

# Friendship Force International 2011 Club and Exchange Policies

As approved by the FFI Board of Directors March 8, 2010

**(All fees are quoted in US dollars)**

## **A. Friendship Force Clubs**

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.

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. 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.

In addition to conducting their regular inbound and outbound exchanges, Friendship Force clubs are encouraged to promote the Friendship Force mission in their region 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: domestic exchanges, European interclub visits or stopover hospitality (see section C. 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 the club to follow the policy guidelines for arranging supplemental activities and for paying the appropriate fees.

The Charter Renewal Form for 2011 should be sent to FFI not later than January 15, 2011 along with the club affiliation fee of US \$10 per individual and US \$17 per family. This should be based on membership numbers at the end of 2010.

## **B. Basic Exchange Policies and Fees**

**1. Exchanges:** Friendship Force exchanges are typically composed of 20 to 25 ambassadors who travel to a host community in another country for a one-week (5-7 nights) homestay experience. After the first homestay, options exist for independent travel in the region, participation in a group tour, or, where available, a second homestay. Participation 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 for the homestay experience. The host club is responsible for recruiting and preparing citizens 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 set by Friendship Force International.

**2. Exchange Directors:** Exchange Directors (EDs) provide the local leadership required for successful exchanges. They are selected by the local club and report to FFI for exchange planning purposes. An Exchange Directors' 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.

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

**4. Recruitment Deadline:** A list of ambassadors should be sent to the host club(s) and FFI 60 days before the exchange departs. The Ambassador Application and Agreement form 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.

**5. FFI Ambassador Fee:** Each ambassador pays an FFI ambassador fee for a Friendship Force experience. This fee is used to cover the direct costs of supporting the exchange. It also includes a contribution to the general operations of the global Friendship Force network. FFI ambassador fees are due to FFI 60 days before the exchange departs. The FFI ambassador fee for 2011 is \$150 per week (5-7 nights) for exchanges outbound from the USA and \$125 per week for all other clubs.

**6. Local Ambassador Club Budget:** 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.

**7. Host Club Program and Fees:** 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 hosts) should be paid by the ambassadors.

a. 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.

b. 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. However, if the Host Club Program Fee is more than \$100, the host ED will present a full budget of all activities—both the basic cultural program and the additional activities—prior to the exchange and a post-exchange accounting of the actual expenses.

c. 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.

d. 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.

**8. 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.

a. FFI Ambassador Program Fee: The ambassador ED will receive a pro-rated discount of the FFI Ambassador Program Fee if there are at least ten 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.

b. Other 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.

**9. 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 in

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.

**10. Visas:** In recent years some clubs encountered difficulties obtaining visas for their outbound exchanges. As a result, some of the regular FFI planning procedures may need to be modified. 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. (See Additional Guidelines below for more details.)

**11. Youth Ambassadors:** 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 2 who participate in an exchange with a parent will not be charged any Ambassador Program Fee or Host Club Program Fee.

In addition, FFI may 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.

**12. Unaccompanied Children:** 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.

**13. 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, 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.

**14. 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.

**15. 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. **The Local Committee Fee is non-refundable at any time.**

**16. 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.

**17. Payment Procedures:** Payment should be made in US dollars and may be made by check on a US account in US dollars, or by credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover Card or American Express), to the following mailing address: Friendship Force International, 127 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 501, Atlanta, GA 30303, USA. Bank wire transfers may also be used, with payments made to: Wachovia Bank, Atlanta, Georgia; Routing Transit No: 061000227; Swift Code: PNBPU33; Beneficiary: Friendship Force International; Operating Account No: 2000-12809-8785. 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. Note: 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.

**18. Special Themed Exchanges:** Friendship Force International recognizes that an alternative to the regular club-based exchanges can be attractive for Friendship Force members and non-members alike. These include exchanges with a theme—such as language learning, hiking or gardening—as well as programs with a cultural focus. The fees for these specialized programs may include the additional costs of providing a more customized itinerary. Each specialized exchange will have payment deadlines and cancellation policies based on the requirements of the itinerary. Club leaders interested in arranging a specialized exchange may contact the Program Planning Department at FFI at any time to discuss how to create a specialized program.

## **C. Supplemental Exchange Opportunities**

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.

**1. 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 neighboring country. Clubs wishing to conduct domestic exchanges will be required to follow these procedures:

*a. Scheduling:* Domestic exchanges may be scheduled between two clubs within a country after all their regular international exchanges have been confirmed for the coming year.

*b. Length:* A domestic exchange can be for 1-7 nights in the host club.

*c. Fees:* There is no FFI Ambassador Program Fee for domestic exchanges of 1-3 nights. However, there is an FFI Ambassador Program Fee of \$50 per person for domestic exchanges of 4-7 nights. Any Host Club Program Fee will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis between the clubs.

*d. Reporting Procedures:* Once a domestic exchange has been confirmed between the two clubs, the club presidents or exchange directors should contact FFI to register the visit 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.

**2. European Interclub Visits:** In recognition of the reduced barriers for travel between the countries of the European Union (EU), and to reserve as much regular European hosting as possible for clubs from outside the region, FFI has a supplemental program called European Interclub Visits. These visits are designed to be shorter with less costly travel requirements than a regular exchange. The club visits are supplemental activities. They should not be seen as an alternative to regular international exchanges. European clubs wishing to have regular week-long hosting experiences within Europe may do so through FFI's regular exchange assignment process. European clubs wishing to conduct domestic exchanges between clubs 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 goals without undermining other Friendship Force activity. Clubs wishing to conduct European interclub visits will be required to follow these procedures:

*a. Scheduling:* Friendship Force clubs within the EU may conduct interclub visits with each other. These should be scheduled directly by the two clubs, but only after all regular international exchanges have been confirmed for the coming year. When scheduling the visit, the clubs should also discuss the possibility of a reciprocal visit in the future, determining in advance if the return exchange would be an interclub visit or a regular exchange. Clubs are not permitted to change a regular exchange within Europe into an interclub visit.

*b. Length:* European interclub visits may be from 1-4 nights and should be considered only for club pairings that are appropriate for this length visit. They should not be planned for long-distance and more costly pairings that are better suited for regular week-long exchanges. Clubs are not permitted to extend interclub visits beyond four nights on either an informal or formal basis.

*c. One at a Time:* Since the purpose of the European Interclub Visit is to provide opportunities for short and inexpensive visits, usually over a long weekend, only one 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, costly and time consuming. Therefore, they do not meet the criteria for an interclub visit. (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 3 below), adding a 1-4 night visit along the way to their regular hosting assignment. FFI is also prepared to

work with European leaders to design specialized exchanges that follow the “Discover” format which can include multiple short homestays as part of the exchange.)

*d. Fees:* There will be an FFI Ambassador Program Fee of \$25 per person for European interclub visits. The Host Club Program Fee will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis between the clubs.

*e. Reporting Procedures:* Once an interclub visit has been confirmed between the two clubs, the club presidents or exchange directors should contact FFI to register the visit 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.

**3. 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.

## **D. Additional Guidelines**

### **1. Ambassador and Host Recruitment:**

EDs should look both within the club membership and to the broader community for the most qualified ambassadors and hosts. **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. Clubs should avoid a “sign up” process that suggests to applicants

that acceptance on exchanges is automatic. Applicants should demonstrate that they are physically fit for the living conditions in their host community and, at the ED's discretion, they may be asked for a physician's verification of good health, stamina and mobility. Please refer to the attached statement on Mobility and Health Limitations

Clubs should educate their members to the reality that some exchanges require little physical exertion while others require a great deal. Therefore, recognizing that each exchange is different, longtime members should not assume they will be accepted just because they are loyal members of the club. Many clubs have elderly members who may not be capable of being good guests in host communities that require a lot of walking and use of public transportation. It is the responsibility of the ED to accept only those who are able to meet the physical demands of the exchange. Club presidents and board members should assist in this process by educating their members and providing support to the ED in making the sometimes difficult decision regarding rejection of applicants because they do not meet these requirements. Clubs that fail to abide by these requirements may be required by FFI to adopt new procedures to ensure that only well-qualified ambassadors are accepted.

## **2. Policy on Mobility and Health Limitations**

Ambassador Exchange Directors are responsible for ensuring that ambassadors on their exchanges understand and certify that they can comply with the physical requirements of the exchange program. While Friendship Force exchanges are not considered unusually demanding, ambassadors need to be able to keep up with the typical daily activities of their hosts. Walking for extended periods of time, carrying their own luggage, riding public transportation, and climbing stairs are all normal activities within any exchange. Participants also need to be alert, capable of following directions, and able to fulfill the goal of The Friendship Force as an ambassador of friendship and goodwill. Here are some ways in which ambassador Exchange Directors can screen potential ambassadors:

- Review the health section of the Ambassador Application Form with the applicant and make sure that any potential or current health or mobility problems are adequately noted. Ask applicants direct questions about their daily routine, travel habits, and level of physical and mental abilities and explain the nature of activities proposed on the exchange plan.
- If the applicant has traveled previously with FFI, check with the applicant's most recent Exchange Director regarding any reasons why the applicant should not participate on the planned exchange. If the applicant is new to FFI, ask for a reference who can speak knowledgeably about the applicant's level of physical and mental capabilities to fulfill the requirements of the exchange.
- Provide the applicant with a list of the planned activities for the exchange and ask for a letter from their health provider indicating if the applicant will be able to meet the requirements of the exchange.

FFI does support the participation of ambassadors with health limitations and physical disabilities. However, without exception, ambassadors can only be accepted on an exchange upon full disclosure of their limitations to both the ambassador and host Exchange Directors and written agreement from the host exchange community and/or travel suppliers that they are able to accommodate the limitation.

During an exchange, if either the ambassador or host Exchange Director finds that a physical or mental limitation, which was not fully disclosed in advance, interferes with the ambassador's ability to participate fully in the exchange program, including the homestay, then that participant may be asked to depart the program or be moved to an alternate housing arrangement at the participant's own expense.

### **3. Travel Visas**

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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.