International Student Resource Center

J-1 STEM International Scholar Sponsorship Initiative
for U.S. Colleges and Universities

A program of the U.S. Department of State – BridgeUSA

The U.S. Department of State (DoS) through their "BridgeUSA" J-1 STEM Sponsorship Initiative allows academic institutions to sponsor J-1 research visas in STEM fields for outside institutions and companies.

Traditionally, the J visa program has been used by academic institutions to bring scholars from other countries to conduct research and or teach at that institution. Through this new program, colleges and universities can facilitate the sponsorship of J-1 Exchange Research Scholars at third-party host companies doing business in STEM fields. The program will streamline the visa process for scholars who have appointments or position offers at qualifying US STEM companies.

Offering these sponsorships can broaden the scope of research done by the universities, and affiliated or collaborative relationships with outside companies. Utilizing this program can also be of assistance to your graduated students seeking work in STEM fields.

Some scenarios to which this sponsorship category could apply are:

• Support for international graduates: Research positions offered to international college or university graduates at STEM companies, when an H-1B work visa is not an option

- Academic / Tech hubs: Sponsorship support for international students involved in collaborative entrepreneurial programs between academic institutions and tech or science-based companies

• External research support: Research positions at start-up STEM companies in areas of interest to the academic institution

Please note: The Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) fosters global understanding through educational and cultural exchanges. As a result, sponsorship under this visa category is not a typical work visa, although it does allow salaried and compensated work. All exchange visitors sponsored through this program will be part of the J-1 research scholar program mission to promote the exchange of ideas, research, mutual enrichment and linkages between research and academic institutions in the United States and foreign countries. More information about the requirements for host companies can be found on the BridgeUSA website.

J-1 STEM Initiative Sponsorship Process

Final determination as to whether the company is in a STEM field, or the position offered qualifies under the State Department policies is made solely by representatives of the sponsoring college or university.

The sponsorship for the J-1 STEM Initiative might involve several steps:

1. The university representative should meet with the sponsoring company's HR office representative, the scholar's work or performance supervisor, and the scholar, to discuss the process and review the work conditions and location. A contract for sponsorship between the company and the school should be signed by both OGE and the hosting company.

2. The Responsible Officer (RO) or the Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) for the school's J-1 program will visit the work location to ensure the facilities and the purpose of the exchange falls within State Department policies.

3. The hosting company and the international scholar will submit applications for sponsorship to the school's J-1 program representative (RO or ARO)

4. The RO or ARO will review the position offered and the scholar's educational and experiential credentials to ensure an appropriate match with State Department guidelines.

5. If approved, the RO or ARO will issue Form DS-2019 and send it to the scholar, with a copy to the HR representative at the host company.

6. The scholar will apply for the J-1 visa at a U.S. Consulate, and enter the U.S.

7. The scholar completes the required check-in with the ARO or RO.

Conditions of the Position:

The duration of the sponsored research position may be between three weeks and five years. Sponsorship may be for up to one year initially, with up to four subsequent annual

extensions. The employer must pay the offered salary and provide health insurance and other benefits as are offered to other employees.

The RO or ARO is responsible for reporting certain information regarding the sponsorship to the U.S. Department of State and Department of Homeland Security. This will require information from and communication between the company and the College or University.

Once in the U.S., the international scholar will complete a required check-in with the RO or ARO, confirming they have entered the U.S. in the correct J-1 status and are beginning the sponsored position. Depending upon the length of the position, subsequent "check-ins" with the RO or ARO may be required to ensure the sponsorship is progressing smoothly and successfully, including ensuring availability to cross-cultural events and / or programming.

The J-1 researcher must comply with health insurance requirements set by the Dept. of State and must be offered health insurance that is normally offered by the employer to all employees. This must include supplemental medevac and re-patriation insurance.

The position may be funded by the hosting employer, or it may be self-funded by the J-1. It can also be funded by outside agencies or organizations.

Sponsorship Costs:

The college or university is allowed to charge a fee for the sponsorship. Additional fees may also be charged if travel is required to inspect the worksite.

In addition, the international scholar will need to pay the "SEVIS" fee to the U.S. government prior to applying for the U.S. visa, and the U.S. visa application fee to the U.S. Dept. of State. The fees may be paid by the company or the scholar. As of Spring 2026 these fees are:

• SEVIS fee: $220

• US Visa application fee: $185

Depending upon the country of citizenship, there may be an additional visa application "reciprocity" fee. These government fees are subject to change.

More Information:

See more information about J-1 STEM Initiative opportunities on the U.S. State Department website.

Find a list of approved sponsors by the Exchange Visitor Program.