



UTAH GLOBAL DIPLOMACY

The Impact of International Exchange Programs in Utah:
Shaping Utah's Diplomatic Relations, One Handshake at a Time.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract3

Introduction4

Background8

- Utah Global Diplomacy
- International Visitor Leadership Program
- Young Leaders of the Americas Program
- Iraqi Youth Leadership Exchange Program
- Home Hosting
- Professional Resources

Methodology12

Findings14

- Applying and Sharing Gained Knowledge
- Improvements to Public Policy and Government Operations
- Improvements to Educational Systems
- Improvements to Private Sector Business Operations
- Improvements to Community Wellbeing
- Personal and Professional Development
- Personal Development
- Professional Development
- Gaining New Skills
- Obtaining New Understanding
- Networking—Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative
- Cultivation of Mutual Understanding and Cultural Learning
- Cultural Learning
- Volunteer Culture
- Religious Tolerance
- Mutual Understanding

Professional Resources
Taste of Home Hospitality

Summary and Conclusion32

Appendix35

List of international visitor countries of origin
Example of Two-week Email
Examples of Three-month, Six-month and One-year Emails
Online Questionnaire
Interview Questions for Professional Resources
Interview Questions for Home Hosts

References43

US Department of State Regional Maps47

ABSTRACT

Since 1967, Utah Global Diplomacy has facilitated international exchanges for the US Department of State International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). During this time, it has expanded its resources to host a variety of congressional international exchanges and engage Utah communities in citizen diplomacy. These efforts include lecture series, symposiums, podcasts, fundraisers, home hosting, and cultural event participation. The connections through these visits have a lasting impact on both the participant and people in Utah. Business connections have resulted in development within the international communities, organizations have greater capacity and resources, and people have improved perceptions of the United States thereby increasing long-term connections. For over 65 years, the US government has invested millions of dollars and effort into hosting and promoting international exchange programs as a tool of diplomatic connections on a government, business, and personal level. These connections are created to help reduce the need for militarized strong-arming and promote the economic development of nations, and overall goodwill towards the US. This report examines the long-term impact of international exchange programs hosted by the US Department of State and the US Congress within Utah. Programs include the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program (IYLEP), Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI), and others. This report will help government entities and nonprofits involved with the US Department of State and Congress exchange programs better understand its impacts and help the American people understand the important role they play as citizen diplomats.

INTRODUCTION

Diplomacy, an ancient practice, involves negotiating and managing international affairs between nations without resorting to hostility (A History, 2004). Diplomacy serves as the primary tool for foreign policy (A History, 2004) and stands in contrast to intimidating tactics and warfare. Traditionally, the US Department of State has handled official diplomatic policy through its many career diplomats, but ordinary Americans also play a role in this process. Since 1940, the United States has actively embraced citizen diplomacy ("Our History," n.d.), which recognizes that everyday individuals, not just career diplomats, have the right and responsibility to shape foreign relations.

Citizen diplomacy, although newer in concept than traditional diplomacy, is an essential component of American diplomatic efforts. It involves the exchange of ideas and cultures between citizens of different countries, occurring in both formal and informal settings, such as official gatherings or casual conversations. The US government supports various international exchange programs to promote citizen diplomacy. These initiatives help participants develop personal and professional skills, which they can utilize to improve conditions in their home countries and foster greater peace and stability.

Currently, the United States has numerous international exchange initiatives focused on establishing professional and personal relationships. The International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), initiated in 1940, has become the most prominent aspect of the US Department of State's efforts in social diplomacy. Over time, additional programs have emerged through the US Congress to address specific regional needs as they arise. Following the Cold War, Congress implemented exchange programs for post-Soviet countries, emphasizing accountable governance, women in leadership, and economic development. In 2007, the Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program (IYLEP) was launched to promote youth leadership and foster stable US-Iraqi relationships. In 2015, Congress introduced the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI), aiming to empower young entrepreneurs and stimulate regional economic development throughout the Americas. Overall, the US Department of State and Congress oversee more than 400 international exchange programs. Participants in these programs often report professional skill development, the implementation of new practices at their workplaces, and lasting connections with individuals they encountered in the United States, ensuring ongoing professional growth even after returning home. Demonstrating the theory of change through qualitative experiences is difficult to demonstrate, however, the precedence for these metrics is strong. In 2006, the US Department of State released a study done on IVLP participants between 1996 and 2001. The

evaluation concluded that programs were largely meeting their goals by cultivating professional and personal development, fostering collaborations and networking, increasing mutual understanding between nations, and spreading newfound knowledge beyond immediate participants.

First, exchange programs prove useful for professional and personal development. Ninety-eight percent of surveyed IVLP alumni believed their experiences in the United States were valuable to their professional development (ORC Macro, 2006; US Department, 2006). Nearly half (49 percent) of IVLP alumni reported establishing or continuing professional collaborations with contacts from their home countries or with those they met in the United States (US Department, 2006). Aside from professional development and networking, exchange programs are also effective in improving understanding of American institutions, values, and culture. Indeed one of the leading purposes of the international exchange programs is to promote and improve understanding of US culture, polity, and business. IVLP visits effectively improve perception for both visitors and their home communities. While there is a relatively small number of IVLP participants, the impact of improved perception of the United States extends to visitor communities via word of mouth. Market research in the tourism industry indicates that word-of-mouth (WoM) marketing is the best indicator of the competitiveness of a destination. WoM provides credible recommendations for listeners and creates a positive emotional connection through a personal connection to the participant that experienced it. WoM also creates an authentic perception of a location that is unclouded by financial or political interest. IVLP alumni reported an increased understanding of the United States (88 percent), Americans (86 percent), US government institutions (76 percent), daily life in the United States (74 percent), and American values and culture (71 percent) (ORC Macro, 2006; US Department, 2006). The IVLP also proved useful in instilling democratic values in participants. An overwhelming number of IVLP alumni report supporting many concepts that are essential to democratic societies. For instance, IVLP alumni believed “citizens should have equal rights (99 percent); the rule of law is fundamental to democracy (99 percent); free and fair elections are cornerstones of democracy (98 percent); individuals and organizations have the right to free speech (97 percent); and independent media is important (95 percent)” (ORC Macro, US Department, 2006).

Not only do exchange programs help participants gain a better understanding of the United States and Americans, but they also help increase mutual understanding and trust between nations. More than two-thirds of IVLP alumni said the program increased their trust in the United States (71 percent), and 65 percent gained a more favorable view of the US government (ORC Macro, 2006; US Department, 2006). Views of Americans also improved. Seventy-three percent reported holding a more favorable

opinion of Americans than before they participated in the IVLP, and 77 percent reported gaining more trust in Americans (ORC Macro, 2006; US Department, 2006). After their experiences in the program, alumni also reported viewing Americans as more friendly, cooperative, compassionate, and concerned about people from other countries (US Department, 2006). There was also a decrease in the number of participants believing Americans to be arrogant (from 36 to 19 percent) (US Department, 2006).

Overall, a substantial majority (97 percent) agreed that the IVLP helped to develop a more positive relationship between the world's peoples by increasing mutual understanding between different nations (ORC Macro, 2006; US Department, 2006). American Home Hosts and Professional Resources have also witnessed the value of foreign exchange programs in increasing international friendship and peace. In assessing the value of the IVLP conducted in Iowa, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia, Home Hosts, and Professional Resources agreed that international exchanges helped increase mutual understanding between Americans and International Visitors by facilitating the sharing of cultures, personal values, and beliefs (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Office of Policy and Evaluation, 2001, 2003, 2005; US Department, 2002, 2005).

Overall, IVLP alumni reported being pleased with their experiences, believing the exchange programs were administered well and made a difference in their lives. Alumni were highly satisfied with the program, with nearly all alumni saying they were satisfied with the administration (98 percent), content (97 percent), variety of experiences (96 percent), and relevance of professional or academic development (94 percent) (US Department, 2006).

Additionally, alumni stated they were able to apply their newfound knowledge to help develop their home countries (US Department, 2006). Specifically, alumni were better able to contribute to the social and civil (68 percent), political (51 percent), and economic development (46 percent) of their native countries (US Department, 2006). Overall, 90 percent agreed that the IVLP meets the four broad goals of the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961 (also known as the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961) which are for all foreign exchange programs to (1) increase mutual understanding between people of the United States and people of other countries; (2) strengthen ties that unite people of the United States and other countries; (3) promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement; and (4) assist in the development of 'friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world' (US Department, 2006).

In summary, available studies largely find international exchange programs to be effective in cultivating professional and personal development, fostering collaborations and networking, increasing mutual understanding between nations, and spreading newfound knowledge beyond immediate program participants. While reports indicate the positive impact of these programs, there is limited research in recent years to quantify their effects on both domestic and international communities. The current study will add to the existing limited knowledge, further assess the value of the IVLP and other exchange programs, and determine whether it is meeting the four legislative goals laid out in the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961.

Purpose Statement: This report attempts to add to the available knowledge of international exchange programs' global impact by surveying and interviewing International Visitors, Professional Resources, and Home Hosts who have participated in programs hosted in Utah over five years from August 2018 to May 2023. The gathered data will be used to determine how these programs have facilitated changes in perceptions, governance, and business practices in both Utah and in communities overseas.

BACKGROUND

Utah Global Diplomacy

Located in Salt Lake City, Utah Global Diplomacy is the sole CBM for the State of Utah ("Community-based Members," n.d.). Founded in 1967, Utah Global Diplomacy has worked to advance the principle of citizen diplomacy or the idea that every individual has the right and responsibility to shape US foreign relations through personal connections "one handshake at a time" ("Who We Are," n.d.). Utah Global Diplomacy carries out its mission through two pillars of work. Firstly, they facilitate professional and cultural international exchange programs in Utah, collaborating with the US Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program and other exchange initiatives. These programs bring emerging leaders from around the world to Utah, enabling them to connect with professionals, businesses, government agencies, and organizations to exchange knowledge, network, and experience Utah's unique culture. In return, Utah businesses, organizations, and individuals learn about different practices, policies, and cultures while forming professional and personal relationships with International Visitors.

Secondly, Utah Global Diplomacy hosts the Ambassador John Price & Marcia Price World Affairs Symposium Series, Foreign Policy Association Great Decisions course, and our Fireside Chats live podcast recording. Its lectures, conversations, and dialogues provide insight into critical national and global issues, shaping public discourse by convening leading experts who engage the public to explore ideas that transform how we connect with the world. Additionally, its Young Diplomats of Utah program immerses youth, age 14 - 32, in international relations in preparation for becoming Utah's future leaders.

Utah Global Diplomacy is dedicated to promoting shared respect and understanding between the people of Utah and other nations. Utah Global Diplomacy emphasizes citizen diplomacy as a powerful tool for building sustainable economic and social relationships in an interconnected world. They are committed to social responsibility and non-discrimination, celebrating diversity in all forms and providing opportunities for individuals of all ages to get involved. The organization is also dedicated to environmental conservation, incorporating sustainable green practices into its business operations and programs whenever feasible.

International Visitor Leadership Program

The IVLP is a program of the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs ("IVLP," n.d.). It aims to strengthen cooperative ties with countries around the world and further the foreign policy goals of the United States by providing a

rich experience in professional and cultural immersion for foreign visitors ("FAQs," n.d.; "IVLP," n.d.). Since its inception in 1940, the IVLP has welcomed more than 200,000 program participants to the United States, with nearly 5,000 visiting annually ("About IVLP," n.d.).

IVLP participants are selected by US embassy staff members who are tasked with identifying current or emerging foreign leaders in the countries in which they are based. Those chosen to participate in the IVLP travel to the United States to gain new skills that can be used to improve conditions in their native countries ("At-a-glance," n.d.; "Questions About," n.d.). Known as International Visitors, IVLP participants visit numerous locations across the United States and meet with professionals in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to learn of new ways of approaching their lines of work ("The IVLP," n.d.). International Visitors also engage in numerous cultural and social activities and have the opportunity to share their own professional and cultural insights with their American hosts ("The IVLP," n.d.).

Visits last approximately three weeks and International Visitors typically travel to two to four locations across the United States, beginning in Washington D.C. ("Questions About," n.d.). Depending on the program theme, International Visitors may travel alone, with fellow citizens, or with a group of individuals representing multiple nationalities ("The IVLP," n.d.). The types of programs International Visitors engage in are diverse and tailored to the professional goals of participants. Program themes include—but are not limited to—government transparency, education, nonprofit and civic engagement, business entrepreneurship, and banking and financial responsibilities. Such a variety of programming ensures International Visitors from vastly different backgrounds gain knowledge that is most pertinent to their lines of work.

The IVLP is funded and administered by the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs ("Questions About," n.d.) and numerous nonprofit partners. The design and implementation of IVLP projects are completed by National Program Agencies (NPAs), a group of seven nonprofit organizations based in Washington D.C. ("Citizen Diplomacy," n.d.; "Public Sector," n.d.). The NPAs, in turn, work closely with Community-Based Members (CBMs), which are the sole implementers of IVLP events at each specific location visited by program participants ("Community-based Members," n.d.). With eighty-six CBMs across the United States, these local nonprofits are ultimately responsible for connecting International Visitors with Professional Resources in the communities in which they are based ("Community-based Members," n.d.; "Public Sector," n.d.). Aside from developing professional programs, CBMs are responsible for arranging cultural activities and

organizing home hospitality visits for International Visitors to enjoy ("Citizen Diplomacy," n.d.).

Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative

The Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI) is a program that empowers entrepreneurs to enhance their capacity to launch and advance their entrepreneurial ideas, contributing effectively to social and economic development in their communities. Since its inception in 2015, YLAI has provided opportunities for over 1,000 YLAI Fellows from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada to expand their leadership and entrepreneurial experience through fellowships at businesses and organizations across the United States.

The YLAI Fellowship program offers a comprehensive curriculum in entrepreneurial leadership, equipping fellows with the necessary skills and knowledge to accelerate the success of their commercial and social ventures. Through individualized professional placements, fellows gain practical experience and develop specific action plans to implement upon their return to their home countries. Moreover, YLAI Fellows establish networks, linkages, and lasting partnerships, attracting investments and support for their entrepreneurial ventures.

Since its launch, the YLAI Fellowship program has made a significant impact. More than 1,200 fellows, including a significant number of women, from 37 countries, have been hosted by over 900 US companies and organizations across 34 states and 83 cities. A year after their YLAI Fellowships, an impressive 98 percent of fellows applied what they learned in the United States, 94 percent felt prepared to find funding, and 84 percent attracted new resources. Notably, among US businesses, 95 percent would recommend hosting a YLAI Fellow, and 92 percent expressed willingness to host again.

To further support the fellows, various grants have been awarded. Forty-nine innovation and pitch competition grants have facilitated business improvements in 23 countries. Additionally, over 90 impact grants have been provided to foster collaboration and capacity building between US partner and alumni networks and local entrepreneurial communities. Moreover, fellows have benefited from travel grants to attend business conferences, both in the United States and abroad. The program has also facilitated visits by over 138 US hosts to fellows in their respective countries, fostering business development and expanding networks.

Overall, the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative has emerged as a highly impactful program, enabling emerging entrepreneurs to unlock their full economic potential. By promoting US business models, encouraging job creation, facilitating trade, and building

sustainable networks, YLAI has contributed significantly to the growth and development of young entrepreneurs and business leaders across the Western Hemisphere.

Iraqi Young Leadership Exchange Program (IYLEP)

The Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program (IYLEP) is a fully-funded initiative sponsored by the US Embassy in Baghdad and the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The program focuses on high school and undergraduate-aged students and aims to develop leadership potential, civic engagement, and global understanding among talented Iraqi and US students. Participants engage in experiential learning activities, workshops, and community service projects, with support from mentors and alumni. The program consists of pre- and post-program segments, as well as a four-week exchange program in the United States. During the exchange, students are hosted in different US cities, where they participate in leadership training, cross-cultural communication, skills development, and networking opportunities. The program also includes a conference in Washington, D.C., where participants synthesize their experiences and engage in professional development. Upon returning home, participants implement their project ideas and continue their engagement through virtual alumni workshops.

Since its inception in 2007, IYLEP has provided invaluable leadership and educational opportunities for over 3,000 high school and undergraduate students. The program is and serves as an investment in global understanding and peace, fully funding the participation of young individuals who demonstrate exceptional potential. By nurturing the talents and skills of these future leaders of Iraq, the IYLEP aims to inspire and empower them to make a positive and lasting impact on their communities and beyond.

Home Hosting

Home hosting is a vital component of the IVLP, YLAI, IYLEP, and other international exchange programs, providing visiting participants with a unique and immersive experience. Through home hosting, local American families open their doors and offer hospitality to International Visitors, allowing them to gain firsthand insights into American culture, values, and way of life. Home hosts play a crucial role in creating a welcoming environment, fostering cross-cultural exchange, and facilitating meaningful connections between visitors and the local community. By sharing meals, engaging in conversations, and providing a glimpse into their daily lives, home hosts contribute to the participants' understanding of American society while promoting mutual understanding and friendship between nations. The home-hosting aspect of the international exchange adds a personal touch to the program, creating lasting memories and promoting cultural diplomacy at the grassroots level.

For IVLP participants, Home Hosting involves a singular hosted dinner in a Utah home. Both the participant and host connect for a few hours during their meal. For YLAI participants, Home Hosting has the opportunity to be more iterative during their three-week-long visit. Participants and host families meet for dinner but often interact in other capacities. Some host families have even invited YLAI participants to other excursions during their free time for professional or personal development. IYLEP participants have the strongest connection to Home Hosts as they stay with a host family throughout their visit. Often, participants are paired with a family that includes a youth member. This instills a sense of camaraderie within their generation and promotes lasting lifetime connections.

Professional Resources

Professional Resources are integral to international exchange programs by providing expertise, guidance, and support to visiting participants. These resources are professionals from various fields who engage with International Visitors, sharing their knowledge, experiences, and best practices. The purpose of Professional Resources is to offer a platform for participants to learn from experts in their respective fields, gain insights into American professional practices, and explore new perspectives and approaches. These resources facilitate discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities, enabling visitors to expand their professional networks and establish meaningful connections. By engaging with Professional Resources, participants benefit from the wealth of knowledge and expertise, ultimately enhancing their professional development and contributing to their respective fields upon their return to their home countries.

For IVLP participants, Professional Resources present a one-time interaction where they present their expertise and converse with the program participants. IYLEP participants likewise have a limited connection to Professional Resources, meeting with them a few times during their program. For YLAI participants, the role of Professional Resources is iterative and long-lasting. Participants connect deeply to their Professional Resource placement and rely on them to succeed in their professional development. The involvement of Professional Resources in all these programs is greatly enriching and promotes the exchange of ideas, fostering international cooperation and collaboration.

METHODOLOGY

To determine the impact of International Visitors' stay in Utah, data was gathered via email communication with program participants at four intervals after departure from the

state: two weeks, three months, six months, and one year. (For drafts of the emails sent to International Visitors of IVLP, YLAI, and other exchange programs, see the appendix.) Visitors were told to expect email correspondence from Utah Global Diplomacy in postscript messages in each local program book, an itinerary given to International Visitors upon arrival in the state. While the emails of most IVLP participants were available, some were missing or were broken addresses. The emails invited all recipients to share their stories of how visiting Utah had an impact on themselves, their causes, and their communities. Follow-up emails were sent regardless of feedback previously submitted to give recipients the chance to share any further developments.

Email recipients could reply directly to the sent emails but were encouraged to submit their feedback using an online form at the Utah Global Diplomacy website, utahglobaldiplomacy.org. The questionnaire provided a field to share stories of impact and also included a series of pre-established statements that respondents could select if the statements were exemplary of their experiences in Utah. (For the online form layout, see the appendix.) If responses were submitted in a non-English language, Google Translate was used to interpret feedback. Furthermore, all repeat responses were carefully examined to ensure that answers to the questionnaire were not double or triple-counted. Overall, the response rate from International Visitors was approximately 11 percent.

Emails were sent to all International Visitors who participated in the IVLP from August 2018 to May 2023, and only responses received before May 1st, 2023 were considered in this report. Noteworthy periods that impacted data gathering include the following: from August 2018 through May 2020, visitor responses were gathered via email questions. Evaluation forms were sent via Formsite, an outside evaluation form resulting in more comprehensive outreach and results. Due to pandemic limitations on international travel starting in 2020, International Visitors participated in virtual programming, meeting with resources via platforms like Zoom. Participants were sent the standard schedule of emails at two weeks, three months, six months, and one year, however, the response rate was significantly lower for these cohorts of visitors. Both the emails and the online form expressly stated that names, images, and information given by International Visitors could be used on the Utah Global Diplomacy website, in social media, and printed materials. The surveys were analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Utah program on the participants themselves and their international communities over an extended period.

Furthermore, surveys were also distributed to Utah locals who participated as Professional Resources or Home Hosts in the exchange program (refer to the appendix for a copy of the surveys). These surveys focused on assessing how the interactions

contributed to increased cultural understanding and promoted mutual growth. Collectively, the responses indicate that the Utah segment of the IVLP and other exchange programs successfully facilitates cultural exchange, enhances mutual understanding between nations, fosters professional and personal development, and has a broader impact beyond the immediate program participants, extending overseas.

Following completion of the surveys, exchange participant responses were coded into categories of interest, (Public Policy and Government Operations, Educational Systems, Private Sector Business Operations, and Community Wellbeing, respectively). Each category was then stratified into interest (increased understanding or appreciation for), or implementation (actual policy or institutional change initiated). This was then used to create a qualitative narrative about the impact areas that international exchange programs have on international communities.

Professional Resource and Home Host responses were limited and as such were maintained uncategorized.

Research Question: What is the outcome of international exchange programs laid out by the US Department of State and US Congress in Utah and abroad?

Hypothesis: The Utah segment of international exchanges fulfills the goals laid out by the US Department of State and US Congress in their international exchange programs.

FINDINGS

This section provides qualitative data collected from the responses of International Visitors, professional resources, and home hosts. The data was evaluated based on three criteria: (1) the application and sharing of acquired knowledge, (2) professional and personal development, and (3) cultural learning and the fostering of mutual understanding. The evaluation was conducted using data obtained from professional resources, home hosts, and 111 unique online and email submissions by International Visitors representing all six geographic regions as defined by the US Department of State. Respondents were located in the following regions. (See appendix for a full list of participant home countries).

Geographic Origins of Submissions (110 Unique Responses)

Region	Number and Percentage
Western Hemisphere	25 (22.7%)
Sub-Saharan Africa	31 (28.7%)
Near East	12 (10.9%)
East Asia and the Pacific	5 (4.6%)
South and Central Asia	14 (12.7%)
Europe and Eurasia	23 (20.9%)



Utah’s unique demographic landscape in religious composition, economic prosperity, and social good organizations provides a varied experience for exchange participants who visit as part of government sponsored programs. During international exchange experience in Utah, all participant of IVLP, YLAI, and IYLEP have the opportunity to visit with professional resources, connect with people in Utah, and explore the natural landscape of Utah. Data gathered from online surveys demonstrate that these opportunities are largely beneficial to the participants personal and professional development.

Online Questionnaire Responses (110 Unique Responses)

Questionnaire Option	Number and Percentage
My visit to Utah increased my understanding of US culture	106 (95%)
I still feel connected to Utah	84 (76%)
My experiences in Utah help me in my professional career	90 (81%)
I volunteer more after visiting Utah	81 (73%)
I enjoyed my trip to Utah and would visit again	110 (100%)
My experiences in Utah motivate me in my work	102 (92%)
My experiences in Utah inspired me to change laws, procedures or policies in my home country	81 (72%)

(It should be noted that the following summary of the findings is a collection of the best examples of International, Home Host, and Professional Resource experiences and is not meant to be an exhaustive account.)

Applying and Sharing Gained Knowledge

International Visitors’ stay in Utah proved to have a multiplier effect, meaning it had an impact beyond immediate participants. The multiplier is present in two ways: (1) through the application of newly-acquired knowledge by International Visitors to improve their causes or workplaces; and (2) from International Visitors sharing their experiences and gained knowledge with supervisors, coworkers, and the community at-large. Implementing new processes, replicating models, and sharing gained knowledge led to

improvements to public policy and government operations, educational systems, private sector business operations, and community wellbeing.

Improvements to Public Policy and Government Operations

Utah's most commonly hosted IVLP program focuses on government transparency and accountability. As such, many visitors reported an increased understanding of governance practices and motivation to promote them in their countries of origin.

One participant from Chile, Christian Lazo Mejias, explained the dramatic effect one professional resource meeting had on his work. In a 2020 IVLP visit, Christian met with the Ogden City Police Department which has a robust integration of public health resources as a solution to crime, gang related issues, and school reentry. This inspired him to implement similar practices in his community, forming a socially focused training program for staff in local prisons.

In 2018, Andres Sebastian Legal Rottges, a public official from Paraguay visited Utah under a transparent governance program. Inspired by what he learned, he has worked for the past five years to modify the Federal Administration System of Paraguay to make salaries transparent through decrees in the budget law. He reports that as of February, he and his team are reengineering the Accounting, Credit and Public Debt, Assets and Human Resources systems, as well as the implementing electronic invoicing services. Through these implementations, Andres hopes to make Paraguayan systems more streamlined, modern, and transparent.

Dejan Kosanin from Serbia shared that the transparency in governance program increased his knowledge of control mechanisms of federal, state, and local level government. He noted in particular that the meeting with prosecutor Sam Gille inspired him with their cooperation between the police and prosecutor's office, methodology of conducting investigation of corruption and fraud, as well as implementation of the special investigative methods. Upon his return to Serbia, Dejan reports composing of the Rulebook on conducting internal control in the MoI, Rulebook on the method of integrity test conducting (which is conducted by the IAS's police officers), Instruction on Method to conduct corruption risk analysis in the MoI, and especially the Rulebook on control of declaration of assets in MoI, which prescribes the manner of conducting the control of declaration and the change in asset declaration by the IAS (IAS keeps records of the ownership status of managers and employees at high-risk job positions in the Ministry, established by the corruption risk analysis).

Rueben Sargsyan from Armenia visited Utah in a program focusing on labor rights. He

reported “Participation in IVLP project gave me an opportunity to get acquainted with the experience of the US labor rights protection, including inspection mechanisms, dispute resolution system, OSHA, Trade Union and sectoral non-governmental organizations, as well as mechanisms of social services provided. This became a basis for strong cooperation and cooperation with some structure [in Armenia] that still in process... Of particular importance was the visit to Department of Labor Forces. Information provided during and after the meeting was very important for my further work.” Since his visit, Reuben was appointed as the Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs where he launched a new Unified Social Service that mirrors Utah’s Department of Labor Force Services. While the new system is still developing, Reuben is optimistic about its success and continues to look to Utah systems for reference.

Improvements to Educational Systems

Related to government improvements, International Visitors for IVLP and other exchanges reported implementing changes and making proposals to ameliorate their country’s educational systems.

Nbete Gizzie directs a nonprofit organization in Liberia focused on education and community engagement with youth. During her time in Utah, she learned how to implement social media in her organization outreach to better spread the message and mission. This helped her to engage and gain support from businesses in her community. She reports that after her return to her country she became acutely aware of the lack of learning environments for rural students. She says, “ I therefore started to renovate rural schools that were in mud and started reaching out to girls in those schools with mentoring sessions. From those mentoring sessions I found out girls will drop out of school 5 to 7 days because they are on their period and don’t want to feel ashamed because they were using just a piece of cloth to hold their period. My team and I started raising funds and through partnerships, we were able to serve 35 schools and orphanages with proper menstrual hygiene products.” Her work has been highly beneficial to rural communities and represents an important progress in grassroots led educational change.

In his home country of Belarus, Oleg Djachenko works as Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs at Mahiliow State University. In 2018, Oleg visited Utah under a program on digital education where participants examined the implementation process and teaching changes involved in the transition from in person to online. Just two years later, the Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on educational systems globally. While the needed national educational policy on digital learning did not occur in Belarus, Oleg Djanchenko

was able to use his understanding of digital education to support the continued learning of students at his university.

Improvements to Private Sector Business Operations

International Visitors also reported implementing learned models and sharing information to improve private sector business operations.

During his visit to Utah, Joshard-Martin Mbambi Moyale, had the opportunity to meet with Cotopaxi and other social entrepreneurs. He excitedly reported to us that this experience in Utah deeply inspired him in his own entrepreneurial journey in his home country of Gabon. Since his visit, he has written two books helping others in their process of entrepreneurship, titled “The Entrepreneurial Culture according to the CIDC Approach” and “Express your Passion & Inspire Vocations!” (not yet in English). He reports, “I have been able to apply and adapt all the social entrepreneurial practices I learned from Lindsey Kneuen and many local social entrepreneurs. The inspiration I got from the social entrepreneurial culture in Utah has completely transformed my mindset”. He explains that his experience shifted his community development mentality as well as changed the way he runs his current organization. In addition to these changes, Joshard founded a new organization which promotes entrepreneurial education to foster community development in Gabon and throughout Africa. Since then, he and his team have worked to provide entrepreneurial training programs on behalf women. He notes, “We focus on entrepreneurship within the context of association, cooperative, and NGO, because I am strongly convinced that networking is a powerful tool to foster both economic and social initiatives. Since then I have been mentoring so many people beyond the borders of my country. I am so passionate for the work I do now.” Such excitement and inspiration through these programs is not unique to Joshard but is shared by numerous other participants in numerous countries.

Improvements to Community Wellbeing

Finally, other International Visitors reported implementing ideas that helped improve overall community wellbeing in various ways.

During an IVLP visit focused on volunteerism, Ekina Chifamba, was motivated in his involvement and started supporting more than ten emerging organisations in his home country of Zimbabwe as they worked through the vital first steps of set up, strategy and fundraising. He also reports setting up a leadership hub to promote leadership capacity of young women as they entered and succeeded in the workforce. The hub focuses on promoting skills among diverse backgrounds, especially those who have faced social barriers to success in the past. Ekina has enhanced his fundraising skills and works to

implement those for the benefit of his and other organizations.

Another IVLP participant, John Tharuba Kariuki reported a turning point in his community work after visiting Utah. During his time here, John visited with a variety of volunteer and nonprofit groups. Upon returning home to Kenya, he initiated a volunteer movement and today community dialogue fora are championing policy and strategy implementation by the government through participatory activities. He notes, "I have been able to train students, workers, and members of the community on first aid and safety improving their safety status and reducing the burden of occupational safety and health injuries and ailments at workplaces." His work has dramatically increased the safety of workplaces in his home community. In addition to that, John was inspired to initiate a climate change focused project of beekeeping. The project has spread to 5 different countries to support and promote biodiversity and sustain improved quality of life for the communities in low-income households in parts of Kenya and surrounding countries. John explains that these efforts have been fueled by the partnerships and leadership example of organizations in Utah.

Inspired by the community outreach programs in Utah, Maiya Sahmenov has worked to implement her own charity projects in her home country of Kazakhstan. She organized numerous school supplies donation initiatives to support local schools that lacked resources. This was directly inspired by an event she participated in during her visit to Utah. She explains that her motivation to create effective and impactful community projects was inspired by the strong sense of community outreach. Maiya is currently working on connecting vulnerable youth with community mentors to help improve educational and professional success for a demographic that would otherwise remain without community assistance.

Personal and Professional Development

Nearly every submission also noted the visit to Utah benefiting IVLP participants either personally or professionally. International Visitors reported their Utah experiences being life-changing, feeling more connected to the community, and having a lift of energy regarding their own cause or job. The Utah segment of the IVLP and other exchange programs also helped to cultivate new skills and aided International Visitors in obtaining a clearer understanding of how their work impacts their societies.

Personal Development

First, International Visitors reported their Utah experiences being life-changing, giving them a lift of energy, and making them feel more connected to their cause and

community. Many International Visitors mentioned the IVLP and exchange programs having a significant impact on their lives, with some commenting how they have grown to be better people with more appreciation for their own causes:

A visitor from Armenia [name withheld for security purposes] describes, ““At first, almost everything was different from my country. It started with people welcoming us in their houses and offices, smiling in the street, or introducing national history and values. I have learned that I can share love instead of hate, I can be more creative... It was the first time I truly felt freedom in my life. Also, I felt that who I am is okay for people who are not working with LGBTQ+ people: communication and questions are the key. I have learned to evaluate, keep in touch freely, ask without fears and study America's culture. So, thank you for this great and heart-warming opportunity and experience for a social worker and LGBTQ+ person to study your experience, to know so many great people in Utah. And thank you for motivating me not to give up in this hard times.” The International Visitor visited the country as part of an LGBTQ program focused on providing LGBTQ inclusivity, awareness, and community support. In her home country of Armenia, members of these communities still face significant challenges and backlash for their identity. Through their connections to strong pro LGBTQ organizations in Utah, participants of this program noted a strong sense of motivation in their work.

Another participant reported that her experience in Utah inspired her to promote her heritage through literature in her home country of Honduras. Claudia Lemus visited Utah as part of a women in leadership program where she met with women led organizations and businesses. Her publication is a children's story inspired by the Mayan culture of Copán, Honduras. The story is bilingual, Spanish - English, and aims to promote reading among youth of Honduras and promote understanding about Mayan culture. Claudia reports that this project was inspired by her time visiting Utah and the desire to form a strong sense of historical identity within her country.

Bander Al-Warthan, an IVLP participant from Saudi Arabia reported the following, “I can't tell you how much of an impact this unique and inspiring experience have in my life, believes & vision, and for that improving my skills at work in a way got me higher positions, from a Journalist to an Editor supervision both opinion and political departments, and also to help my family and close friends to survive positively any effects that would pandemic was making on people.” Bander’s experience provided not only an inspiring personal experience, but one that directly benefited the progress in his professional endeavors.

Professional Development

Gaining New Skills

Apart from International Visitors being more energetic about their cause and community and feeling their stay transformed their lives, time spent in Utah helped cultivate skills and attributes that proved useful in their careers. Participants report a significant increase in career development due to their experience.

Yoandy Rizo Fiallo, an architect from Cuba reported that following his visit, he was inspired to start a new business which led him to be selected on the board of advisors of another large company. He noted that his experience in Salt Lake City represented a perfect opportunity to learn how to build his business during a period of business policy change in Cuba.

For Serge Ngandu, an IVLP participant from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the trip to Utah encouraged a radical shift in his profession. He notes, “[the visit to Utah encouraged] me to work on a voluntary basis and for less lucrative and much more social causes, which is how I am currently a member of the executive office of the IVLP in the DRC. In addition, I am vice president of a voluntary association called Congolese children of the future.” This has led him to participate in educational initiatives for orphaned children to support their development into building a stronger community in the DRC.

Baktygul Bozgorpoeval, an IVLP participant, reports that his experience in Utah gave him new professional tools in his advocacy of accessible and affordable healthcare in his home country of Kyrgyzstan. He participated in the revision of standards of medical services and human resources and became a member of the Public Council of the Ministry of Health in Kyrgyzstan where he is better able to implement his vision. Baktygul reports, “In 2018 I successfully completed Ph.D in Medicine, which I was inspired to complete after my visit to the USA.” Because of this educational achievement, Baktygul has a greater capacity to understand and implement the changes needed to his country's systems.

Obtaining New Understanding

Many International Visitors also mentioned gaining new understanding or being made to think differently about their own causes and careers thanks to their time spent in Utah.

For Sara El Masry, the experience in Utah helped opened her eyes to a new form of community connection. She commented that the Utah connection to nature and to each other seemed to promote a strong sense of connectivity. She shares, “my visit to Utah

was a very different experience than any other place I visited in my life that I would love to visit again for sure... how the community there works as a unit is really impressive.” While her efforts in civil society work in her home country of Egypt have met many challenges, Sara remains inspired and motivated by her experience in Utah, “my memories there are the ones which I still carry from this trip to the US.”

In 2021, Laila Al Shareefi visited Utah under a program focusing on transparency in governance. During her program, she was able to witness the electoral process in Utah and the steps taken to ensure an equitable and ethical outcome. Her past experience with elections in her home country of Iraq was clouded by multiple counts of fraud and forgery which led to Laila having a poor perception of the electoral process as a whole. Following her experience, she was inspired by the prospect of elections being free and equal. This inspired her to enter the political foundation and candidacy for Iraqi Parliamentary elections in 2021 with the main goal of building a better Iraq. While the election remained polluted by fraud, Laila explains, “I will never consider that as a loss because I gained the trust and love of the people I represent. In spite of all difficulties I faced through the election process, I consider these obstacles as a lesson learned for the future.” Her positive outlook at the potential future of free and equal elections is a bolstering force for her community and continues to promote the values upon which IVLP was established.

Networking—Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative

One of the most impactful aspects of the international exchanges, is the opportunity for participants to network with organizations in the US and form collaborations with their visitor cohorts. This promotes diplomatic relations not only between the US and participating countries, but relationships between participating countries with each other.



The most prominent example of this is the

Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI). YLAI is designed to empower young business owners and social entrepreneurs from Latin American and Caribbean nations with the training, resources, and networks they need to make positive impacts on their societies. Unlike the IVLP, participants in the YLAI, known as Professional Fellows, stay exclusively in Utah to complete a fellowship with a specific hosting organization over a four-week period. This extended stay allows for more focused learning, facilitating professional development as well as collaboration and networking opportunities. It also provides greater opportunities to learn about the state, its culture, and its people. (See photo of YLAI group 2022 above).

Three alumni of the YLAI—Ronald Barzola (Peru), Daniel Zaldana (El Salvador), and Sindy (Guatemala) reported their time in Utah as being an outstanding experience.

Ronald Barzola is a passionate director of a business incubator in his home country of Peru. Working across 6 different countries and 55 different universities, Ronald came to the US with the goal of growing his incubator resources. He reports that his time in the US helped him better understand US economic markets and how to connect with donors and potential investors. He noted that it was refreshing to realize that the business challenges he faces in Peru are not unique but shared by many other entrepreneurs. Ronald reports growth and new connections with professionals that he met while in the US.

Daniel Zaldana is directs a youth empowerment organization in his home country of El Salvador called Activate Por tu País. He reports that his objective in the US was to learn management skills to better lead his team and grow his organization. During his time here, Daniel was paired with the local youth organization Youthlinc. Because of his experience with Youthlinc, Daniel left feeling empowered and motivated to continue building his organization. Currently, Daniel is building a partnership with Youthlinc to host a group of Youthlinc youth visitors in his El Salvador to support his program. Having a significant amount of time to work in close connection with Youthlinc directors allowed Daniel to build a strong and lasting business connection that will benefit both parties for years to come.

The YLAI also allowed visitors to develop professionally, giving them the knowledge needed to improve their businesses and gain greater appreciation of their work. Sindy reported during her experience with the Utah Women Business Center, she was able to understand the importance of using stories to market her goods. She also shared that the experience helped her realize the importance of ethical trade systems and ways that she can fight against human trafficking that occurs in her country. Using the knowledge she gained in Utah, she altered to procedures and programs at her company to better

align with more ethical and effective business practices. She expressed that following her experience in the US, she returned home with the strong feeling that, “This is the start”.

Beyond the beneficial professional connections that YLAI participants form during their time in the US, all report a significant connection made with participants in their cohort and the desire to remain in contact. Consequently, the YLAI program benefits not only international collaboration with US and Latin American communities but prompts strengthened relations between Latin American countries. One YLAI participant from Cuba [name withheld for security purposes] explained that due to her country’s political history, there is little connection to the latin heritage shared by other countries throughout Central and South America. Through the relationships formed during her time in the YLAI program, Adriana expressed a newfound sense of identity and connectivity with the other participants.

Cultivation of Mutual Understanding and Cultural Learning

Apart from personal and professional development and replicating and sharing methods, procedures, and tactics overseas, the IVLP also gives International Visitors the opportunity to learn about US values and experience what Americans are like firsthand. This is primarily accomplished through Home Hosting and Professional Resource visits which boost cultural competency for International Visitors and their American hosts. In Utah, these exchanges not only increase mutual understanding, but result in International Visitors learning more about the state’s caring nature through its strong rate of volunteerism, respect of religious diversity, and the acceptance of foreigners.

Volunteer Culture

One of the most striking examples of International Visitors learning about Utah’s culture is witnessing and participating in the state’s strong volunteer environment. The Corporation for National and Community Service—the federal agency which leads service, volunteering, and grant-making efforts—has consistently ranked Utah as having the highest rate of volunteerism in the United States (“State Rankings,” n.d.). According to the agency, approximately 43 percent of people in Utah volunteer their time each year (“State Rankings,” n.d.), well above the US average of 25 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). This high rate of volunteerism amounts to approximately 81 volunteer hours per state resident annually (“Volunteer Hours,” n.d.)—that is more than

double the volunteer hours per resident in forty-five other states and the District of Columbia ("Volunteer Hours," n.d.).

Many International Visitors who come to Utah experience Utah's volunteer culture firsthand through participating in volunteer activities, a number of which are completed with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), Utah's dominant religion. In their interactions with the LDS Church, Visitors have the opportunity to learn about the Church's Welfare Square and the Humanitarian Center which help the less fortunate locally and internationally. Volunteering at these institutions, International Visitors help prepare hygiene and emergency kits, make quilts, and prepare and stock items to be available to the less fortunate.

IVLP participant Bassam Al Wachi from Iraq reports that since his visit to Utah, he has increased his volunteerism by participating in the United Nations Volunteer program. In this role he conducted two workshops to raise awareness regarding about volunteerism at the Basra Engineering Technical College and at the local St. Thomas Church in Baghdad. Bassam notes that he hopes these initiatives will instill the same motivation and passion he has for volunteering among youth in his community.

During his visit to Utah in 2018, Herald Alves learned about voluntourism and gained important insights into professional networking as a mechanism for increasing success of social impact initiatives. Because of these experiences, Herald worked with friends to create community aid projects in his region to support children and young women through activities like sports, health walks, hands on skills training programs, women empowerment training, and youth debate competitions. These initiatives not only provided a strong community development but provided volunteering opportunities for many community members. One of the most significant volunteer opportunities was a project distributing Christmas party bags and toys to over 200 children in five different communities. The program was so successful that Herald looks forward to increasing the outreach.

Religious Tolerance

The appreciation of diverse religious societies in the United States and Utah is an important aspect for International Visitors in understanding the harmonious coexistence of people from different backgrounds. Utah, in particular, has a notable history of fostering interfaith dialogues. A prominent example is the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable, established during the 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City to offer religious support for athletes and families ("History," n.d.). Since the conclusion of the games, the Roundtable, which represents more than twenty-two religions, has continued its monthly meetings, working towards four key objectives: (1) promoting

interfaith respect, understanding, and appreciation; (2) fostering interfaith collaboration; (3) addressing issues related to religiously motivated hate and conflict within the community; and (4) upholding the Olympic legacy of embracing cultural diversity, human potential, and global peace ("History," n.d.). By experiencing the initiatives of organizations like the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable, International Visitors gain valuable insights into the importance of religious tolerance and cooperation, which they can apply in their own communities.

This spirit of cooperation was reflected in the experiences of Utah's International Visitors. One visitor, Tassi Ntan Lucas, reported that the focus on interfaith connections in Utah inspired him to promote interfaith connections in his home country of Cameroon. As a priest of the Roman-Catholic Church, Tassi is highly influential in the religious

attitudes in his community. He reports, "I try to make inclusive work groups with variant components like youths of other religious denominations. I also started training vulnerable youths in professional training as public secretariate, legals issues and social interaction". His efforts demonstrate the compounding effect of the skills and attitudes learned in Utah. See the photo he shared with us on the right.





Another visitor, Bassam Al Wachi, was inspired by his experience with the religious landscape in Utah to improve the religious outreach in his home country of Iraq. His nonprofit, Larsa promotes peaceful coexistence among all Iraqis, respect for human rights, and a strong spirit of citizenship in the broader Iraqi community. To help ameliorate tensions in Iraq, Mr. Al-Wachi started an initiative which

promotes conversations about cultural and religious diversity that lead to mutual understanding. During his visit to Utah in 2019, he visited with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints where he was inspired by the use of media to promote their religious message. After returning home, Bassam reports, “My visit motivated me to invest my experience as an ICT and support the Christian community in Basra, through the great relationship I have with my church in Basra city, I assisted the bishop in launching the official website of the Basra & The South Chaldean Catholic Archdiocese in July 2021. The website posting recent news, books, articles, and movies to raise awareness about Christianity among all communities in Basra and Iraq as well.” (See and example of this newly launched website above).

Serge Ngandu, a visitor from the DRC reported, “Being exposed to nature in Utah and visiting the Mormon temple made me understand a different culture despite being Catholic and accepting another religious dimension.” This experience inspired him to get involved with a local religious group in his home country called Family Church. There he introduced aspects of genealogy and worked to extend his connection to Utah with this new organization.

Mutual Understanding

Aside from cultural learning, Utah's exchange experience also cultivated mutual understanding between International Visitors and people in Utah, with many visitors commented on the generosity and affection of the state's residents:

- *"My time in Utah was amazing, I learned many things about Utah. People were very kind, including and helpful in every way. I would definitely visit again."* Nathalie Rubio- YLAI participant- El Salvador
- *"My visit to Utah was a wonderful experience. I felt respected by people and enjoyed volunteer work. I still feel closely connected with the US culture."* Anastasiya Nam- IVLP participant- Kazakhstan
- *"I LOVED my experience in Utah. I met people in many different situations and they were nice. The sense of community and the way people welcome other people are 2 things I am carrying home with me."* Vitor Ungari- YLAI participant- Brazil
- *"I loved Utah and its people more than any other state in USA due to their hospitality , generosity and care."* Rosette Nkundimfura - IVLP participant- Rwanda
- *"It was an enriching visit to this beautiful city of Utah. The blend of modernity with the deep values was most fascinating. Bhutan today is changing fast and some of the ways of Utah can be something to look up to."* Karma Tenzin- IVPL participant- Bhutan
- *"I always remember the valuable experience I had in lovely Utah, and all the wonderful people [who were] so friendly, kind, and generous."* Bander Al Warthan- IVLP participant- Saudi Arabia

The cultivation of mutual understanding and respect happened frequently between the people with whom International Visitors interacted with most: Professional Resources and Home Hosts.

Professional Resources

As countless Professional Resources spend a respectable amount of time meeting with International Visitors, they obtain a firsthand glimpse of how the IVLP helps facilitate

mutual understanding. By meeting with International Visitors, Professional Resources are introduced to new ideas and perspectives and gain insights into the ways International Visitors handle their lines of work. This promotes new realizations about the values and practices of certain countries or regions of the world.

Some Professional Resources were also struck by the commonalities between the practices of their own organizations and those of International Visitors. In 2019, Wasatch Community Garden's welcomed a group from Bermuda under the *Transformational Living Facilities for Women program* to tour their facilities and learn about sustainable and open resource food production. She explained, "Our organization had the opportunity to talk with the group about the farm-based job training program we run for both women facing homelessness and single mothers living in poverty. We were surprised to learn, through the course of the conversation, that the group is beginning work on a center for single moms to provide housing, training, and wrap-around services. We were able to share with the group some of our challenges in working with this population as well as our triumphs. They were interested in our partnerships, something our organization does very well, and also in the process of beginning a greenhouse and farm, as agriculture is one of the areas the Bermuda team is considering for an element of their own program."



These conversations helped to inspire the Bermuda women in their efforts and invigorate the Wasatch efforts in their programs. (See photo of the group above).

Taste of Home Hospitality

Perhaps the greatest opportunity to increase mutual understanding is through the Taste of Home Hospitality (Home Hosting) program. Taste of Home Hospitality provides the opportunity for local people in Utah to host a group of International Visitors in their homes to converse over a meal. Through food and conversation, both hosts and International Visitors leave with more accurate understandings of each other, becoming more culturally competent.

Charlotte Gant, has been hosting dinners with International Visitors for over nine years. She believes there is nothing more important than meeting with people face-to-face to learn and dispel any preconceived notions. Charlotte is a passionate believer that at the root of strong international relations are interpersonal relationships formed through interactions like a simple dinner at someone's home. It is where people can recognize that the shared humanity is greater than cultural, political, or religious differences. One favorite anecdote demonstrating this principle was the time that visitors discovered Charlotte's small exercise trampoline. One hijabi woman was hesitant at first to try, but after getting on and bouncing, could not help herself from giggling. Charlotte explained, "People are so different but certain human qualities are so universal". The visitors came from around the world with vastly different backgrounds, yet through the silly act of jumping on a trampoline, they were able to share in the human experience of joy.

One particularly profound connection was made with a man from Afghanistan when he visited in 2015. Upon his return home, he and Charlotte kept in contact, sending each other email updates about their lives including his wedding and the birth of his two daughters. When the US withdrew from the region and the Taliban took power, Charlotte worked extensively to assist him and his small family in any way she could. They eventually moved and are now living in Pakistan. As she related his story, she showed the pictures he had sent to her and noted how his eyes look so much happier now that they are settled. Because of their connection, the international issue that is often easy to view in quantifiable statistics, has become one of deep personal care and concern.

In addition to maintaining virtual contact, Charlotte has been able to visit some of the visitors in their home countries. On a trip to Katmandu, Charlotte met up with Migmar Dolma, who had visited Utah in 2014. Just as Charlotte had shared her home and culture, Migmar was able to share her adopted country and culture with Charlotte. (see photo below.)



Laurie Sowby, another frequent Home Host, has similar experiences. She finds that “when you meet people one-on-one all the differences ... melt away.” Sowby values the Home Host program as it allows International Visitors to see what Americans are like firsthand. Sowby relays how many of her guests have never experienced a country that has so much personal freedom, which is exemplified through the many choices and decisions Americans can make. While Sowby has had ample opportunity to learn about other cultures and traditions, she says that Home Hosting also cultivates mutual understanding. As she puts it, “[Home Hosting] makes your perspectives wider and you appreciate that people around the world really are pretty much the same in the really core ways even though their cultures and their governments may be different. ... They care about their families and they want a better place for their children and grandchildren.”

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This report attempts to add quantitative and qualitative data to the available knowledge of state sponsored international exchange programs global impact by surveying and interviewing International Visitors, Professional Resources, and Home Hosts who have participated in IVLP, IYLEP, and YLAI over a five year period from August 2018 to May 2023. Given the information that these parties provided Utah Global Diplomacy, it is clear the Utah segment of the IVLP is not only meeting the four goals laid out by the Fulbright-Hays Act, but goes beyond to accomplish goals more specific to the personal and professional development aspects of the program. The IVLP in Utah also has a multiplier effect, contributing to the spread of knowledge and the amelioration of conditions overseas.

First, the goals of the Fulbright-Hays Act are to (1) increase mutual understanding between people of the United States and people of other countries; (2) strengthen ties that unite people of the United States and other countries; (3) promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement; and (4) assist in the development of 'friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world' (US Department, 2006). The accomplishment of these codified goals is best exemplified through the basic design of exchange programs in bringing together individuals representing differing nationalities. This is well-illustrated through numerous meetings between International Visitors, Professional Resource, and Home Hosts. Testimony from these interactions demonstrate that both Americans—specifically people in Utah—and International Visitors learn from each other and recognize the common humanity that binds us all. Additionally, the international exchange programs in Utah has helped International Visitors learn about Utah's culture and values, including the state's respect for religious diversity and Utah's strong desire to help others through volunteerism.

Yet the findings of this report also make it clear that the impacts of the international exchange programs go beyond these four official benchmarks to accomplish goals more specific to the personal and professional development aspects of the program. On the personal level, International Visitors report their Utah experiences being life-changing, feeling more connected to their communities, and having a lift of energy to continue their work. On the professional level, International Visitors report gaining new skills, obtaining new understandings, and networking with those they met. Professional development through networking is best exemplified with the YLAI whose Reverse Exchange Program allows for people in Utah to travel overseas to Professional Fellows' home countries to continue work on professional development and special projects.

However, perhaps the most significant finding is international exchange programs paying dividends in the communities in which International Visitors live (i.e. the multiplier effect). As testimony makes clear, International Visitors were able to implement new processes, replicate models, and share gained knowledge which led to improvements to public policy and government operations, educational systems, private sector business operations, and community wellbeing. These examples illustrate that international exchange programs are successful in making changes overseas that have lasting impacts beyond immediate program participants.

While these conclusions are significant, certain steps can be taken to increase the accuracy and breadth of the findings. For instance, it would be useful to create different forms of data collection depending on the category of exchange program participant. For instance, IVLP participants have a much higher rate of response to online forms

than IYLEP participants, perhaps due to age differences. It may be helpful to gather data at the beginning of the program and at the end of the program to track short term theory of change. For tracking longer term theory of change, it would be beneficial to facilitate cohort meetings at three months, six months, and one year respectively, over Zoom where youth could meet with a Utah Global Diplomacy researcher to report on what they are implementing in their home communities. Additionally, YLAI participants are shown to have far greater lasting connections with their Professional Resource Host. It would be beneficial to have more poignant interviews with the Professional Resource to determine what the lasting connection is between them and the participant. This could be done via in person interviews with the resource, three months following the visit. Additionally, it would produce more comprehensive survey results to divide the online questionnaire sent to IVLP participants into three sections reflective of those in this report—applying and sharing gained knowledge, personal and professional development, and the cultivation of mutual understanding—and ask International Visitors to give their thoughts regarding each. Furthermore, more specific questions could be asked within each category. For example, International Visitors could be asked more specific questions regarding American and Utah culture and values, such as if they came to understand democratic values (e.g. freedom of speech, freedom of the press, minority rights) better. International Visitors could have also been asked to list any gained skills that aided them personally or professionally, or explain collaborations between themselves and those they met in Utah.

While the low response rate (approximately 11 percent) may suggest that International Visitors did not significantly gain from the IVLP, YLAI or IYLEP programming in Utah, language barriers, lack of time or interest, external governmental firewalls blocking incoming emails, the Covid-19 pandemic, and other reasons are all factors that likely negatively impacted the response rate. With this in mind, the overall impact of the exchange programs could be considered far greater than what is exemplified in this study as numerous examples of impact went unreported. This is especially true considering that International Visitors were asked only about their Utah experiences which may have limited responses from those who had more fulfilling experiences in other states. While more responses would have made this report more comprehensive, from the information gathered in a two year period from August 2018 to May 2023, it can be concluded that the Utah segment of the international exchanges facilitates cultural exchange, increases mutual understanding between nations, provides for professional and personal development, and has an impact overseas beyond immediate program participants.

Appendix

List of Participant Countries

Afghanistan	East Timor	Nepal
Angola	Ecuador	Niger
Argentina	Egypt	Nigeria
Armenia	El Salvador	Pakistan
Bangladesh	Fiji	Panama
Belarus	Gabon	Paraguay
Bhutan	Ghana	Russia
Bolivia	Guyana	Rwanda
Brazil	Haiti	Saudi Arabia
Bulgaria	Honduras	Senegal
Burundi	India	Serbia
Cameroon	Iraq	Sierra Leone
Chile	Italy	Thailand
China	Kazakhstan	The Gambia
Congo, Democratic Republic of	Kenya	Tunisia
China	Kosovo	Ukraine
Congo, Republic of	Kuwait	United Arab Emirates
Cuba	Kyrgyzstan	United States of America
Czech Republic	Lebanon	Venezuela
Djibouti	Liberia	Zimbabwe
Dominica	Malaysia	
Dominican Republic	Mongolia	
	Mozambique	

Example of Two-week Email

Dear {{{Recipient.FirstName}}} {{{Recipient.LastName}}},

Thanks for visiting Salt Lake City, Utah, USA and participating in the *Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development* program! We hope your time in Utah exploring business development as well as experiencing some of our unique cultural activities proved beneficial both professionally and personally.

Now that it has been **two weeks** since your visit, Utah Council for Citizen Diplomacy is interested in learning if your experience in Utah had an impact on you, your cause, your job, or your community.

Please take a few minutes to reply back to this email or complete our online form sharing your stories, photos, and videos with us explaining how you were able to use the knowledge and experience you gained in Utah and apply it to the important work you do in your own country. We may share your story, photos, or video in printed material or on our website, Facebook, and other social media sites.

Sincerely,

Ruth Hardy

Impact Research Coordinator

Utah Council for Citizen Diplomacy

www.utahdiplomacy.org



Examples of Three-month, Six-month, and One-year Emails

Dear {{{Recipient.FirstName}}} {{{Recipient.LastName}}},

Thank you for visiting Utah with the US Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program in **2019!** We hope your visit was beneficial both professionally and personally.

Now that it has been more than **3 years** since your visit, the Utah Council for Citizen Diplomacy is interested to hear what you have been doing in your community, and if your experience in Utah had any long-term impacts on your work, in your life or otherwise.

Please take a few minutes to complete our [online form](#) and share your stories, photos, and videos with us, explaining if and how you were able to use the knowledge and experience you gained in Utah and apply it to the critical work you do in your own country.

We would love to share your story, photos, or videos in printed materials, on our website, Facebook, and other social media sites.

With great appreciation,

Ruth Hardy

Impact Research Coordinator

Utah Council for Citizen Diplomacy

www.utahdiplomacy.org



Online Questionnaire

First & Last Name:

Email Address:

Preferred Pronouns:

What country are you from?

Approximate date of visit:

Is this an exact or approximate date? (*Users have the option to select either "Exact" or "Approximate."*)

Please rank your agreement with the following statements (1= Disagree, 5= Agree)

My visit to Utah increased my understanding of US culture

I still feel connected to Utah

My experiences in Utah help me in my professional career

I learned lessons in Utah that are still relevant to my daily life

I volunteer more after visiting Utah

I enjoyed my trip to Utah and would visit again

My experiences in Utah motivate me in my work

My experiences in Utah inspired me to change laws, procedures or policies in my home country

I felt frustrated when I was in Utah

I had difficult experiences when I was in Utah

I felt included when I was in Utah

I felt respected by the people in Utah

Tell us how you have been able to use the knowledge and experience you gained in Utah and apply it to the critical work you do in your own country.

(Feel free to share with us photos and videos about your experiences)

(*Users are given space in which to write their impact story.*)

Quantitative Interview Questions for Professional Resources

1. How did you find out about the UCCD?
 - a. On the UCCD website
 - b. Social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, etc.).
 - c. Through the monthly UCCD Newsletter
 - d. Flyers
 - e. Mailed postcards
 - f. Online community calendars (County Library, KSPW, etc.)
 - g. Community partner: (if so who? _____)
 - h. Word of mouth
 - i. Other: _____(please explain)
2. How did you find out about the opportunity to be a professional resource?
 - j. On the UCCD website
 - k. Social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, etc.).
 - l. Through the monthly UCCD Newsletter
 - m. Flyers
 - n. Mailed postcards
 - o. Online community calendars (County Library, KSPW, etc.)
 - p. Community partner: (if so who? _____)
 - q. Word of mouth
 - r. Other: _____(please explain)
3. Do you maintain contact with any International Visitors with whom you have met?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. Do you feel interacting with International Visitors benefits you or your organization?
 - a. Yes (How)
 - b. No
5. Did your organization have any international network before the interaction (international partners, internationally diverse staff, global outreach, etc.)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Did your organization's international network (international partners, internationally diverse staff, global outreach, etc.) expand after your participation as a UCCD professional resource?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. Why is acting as a professional resource valuable to you and your organization? (Select all that apply)

- c. Increases exposure of your organization
 - d. Opportunity to learn from International Visitors
 - e. Opportunity to share your knowledge with International Visitors
 - f. Opportunity to fulfill service obligations
 - g. N/A
 - h. Other: _____
8. How can interaction with International Visitors benefit you or your company more? (Please explain)
9. Would you host an international visitor group again, and why?

Qualitative Interview Questions for Professional Resources

1. How did you find out about the UCCD?
 - a. How did you find out about the opportunity to be a professional resource?
2. Do you maintain contact with any International Visitors you have met with?
3. Has this relationship benefitted your organization?
 - a. In what way?
4. Did your organization have any international network prior to your interaction?
 - a. International partners?
 - b. Internationally diverse staff in Utah?
 - c. International outreach focus?
5. Has your participation as a UCCD professional resource increased your participation in the aforementioned experiences?
6. Why is acting as a professional resource valuable to you?
7. If you have done it more than once or have the desire to do it more than once, why?
8. How do you feel you or your organizations outlook on global issues has been changed through these interactions?
9. How has your business strategy changed following this interaction
 - a. How can they benefit or increase the relationship
 - b. How is the relationship mutually beneficial- internships to offer? Connections to foreign businesses?
 - c. How does a visit with one or two business partners impact a companies

Quantitative Interview Questions for Home Hosts

1. How did you find out about the UCCD?
 - a. On the UCCD website
 - b. Social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, etc.).
 - c. Through the monthly UCCD Newsletter
 - d. Flyers
 - e. Mailed postcards

- f. Online community calendars (County Library, KSPW, etc.)
 - g. Community partner: (if so who? _____)
 - h. Word of mouth
 - i. Other: _____(please explain)
2. How did you find out about the home hosting opportunities?
- a. On the UCCD website
 - b. Social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, etc.).
 - c. Through the monthly UCCD Newsletter
 - d. Flyers
 - e. Mailed postcards
 - f. Online community calendars (County Library, KSPW, etc.)
 - g. Community partner: (if so who? _____)
 - h. Word of mouth
 - i. Other: _____(please explain)
3. How many times have you hosted? _____
4. What relationship would you consider if you maintain contact with any International Visitors you have hosted?
- a. Acquaintance (infrequent contact 1-3 times per year)
 - b. Friendly (frequent contact 1-3 times per month)
 - c. Close friends (they have returned to visit you or you have visited them in their home country)
 - d. No contact
5. Have you had international experiences (international travel, volunteering with organizations that serve international peoples, friendships with people of different ethnic backgrounds) before getting involved with the UCCD?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Has your participation in the UCCD home hosting increased your international experiences (international travel, volunteering with organizations that serve international peoples, friendships with people of different ethnic backgrounds)
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. If yes, please specify how
7. How do you feel your outlook on global issues has changed through interacting with International Visitors?
- a. Not at all changed
 - b. Somewhat changed
 - c. Significantly changed
 - d. Please comment on in what way your outlook changed.

Why is home hosting valuable to you and your family?
What did you not like about the experience?
Would you like to host again?

Qualitative Interview Questions for Home Hosts

1. How did you find out about the UCCD?
 - a. How did you find out about the home hosting opportunities?
2. How many times have you hosted?
3. From where were the International Visitors that you have hosted?
4. Do you maintain contact with any International Visitors you have hosted?
 - a. What type of relationship would you consider it to be?
5. Have you had international experiences prior to getting involved with the UCCD?
 - a. Traveling?
 - b. Volunteering with organizations that serve international groups of people?
 - c. Forming friendships with people of different ethnic backgrounds?
6. Has your participation in the UCCD home hosting increased your participation in the aforementioned experiences?
7. Why is home hosting valuable to you?
8. If you have done it more than once or have the desire to do it more than once, why?
9. How do you feel your outlook on global issues has been changed through these interactions?
10. Would you consider partnering with the UCCD
11. What did you not like about the experience?

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US Department of State Regional Maps

Map 1

East Asia and the Pacific



Map 2

Europe and Eurasia



Map 3

Near East



Map 4

South and Central Asia



Map 5

Sub-Saharan Africa



Map 6

Western Hemisphere

