100 per ambassador (*including the ED*) per hosting week (*5-7 nights*). The fee can be used to pay for welcome and farewell parties/dinners, and for other group activities that provide the ambassadors an excellent cultural orientation to the host city and region. The fee can also be used, at the host club’s discretion, to enable the hosts to participate in these activities.

ii. In some cases the host ED may recommend optional activities that are not covered by the \$100 fee. If the ambassador ED agrees, the Host Club Program Fee may be increased accordingly for the enhancement of the exchange. ***This budget should be presented prior to the exchange so there are no surprises.*** Following the exchange, if requested, the host ED will present a post- exchange accounting of the actual expenses to FFI.

iii. The Host Club Program Fee does not cover the cost of transporting ambassadors from their arrival site to the host community and returning them to their departure sites or for any tour arrangements prior to or following the exchange week. If the host ED is asked by the ambassador ED to assist in these arrangements, the costs should be agreed to in advance and should be designated "transfer and/or tour costs." Transfer and tour costs are not considered part of the Host Club Program Fee, and should be treated separately with payment and accounting details arranged between the ambassador and host EDs.

iv. For some clubs the basic Host Club Program Fee is automatically set to an amount over the typical \$100 fee and approved by FFI. This is due to the cost of standard tours in their city and the transportation necessary to provide for the ambassadors during the exchange. The ambassador ED will be notified of this situation early in the exchange planning process.

v. Host Club Program Fees are normally transferred directly from the ambassador club to the host club in a mutually acceptable manner, unless otherwise authorized by FFI. The \$100 Host Club Program Fee is non-refundable if an ambassador cancels from the exchange less than 60 days prior to departure and the fee must therefore be transferred to the host club together with the fees for the participating ambassadors. In the event that the ambassador club fails to pay for all confirmed ambassadors, FFI will advance the fees to the host club and collect them from the ambassador club.

5. Supplemental Exchange Programs and Fees

In addition to the regular exchanges planned and coordinated by FFI on behalf of the global Friendship Force network, clubs have the opportunity to arrange several types of supplemental exchange activities. The purpose of each of these categories is to supplement regular exchanges and should be planned only after the regular exchange calendar for the year has been established.

A. Domestic Exchanges: A domestic exchange is an official club-to-club exchange between two clubs in the same country. Domestic exchanges are supplemental to a club's regular exchange activity, providing the opportunity for members within a country to get to know each other as well as different regions of their own country. Domestic exchanges are authorized only between clubs within a country and, therefore, are not available in countries where there is only one club. They may not be conducted across a national border to a club in a neighbouring country. Clubs wishing to conduct domestic exchanges will be required to follow these procedures:

i. Scheduling: Domestic exchanges may be scheduled between two or more clubs within a country after all their regular international exchanges have been confirmed for the coming year. FFI is happy to assist in the arranging of domestic exchanges, as needed or requested.

ii. Length: A domestic exchange can be for 1-7 nights with the same host club. Multi-club exchanges are permitted as long as each component does not exceed 7 nights.

iii. Fees: A nightly fee of \$10.00 USD will apply to each night of hosting, irrespective of the duration or location of the exchange. Any Host Club Program Fee will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis between the clubs.

iv. Fees Applying to Domestic Exchanges Involving Ambassadors from Outside the Host Country: Domestic Exchanges are designed to be exchanges primarily planned and implemented by clubs within the same country to promote the exchange of ideas, friendship and collaboration among clubs. If however, the ED of the host club determines that the Domestic Exchange will not be filled to capacity, the ED should open the exchange to

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Ambassadors from outside the country and market the exchange using the FFI catalog/website. Ambassadors from outside the country hosting the exchange shall pay the standard fee for International exchanges.

goals without undermining the goals and operations of Friendship Force.

Clubs wishing to conduct EU and Schengen interclub visits will be required to follow these procedures:

v. Reporting Procedures: Once a domestic exchange has been confirmed between two or more clubs, the club presidents or exchange directors are required to contact FFI to register the visit within 90 days of the exchange so it can be included in FFI's master calendar and thus facilitate the overall coordination of FFI exchanges.

A. Scheduling: Friendship Force clubs within the EU and Schengen countries may conduct inter-club visits with each other. These should be scheduled after clubs have confirmed their regular international exchanges for the coming year.

vi. Participants have obligations: Failing to report on exchanges and make fee payments undermines the overall coordination of exchanges and pushes fees up for everyone. Failing to report and comply with these policies will result in all clubs involved being denied exchange assignments for the following exchange cycle.

Clubs are not permitted to change an international exchange between the EU and Schengen countries into an inter-club visit.

B. Length: Since the purpose of the EU and Schengen Inter-club Visit is to provide opportunities for short visits, EU and Schengen inter-club visits may not exceed 4 nights. Clubs are not permitted to extend inter-club visits beyond four nights on either an informal or formal basis.

6. EU and Schengen Inter-club Visits:

In recognition of the free movement of citizens between the combined territories of the European Union (EU) and of the Schengen area, and to reserve as much regular hosting as possible for clubs from outside the region, FFI has a supplemental program called EU plus Schengen Inter-club Visits. These visits are designed to be shorter with less costly travel requirements than a regular exchange and as such shall be limited to 4 nights. The club visits are supplemental activities. They should not be seen as an alternative to regular international exchanges nor should they be seen as domestic exchanges which are within the same country.

C. One at a Time: Since the purpose of the EU and Schengen Inter-club Visits is to provide opportunities for short visits, only one club visit may be scheduled at a time. Clubs are not authorized to plan multiple club visits as part of the same exchange. Visits to more than one club are more complicated and time consuming. Therefore, they do not meet the criteria for an inter-club visit.

EU and Schengen clubs wishing to have regular week-long hosting experiences within their combined areas may do so through the FFI's regular international exchange assignment process. Clubs wishing to conduct domestic exchanges within their own country may do so by following the procedures for domestic exchanges. The FFI Board of Directors will continue to review this policy to ensure it achieves its

NOTE: Clubs wishing to have multiple hosting opportunities on one exchange may do so by requesting a two-week regular exchange. They can also combine a one-week regular exchange with the new stopover hospitality program format (see item 7 below), adding a 1-3 night visit along the way to their regular hosting assignment. FFI is also prepared to work with EU and Schengen leaders to design specialized exchanges that follow the "Discover" format which can include multiple short homestays as part of the exchange.

D. Fees: Notwithstanding the distinction between domestic and EU plus Schengen inter-club visits, the fees levied for both categories of visits shall be equalized at \$10 US a night.

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The Host Club Program Fee will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis between the clubs.

E. Reporting Procedures: Once an inter-club visit has been confirmed, both clubs, the club presidents and exchange directors must register the visit with FFI within 90 days of departure so that the exchange may be included in FFI's master calendar and enable FFI to better coordinate exchanges taking place around the world.

F. Participants have obligations: Failing to report on inter-club visits and make fee payments undermine exchanges for everyone. Failing to report and comply with these policies will result in all clubs involved being denied outbound exchange assignments and/or inter-club visits for the following exchange cycle.

7. **Stopover Hospitality**

Stopover Hospitality is a 1-3 night homestay provided by a host club to an exchange delegation transiting the area while traveling to or from a regularly scheduled exchange. The purpose is to: (a) provide additional Friendship Force hosting for ambassadors on regular Friendship Force exchanges, and (b) provide additional hosting opportunities for the host clubs. Potential host clubs are under no obligation to provide such a program and should feel free to decline if it is not convenient. *Ambassador EDs wishing to schedule Stopover Hospitality will be required to follow these procedures:*

A. Scheduling: Arrangements for Stopover Hospitality are made directly between the host club and the ambassador ED, making sure that this does not interfere with any regular exchange responsibilities of the host club.

B. Reporting: Once a Stopover Hospitality program has been confirmed between the two clubs, both the ambassador ED and the host club leader (*ED or club president*) should register the stopover with FFI so it can be included in FFI's master calendar and so FFI will have a full record of the club's Friendship Force activities for the year.

C. Fees: There will be an FFI program fee of \$20 per person/per night. The Host Club Program Fee will be negotiated directly between the ambassador ED and the host club.

D. Club Stopover Policy: Clubs, particularly those in popular gateway cities, are encouraged to develop a policy on how they will respond to requests for Stopover Hospitality. Some may decide they are not able to provide Stopover Hospitality but are able to give advice regarding hotels and tours in the region. Others may choose to consider requests on a case-by-case basis. FFI will be glad to publicize any policies that are developed by these clubs.

8. **Payment Procedures**

All transactions should include full information to identify both the source (club name or exchange name) and the purpose (club fees, Ambassador Program Fees, etc.) of the payment.

Payment should be made in US dollars and can be made one of four ways:

A. Check: Payment may be made by check on a US account in US dollars and sent to the following mailing address (thru December 31, 2015):

Friendship Force
International The Candler
Building
127 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 501
Atlanta, GA 30303, USA

NOTE: The FFI office will be moving at the end of December 2015, TBA to the following address:

Friendship Force International
260 Peachtree Street, NE Suite 402
Atlanta, GA 30303 USA

B. Wire Transfer: Bank wire transfers may also be used. Contact your FFI program services coordinator for further information if you would like to make a wire transfer.

C. Credit Card: Payment may be made by credit card (Visa, MasterCard or American Express) on the FFI website. Go to: www.thefriendshipforce.org and click on “Support FFI” in the blue bar. Select *Legacy Fund, Exchange Payments* or *Club Dues*. Paying online is simple, convenient and safe.

Please note an extra fee of 3% applies to payments made by credit card. This fee corresponds to bank charges for credit card transactions. This 3% processing fee applies to credit card payments of fees related to participation in all types of exchanges as well as participation in FFI World Conferences but does not apply to credit card payments for Legacy Fund donations or Club Affiliation fee’s where FFI will continue to absorb the bank and credit card company costs. This processing fee is defined on the FFI website payment screens and will be calculated automatically.

D. Regional Banking Arrangements: In Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, separate banking arrangements have been made, and payments should be made according to the procedures established by FFI for these countries. Check with your FFI program services coordinator for details.

9. Exchange Policies

A. Exchange Directors: Exchange Directors (EDs) provide the leadership required for successful exchanges. The EDs for club exchanges are selected by the local club and report to FFI for exchange planning purposes. EDs for specialized exchanges are appointed by the clubs or by FFI. An [Exchange Director Manual](#) is provided by FFI to guide the planning and leading of the exchange. Clubs should take the appointment process very seriously, as the success of the exchange depends primarily on the quality of exchange leadership. Preference should be given to individuals with proven leadership ability and prior experience in exchange planning.

B. Ambassadors and Hosts

i. Recruitment Deadline and Forms: A list of ambassadors should be sent to the host

club(s) and FFI 60 days before the exchange departs. The [Ambassador](#) and [Host Application and Agreement](#) forms must be completed and signed by each ambassador and host. The respective EDs retain these forms. Failure to meet the specified deadlines can result in the rescheduling or cancellation of the exchange, with the hosting assigned to another club.

ii. Recruitment and Selection: The outbound (ambassador) ED should recruit as many qualified applicants as can be accommodated by the host club(s), while maintaining a waiting list. The host ED should recruit hosts who can be properly matched to the inbound ambassadors. In most cases, the ambassador recruitment goal is 20-25 people. Exchanges recruiting fewer than 15 persons may continue to be conducted, pending consultation with the clubs involved and with permission granted by FFI.

EDs should look both within the club membership and to the broader community for the most qualified ambassadors and hosts. FFI provides an online exchange catalog on thefriendshipforce.org where EDs can publicize their exchange openings if they choose. The outbound ED should request advertisement of an exchange on the website as soon as there is any awareness the club(s) cannot fill the exchange with their own membership. Many regions also offer regional recruitment tools.

Prior membership in a club should not be a requirement to apply for an exchange, but clubs may, if they choose, ask new participants to become a club member when joining their first exchange. Care should be taken to screen all applicants and to accept only those who understand the goals of the organization and who fit the health and mobility requirements of the exchange. Clubs should avoid a “sign up” process that suggests to applicants that acceptance on exchanges is automatic.

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If an exchange is not full at 100 days prior to departure, the exchange must be listed on the FFI online exchange catalog. (See Section 9, C below)

Ultimately, exchanges with fewer than 15 ambassadors may continue to be conducted, pending consultation with the clubs involved and with permission granted by FFI.

Ambassador and host EDs are advised to follow the procedures in the ED manual to ensure a successful exchange experience.

The manual is available on the FFI website. A DVD training program and frequent FFI conducted online trainings are also available.

iii. Accepting Ambassadors from Other Communities: The increased promotion of exchanges via email and the online catalog, along with travel flexibility, make it possible for ambassadors from anywhere in the world to join an exchange. As a result, ambassador EDs are increasingly looking outside their own communities for qualified applicants to fill their exchange. Since these candidates cannot attend workshops or meet face-to-face with the ED, other techniques are needed to ensure that only qualified candidates are accepted on the exchange. EDs wishing to recruit ambassadors from outside their community should follow these guidelines:

a. The current ambassador application includes the following statement: *"In the event the applicant is not able to meet in person with the exchange director, you will be asked to provide references and other supporting documentation."* This enables the ED to request references as needed to support the application.

b. The ED should correspond with the applicant via email and also speak with him or her on the phone. If the applicant is in a different country, the ED may request assistance from FFI in making direct contact to interview the applicant.

The ED should have several conversations or emails with the candidate, including a detailed discussion regarding the exchange and why the candidate is interested in participating. Suggested [interview guidelines](#) are provided on the FFI website in the Club Resources section, under "[documents](#)."

c. If, after discussing the exchange with the applicant, the ED wants to consider him/her for the exchange, the ED should obtain at least one written reference for the applicant. This should be from the applicant's Friendship Force club president or other suitable club reference. Clubs that are asked to provide references must be honest in responding to the ED's questions. The applicant may also be asked to provide one or more non-Friendship Force references who may be contacted by the ED. In the case of an applicant who is not currently a member of a Friendship Force club, at least two references should be obtained. If a non-club member lives in a community that has a club, they may also be asked to meet in person with a leader of the local club.

d. The ED should provide applicants from outside his/her community with all of the same material that is provided the local applicants at the exchange participation workshops. To facilitate this process and to provide an additional means for pre exchange communication, the ED may want to establish an interactive email, online or social media forum (*such as Facebook*) with all the ambassadors participating in the exchange.

C. Fill-the-Seat Policy: If an exchange is not full at 100 days prior to departure, the exchange must be listed on the FFI online exchange catalog.

A full exchange is one in which the number of ambassadors matches the hosting capacity of the host club. For multi-club exchanges, the hosting capacity of the smaller club will determine the overall hosting capacity. Any exchange of 25 ambassadors will also be considered full.

Domestic and EU and Schengen interclub exchanges are excluded from this policy.

D. Responsibilities of the Exchange Directors:

- i. Both the ambassador and host exchange director should work with the FFI staff to list the exchange on the FFI online exchange catalog. The outbound ED should request advertisement of an exchange on the website as soon as there is any awareness the club(s) cannot fill the exchange with their own membership.
- ii. The ambassador exchange director must receive and respond to inquiries and applications that come from the online catalog.
- iii. The ambassador exchange director should accept or reject applicants according to his/her own judgment. See section (B, ii) above.
- iv. The ambassador exchange director is not required to fill every space, only to make an effort toward that end by listing the exchange on the FFI website.
- v. Should an ambassador or host exchange director decide to cancel the exchange, he or she is free to do so but must contact FFI first, before cancelling the exchange on his/her own.
- vi. The Fill-the-Seat policy does not preclude any other policies in this document.

E. Guidelines for Filling an Exchange:

- i. Exchange directors are encouraged to set definite dates and confirm program activities early in their planning process and well ahead of the 100 days. Applicants will be more likely to commit when they can see an itinerary of activities.
- ii. Ambassador exchange directors are encouraged to promote their exchange regionally and are welcome to give top

priority to applicants from their own region if they choose. Contact your field representative or FFI program manager for more information.

F. Health and Mobility: Friendship Force exchanges are intended to be inclusive, welcoming people of all ages and backgrounds to participate. This includes children, adolescents, elderly participants and those with disabilities, mental or physical. However, applicants with special requirements can be accepted only if the host ED agrees in advance that the host club can meet those special requirements. This is to protect the safety and comfort of the ambassador as well as the host club.

In addition to ambassador applicants who have special needs, it is important to recognize that the level of physical activity required for a Friendship Force exchange according to the hosting situation as well as the program itinerary.

Therefore, the ambassador ED shall abide by the following guidelines to ensure that he/she accepts only those candidates who can meet the physical requirements of the exchange. If an ED has any questions regarding these policies, he/she should discuss them with the appropriate FFI staff for clarification and guidance.

- i. The Host ED shall provide the ambassador ED information describing the level of physical activity that will be required during the exchange, including the amount of walking as well as the living conditions and type of transportation that will be used during the exchange. (FFI provides a [checklist](#) on our website to assist in this process.)
- ii. The ambassador ED will provide this information to the ambassador applicants in writing prior to their acceptance on the exchange. The ED shall consider each applicant's ability to perform the physical requirements of the exchange when deciding whether or not to accept that applicant on the exchange.

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iii. If the ambassador ED wants to accept an applicant who cannot meet the physical requirements or who has special needs, the ambassador ED must first consult with the host ED. If the host ED agrees that the host club can accommodate that applicant safely and comfortably, then the ambassador ED may accept the applicant.

iv. The ambassador ED shall remind all applicants to take seriously the questions on the ambassador application regarding their health. THESE QUESTIONS ARE FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY and must be completed honestly. If an ED discovers that an ambassador did not provide full and truthful information, that person may be removed from the exchange at his/her own expense.

v. Because exchanges have differing physical requirements, the ambassador ED shall not automatically accept club members for an exchange. Only applicants who are able to demonstrate to the ED their ability to fulfill the physical requirements of the exchange shall be accepted.

vi. If the ambassador ED has concerns regarding an applicant's ability to fulfill the physical requirements of an exchange, he or she may ask the applicant to provide references pertaining to the applicant's physical abilities. At the discretion of the ED, this could include a requirement to provide a doctor's statement supporting the applicant's ability to carry out the requirements of the exchange. In such cases, the ED should provide the doctor an accurate statement regarding the type of activities and the expected living conditions on the exchange.

NOTE: This provision is to protect the health and safety of the ambassador applicant.

vii. Host capabilities: While the question of physical activity applies primarily to the ambassador applicants, host EDs shall also ensure that only qualified hosts are selected for the exchange. Since hosts are often expected to participate in various exchange activities, as well as provide a variety of

individual activities for the ambassadors, only those capable of performing these activities shall be selected as hosts. Furthermore, if the host is required to drive the ambassador during the exchange it is essential that only those who are fully qualified to carry out this responsibility are accepted. Host clubs are encouraged to use day hosts and other support as needed to assist hosts who may have limitations.

G. Youth Ambassadors

i. Youth ambassadors participating in a regular Friendship Force exchange (including supplemental exchanges) will receive a discount of 50% on the Ambassador Program Fee. The discount does not apply to exchanges designed specifically for youth ambassadors, which will have their own fees. A youth ambassador is defined as someone who is 18 years of age or younger or a full-time student 26 years of age or younger. Children under the age of two years who participate in an exchange with a parent will not be charged any Ambassador Program Fee or Host Club Program Fee.

ii. Separate from participation in regular exchanges, FFI may from time to time organize exchanges that are designed specifically for students and youth. Each student/youth exchange will have an itinerary that is developed jointly by the ambassador and host leaders. They will also establish the pricing, hosting and adult supervision arrangements suitable for that particular exchange. Prior to the exchange, the ambassador ED will provide the host ED full documentation for each student/youth ambassador regarding medical insurance, parental authorization, and guardian designation. All arrangements for student/youth exchanges, including pricing, are subject to approval by FFI.

iii. Any person under the age of 18 who is not accompanied by a parent must have a designated guardian during any Friendship Force experience. FFI provides master copies of the appropriate legal documents online. In addition, children under 16 must travel and be

hosted in the same home with an adult relative or designated guardian.

H. Visas: Clubs in some countries encounter difficulties obtaining visas for their outbound exchanges. As a result, the regular FFI planning procedures may need to be modified for their exchanges. It is important for the host club to recognize that these difficult situations are often the ones where the Friendship Force mission is most needed. Therefore, host clubs are encouraged to accept exchanges with clubs from these countries and to work with FFI and the ambassador club to carry out the exchange.

It is the responsibility of the ambassador exchange director to determine what visas will be required, if any, to travel to the host club(s). This should be done as soon as the exchange is assigned. If there is the expectation that obtaining visas will be a problem, the following steps should be followed:

- i. The ambassador ED should meet with Embassy or Consular officials of the host country as soon as possible to determine what steps are required to apply for visas.
- ii. FFI and the host clubs should respond promptly to any requests for documentation regarding the Friendship Force experience. However, the ambassador club should not expect that individual host families will be able to issue private invitations that include guarantees of financial support.
- iii. The ambassador ED should thoroughly screen all applicants for the exchange and reject any who may be a risk for not returning home. This is very important because any violations will make it difficult or impossible for future Friendship Force ambassadors to receive visas for that country.
- iv. The ambassador ED should ensure that all qualified applicants apply for their visa interview as soon as possible in order to avoid last-minute decisions.
- v. Host clubs should recognize that visa decisions are beyond the control of the ambassador club and that often the decision is made at the last minute. In such situations, the host club is encouraged to

keep open the possibility of hosting the exchange but to avoid making firm commitments until the visas have been issued. In some cases this may mean waiting until just before the exchange to make the final hosting and program arrangements.

I. Travel Insurance: All Friendship Force ambassadors are required to secure adequate travel and medical insurance to cover emergencies during their exchanges. This requirement can be fulfilled in one of the following ways: a) through the ambassador's existing insurance policy if it covers international travel, b) through the policy offered by FFI on our website, or c) by purchasing a separate travel insurance package. The Ambassador Application and Agreement form includes the following statement: "I hereby agree to secure adequate travel and medical insurance for the duration of the exchange." At the discretion of the ED, an insurance waiver form may be signed by an ambassador and notarized for those who choose not to secure insurance.

J. Exchange Evaluation: Within 30 days of the completion of the exchange, each ambassador ED and host ED shall complete and send to FFI a final Exchange Evaluation using a form provided by FFI. If there are substantial negative comments, FFI will contact the club(s) involved and will work with them to implement corrective action.

The results of the evaluation may be taken into account by FFI in determining future assignments for the club. Clubs with consistently excellent exchanges will be given priority in their choice of future exchanges. On the other hand, clubs with consistently poor evaluations will be closely monitored by FFI. If the issues are not resolved, FFI may suspend exchange activity until such time as the club can demonstrate its ability to carry out Friendship Force exchanges.

K. Cancellation:

i. Ambassador Cancellation: If an ambassador cancels more than 60 days before departure, FFI will refund all FFI Ambassador Program Fees and Host Club Program Fees. There is no refund of the FFI Ambassador Program Fees or Host Club Program Fees if an ambassador cancels less than 60 days before the exchange.

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Ambassadors are encouraged to file for a refund through their travel insurance; FFI will assist ambassadors with this process and provide any necessary documentation.

The Ambassador Exchange Committee Fee is non-refundable at any time.

ii. Exchange Cancellation: FFI reserves the right to cancel an exchange if it believes that conducting the exchange could lead to unnecessary risk or danger on the part of the ambassadors. In some cases cancellation may be due to the failure of the host club to provide an adequate program for the visiting ambassadors. In such cases, FFI will work with the ambassador ED to develop a suitable alternative itinerary for the ambassador delegation. In addition, if FFI cancels any exchange, all FFI Ambassador Program Fees and Host Club Program Fees will be fully refunded to the ambassadors.

L. *FFI Oversight and Monitoring of Exchanges*

To ensure that Friendship Force exchanges provide high quality cultural experiences for all ambassadors and hosts, FFI will monitor each exchange's planning and recruiting. This includes: *(a) the timely appointment of all EDs and selection of exchange dates, (b) the timely confirmation of a final itinerary and price, (c) recruitment of qualified ambassadors and hosts, and (d) payment of fees according to FFI guidelines.*

When asked, ambassador EDs should submit to FFI current information regarding exchange details, recruiting progress, names and ages of the prospective ambassadors, and the status of the payment of fees.

This information can be useful in determining if the exchange is progressing properly or if additional support is needed from the ambassador club, other clubs and leaders in the region, or from FFI. In most cases, early intervention for an exchange experiencing difficulty can lead to a successful exchange.

If, however, it is determined that the ambassador recruiting is not satisfactory, FFI may cancel or reschedule the exchange and reassign the hosting assignment to another club from the waiting list that is maintained by FFI.

If at any time you have any questions you can always call the FFI head office in Atlanta at US (+404) 522-9490 and ask to speak with a Program Manager. Or visit our website at www.friendshipforce.org.

These 'Club and Exchange Policies' are updated each year by the FFI Board of Directors and staff, and are subject to change, with notice, throughout the year.

Thank you!