



friendship force  
INTERNATIONAL

## 2017/18 Policies and Guidelines for Clubs and Programs

As approved by the FFI Board of Directors October 2016

The policies and guidelines contained in this document have been approved by the FFI Board of Directors to govern all Friendship Force program activity. Additional information and instruction can be found on the FFI website ([www.thefriendshipforce.org](http://www.thefriendshipforce.org)) or by contacting the FFI staff at [support@friendshipforce.org](mailto:support@friendshipforce.org) (Note: All fees are quoted in US dollars.)

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## Part A: Policies

### I. Friendship Force Clubs

#### a. Organization

Friendship Force clubs are chartered by Friendship Force International (FFI) for the purpose of promoting the Friendship Force mission in a local community or region by organizing groups to welcome individuals from other parts of the world (host inbound) and participate in traveling to visit others (travel outbound). This process of hosting and traveling are called “journeys.” Each club is an independent organization. While the actual organizational structure may vary according to the traditions and legal requirements of a region, all clubs are expected to have written bylaws<sup>1</sup> and be based on volunteer leadership that is selected by the club. Clubs are expected to be familiar with and follow the FFI club and program policies, as well as the policies on appropriate use of the logo and other registered materials.

#### b. Club Affiliation Fees and Charter Renewal

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

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

Failure to comply will result in the denial of journey assignments for the following assignment cycle.

#### c. Activities

In addition to conducting regular inbound and outbound journeys, Friendship Force clubs are encouraged to promote the Friendship Force mission in their regions and to plan a wide range of local activities for their members to keep them building friendships throughout the year. This includes social events for club members as well as programs that link the membership with other international activity in the community.

In addition to regular journeys and local activities, clubs may also participate with other clubs in supplemental journey activity; however, these should be scheduled only after the official international journeys for the year have been confirmed.

#### d. Membership

A member of Friendship Force is defined as a person that pays the annual affiliation fee, and is familiar with and adheres to the mission and philosophy of Friendship Force International. Clubs

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<sup>1</sup> Bylaws are in your organization’s operating manual. They define:

- Size of the board and how it will function
- Roles and duties of club officers
- Rules and procedures for holding meetings, electing and/or appointing officers
- Other essential club governance matters

may set further criteria for club membership according to their bylaws.

## **II. Friendship Force Journey Programs**

A Friendship Force journey program is a cultural experience between travelers (ambassadors) and hosts. The hosts will introduce the ambassadors to their culture through organized activities and sightseeing tours, but especially through home hosting and sharing of everyday experiences. Friendship Force journey programs are assigned each year by FFI based on a variety of factors, including club history, preference, and availability of counterpart clubs. It is intended that the hosting capacity for each assigned journey week be fulfilled.

Each journey operates under the leadership of volunteer ambassador and host coordinators appointed by the clubs and in accordance with the policies set by Friendship Force International. Acceptance as an ambassador on a journey program is by application to an Ambassador Coordinator. The Ambassador Coordinator is responsible for recruiting and preparing ambassadors and hosts for the journey program experience.

Any person under the age of 18 who is not accompanied by a parent must have a designated guardian during any Friendship Force experience.

### **a. International Club-to-Club Journeys**

An International Club-to-Club Journey is a one-week (5-7 nights) program between clubs from different countries.

### **b. Domestic Club-to-Club Journeys**

Domestic Club-to-Club Journeys are authorized up to 7 nights, and are only between clubs within a country and, therefore, are not available in countries where there is only one club. They may not be conducted across a national border to a club in a neighboring country. These should be scheduled after clubs have confirmed their regular international journeys for the coming year.

### **c. EU and Schengen Journeys**

EU and Schengen Journeys are for clubs located in the combined territories of the European Union (EU) and of the Schengen area and are limited to four nights. Clubs are not authorized to plan multiple club visits as part of the same journey. Clubs wishing to have multiple hosting opportunities on one journey may do so by requesting a two-week regular International Club-to-Club Journey. These should be scheduled after clubs have confirmed their regular international journeys for the coming year.

### **d. Stopover**

A Stopover is a 1-4 night homestay provided by a host club to a journey delegation transiting the area while traveling to or from a regularly scheduled International Club-to-Club Journey.

### **e. Global Journeys**

Global Journeys are designed to attract ambassadors from anywhere in the world. They will often have a specific theme or a focus on cultural understanding. Global Journey durations can vary, and may not always include home-hosting.

**If any of the above type of journeys are organized outside of the regular FFI journey planning cycle or process, all participating clubs must register the journey with FFI prior to departure. Failing to report and**

comply with these policies will result in all clubs involved being denied journey assignments for the following journey cycle.

### III. Journey Fees

#### a. 2017 FFI Ambassador Fee Schedule

Journey Type	FFI Fees (USD)
International Club-to-Club Journeys*	\$165 per week for journeys from the USA
	\$140 per week for journeys from all other countries
Domestic Club-to-Club Journeys**	\$10 per night
EU and Schengen Journeys	\$10 per night
Stopover	\$20 per night
Global/Special Journeys	Fee varies

\*Domestic ambassadors from within the host country applying to participate on an International Club-to-Club Journey must pay according to the International Club-to-Club FFI fee.

\*\*International ambassadors from outside the host country applying to a Domestic Club-to-Club Journey must pay according to the International Club-to-Club FFI fee.

#### b. FFI Ambassador Coordinator Discount (NEW)

The Ambassador Coordinator will receive a pro-rated discount of the FFI Fee if 75% or more of the hosting capacity is reached. For the coordinator who recruits ambassadors that fill 75% or more of the hosting capacity, FFI prorates the coordinator discount according to the following schedule:

100% of hosting capacity: coordinator receives a 100% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee

95% of hosting capacity: coordinator receives a 95% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee

90% of hosting capacity: coordinator receives a 90% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee

85% of hosting capacity: coordinator receives an 85% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee

80% of hosting capacity: coordinator receives an 80% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee

75% of hosting capacity: coordinator receives a 75% credit of the FFI Ambassador Fee

The FFI Ambassador Coordinator Discount is contingent upon compliance with the **Fill-the-Seat policy** outlined below, and is only applicable to International Club-to-Club Journeys.

#### c. Fill-the-Seat Policy

If a journey is not full at 100 days prior to departure, the journey must be listed on the FFI online journey catalog. A full journey is one in which the number of ambassadors matches the hosting capacity of the host club. For multi-club journeys, the hosting capacity of the smaller club will determine the overall hosting capacity. Domestic and EU and Schengen journeys are excluded from this policy.

#### d. Host Club Program Fee:

- i. To pay the cost of the group activities, host clubs will receive a Host Club Program Fee of \$150 USD per ambassador (including the coordinator) for all standard 5-7 night International Club-to-Club journeys. The fee can be used to pay for welcome and farewell parties/dinners, and for

- other group activities that provide the ambassadors with an excellent cultural orientation to the host city and region. The fee can also be used, at the host club's discretion, to enable the hosts to participate in these activities. The costs of activities outside the home (those not planned by the host club) should be paid by the ambassadors. Following the journey, if requested, the Host Coordinator will present a post-journey accounting of the actual expenses to FFI.
- ii. The Host Club Program budget should be presented to the Ambassador Coordinator and FFI prior to the journey with sufficient time for the Ambassador Coordinator to market the journey.
  - iii. The Host Club Program Fee should not cover the cost of transporting ambassadors from their arrival site to the host community and returning them to their departure sites or for any tour arrangements prior to or following the journey week. If the Host Coordinator is asked by the Ambassador Coordinator to assist in these arrangements, the costs should be agreed to in advance and should be designated "transfer and/or tour costs." Transfer and tour costs are not considered part of the Host Club Program Fee, and should be treated separately with payment and accounting details arranged between the Ambassador and Host Coordinators.
  - iv. For some clubs the basic Host Club Program Fee may be an amount over the recommended \$150 fee and approved by FFI. This is due to the cost of standard tours in their city and the transportation necessary to provide for the ambassadors during the journey. The Ambassador Coordinator must be notified of this situation early in the journey planning process, be provided with a detailed breakdown of all costs over the recommended \$150, and agree to the amended proposed Host Club Program Fee.
  - v. Host Club Program Fees are normally transferred directly from the ambassador club to the host club in a mutually acceptable manner, unless otherwise authorized by FFI. The Host Club Program Fee is non-refundable if an ambassador cancels from the journey less than 60 days prior to departure and the fee must therefore be transferred to the host club together with the fees for the participating ambassadors. In the event that the ambassador club fails to pay for all confirmed ambassadors, FFI will advance the fees to the host club and collect them from the ambassador club.
  - vi. For all other journey types and shorter stays, the Host Club Program Fee will be set on a case-by-case basis, to be worked out and agreed upon by the Ambassador and Host Coordinators.

## **IV. Journey Cancellation**

### **a. Ambassador Cancellation**

If an ambassador cancels more than 60 days before departure, FFI will refund all FFI Ambassador Program Fees and Host Club Program Fees. There is no refund of the FFI Ambassador Program Fees or Host Club Program Fees if an ambassador cancels less than 60 days before the journey. Ambassadors are encouraged to file for a refund through their travel insurance; FFI will assist ambassadors with this process and provide any necessary documentation.

### **b. FFI Cancellation**

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

## V. Travel Insurance

All Friendship Force ambassadors are required to secure adequate travel and medical insurance to cover emergencies during their journeys. This requirement can be fulfilled in one of the following ways:

- a) through the ambassador's existing insurance policy if it covers international travel,
- b) through the policy offered by FFI on our website, or
- c) by purchasing a separate travel insurance package.

The Ambassador Application and Agreement form includes the following statement: "I hereby agree to secure adequate travel and medical insurance for the duration of the journey." At the discretion of the Coordinator, an insurance waiver form may be signed by an ambassador and notarized for those who choose not to secure insurance.

## VI. Payment Procedures

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

Payments must be made in US dollars (USD) and can be made one of four ways:

### A. Check

Payment may be made by check on a US account in US dollars and sent to the following mailing address:

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

### B. Wire Transfer

Bank wire transfers may also be used. Contact your FFI Regional Support Manager for further information if you would like to make a wire transfer.

### C. Credit Card

Payment may be made by credit card (Visa, MasterCard or American Express) on the FFI website. Please note an extra fee of 3% applies to payments made by credit card. This fee corresponds to bank charges for credit card transactions. This 3% processing fee applies to credit card payments of fees related to participation in all types of journeys as well as participation in FFI World Conferences, but does not apply to credit card payments for Annual Fund (formerly known as the Legacy Fund) donations or Club Affiliation fees. *(Note: Clubs in the USA can help to save FFI the 3% credit card charge by paying their club affiliation fee by check.)*

### D. Regional Banking Arrangements

In Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, separate banking arrangements have

been made, and payments should be made according to the procedures established by FFI for these countries. Please check with your FFI Regional Support Manager for details.

## **VII. Journey Evaluation**

Within 30 days of the completion of the journey, each Ambassador Coordinator and Host Coordinator shall complete and send to FFI a final Journey Evaluation using a form provided by FFI. If there are substantial negative comments, FFI will contact the club(s) involved and will work with them to implement corrective action.

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

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## **Part B: Journey Guidelines**

### **I. Journey Monitoring and Oversight**

To ensure that Friendship Force journeys provide high quality cultural experiences for all ambassadors and hosts, FFI will monitor each journey's planning and recruiting. This includes:

- (a) the timely appointment of all Coordinators and selection of journey dates,
- (b) the timely confirmation of a final itinerary and price,
- (c) recruitment of qualified ambassadors and hosts, and
- (d) payment of fees according to FFI guidelines.

Eight and six months prior to the journey Ambassador Coordinators will be asked to submit to FFI current information regarding journey details, recruiting progress, names and ages of the prospective ambassadors, and the status of the payment of fees.

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

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

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

### **II. Earned Seat for the Ambassador Coordinator**

It is appropriate for an Ambassador Coordinator to "earn" part or all of the basic cost of the Friendship Force journey (including supplemental journeys) that he or she is leading. Providing some or all of the journey cost as an "earned seat" recognizes the responsibility associated with leading a journey and can also motivate the Coordinator to recruit a full journey. Each club should adopt a written policy regarding the "earned seat." This policy should be publicized within the club so that all members are aware of the policy. Coordinators should price their journeys in accordance with the club policy. Any member of one club that joins another club's journey will be expected to accept the governing policy of the Ambassador Coordinator's club. An "earned seat" can include some or all of the following:

- (a) travel costs to and from the host community,
- (b) travel and tour costs that are a required part of the journey,
- (c) Host Club Program Fees.

### **III. Ambassador Journey Committee Fee**

Up to \$25 per person may be added to the cost of a journey to be retained by the ambassador journey committee. These fees cover the costs of administering the journey at the local level and are collected and retained by the club, not by FFI. These fees can be non-refundable if the ambassador fails to participate in the

journey or the journey is cancelled, please refer to Ambassador Coordinator for details.

## **IV. Ambassador and Host Coordinators**

Ambassador and Host Coordinators provide the leadership required for successful journeys. The Coordinator(s) for club journeys are selected by the local club and report to FFI for journey planning purposes. Coordinators for specialized journeys are appointed by the clubs or by FFI. An Ambassador and Host Coordinator Manual is provided by FFI to guide the planning and leading of the journey. Clubs should take the appointment process very seriously, as the success of the journey depends primarily on the quality of journey leadership. Preference should be given to individuals with proven leadership ability and prior experience in journey planning.

### Responsibilities of the Ambassador and Host Coordinators

- i. Both the Ambassador and Host Coordinators should work with the FFI staff to list the journey on the FFI online Journey Catalog. The Ambassador Coordinator should request advertisement of a journey on the website as soon as there is any awareness the club(s) cannot fill the journey with their own membership.
- ii. The Ambassador Coordinator must receive and respond to inquiries and applications that come from the online catalog.
- iii. The Ambassador Coordinator should accept or reject applicants according to his/her own judgment.
- iv. The Ambassador Coordinator is not required to fill every space, only to make an effort toward that end by listing the journey on the FFI website, as in accordance to the Fill the Seat policy.
- v. Should an Ambassador or Host Coordinator decide to cancel the journey, he or she is free to do so but must contact FFI first, before cancelling the journey on his/her own. An acceptable reason for an Ambassador Coordinator to cancel would be a safety concern. Insufficient ambassadors or the inability to recruit an Coordinator are not acceptable. These issues should be reported to the Regional Support Manager as soon as possible so that they can attempt to reassign the journey to another club.

## **V. Ambassadors and Hosts**

### **a. Recruitment Deadline and Forms**

A list of ambassadors should be sent to the host club(s) and FFI 60 days before the journey departs. The Ambassador and Host Application and Agreement forms must be completed and signed by each ambassador and host. The respective Coordinators retain these forms.

### **b. Recruitment and Selection:**

The Ambassador Coordinator should recruit as many qualified applicants as can be accommodated by the host club(s), while maintaining a waiting list. The ambassador recruitment goal is the maximum number the host club can host.

Coordinators should look both within the club membership and to the broader community for the most qualified ambassadors and hosts. FFI provides an online journey catalog on [friendshipforce.org](http://friendshipforce.org) where Coordinators can

publicize their journey openings if they choose. The outbound Coordinator should request advertisement of a journey on the website as soon as there is any awareness the club(s) cannot fill the journey with their own membership. Many regions also offer regional recruitment tools.

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

## **VI. Filling a Journey**

Coordinators are encouraged to set definite dates and confirm program activities early in their planning process well ahead of the 100 days deadline of the Fill-the-Seat policy. Applicants will be more likely to commit when they can see an itinerary of activities.

Ambassador Coordinators are encouraged to promote their journey regionally and are welcome to give top priority to applicants from their own region if they choose. Contact your field representative or Regional Support Manager for more information.

### **a. Accepting Ambassadors from Other Communities**

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

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

The Coordinator should correspond with the applicant via email and also speak with him/her on the phone, or via Skype. If the applicant is in a different country, the Coordinator may request assistance from FFI in making direct contact to interview the applicant. The Coordinator should have several conversations or emails with the candidate, including a detailed discussion regarding the journey and why the candidate is interested in participating. Suggested interview guidelines are provided on the FFI website in the Club Resources section, under “Documents.”

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

with a leader of the local club.

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

## **VII. Health and Mobility**

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

It is important to recognize that the level of physical activity required for a Friendship Force journey according to the hosting situation as well as the program itinerary.

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

The Host Coordinator shall provide the Ambassador Coordinator information describing the level of physical activity that will be required during the journey, including the amount of walking as well as the living conditions and type of transportation that will be used during the journey. (FFI provides a checklist on our website to assist in this process.)

The Ambassador Coordinator will provide this information to the ambassador applicants in writing prior to their acceptance on the journey. The Coordinator shall consider each applicant's ability to perform the physical requirements of the journey when deciding whether or not to accept that applicant on the journey.

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

The Ambassador Coordinator shall remind all applicants to take seriously the questions on the ambassador application regarding their health. These questions are for their own safety and must be completed honestly. If a Coordinator discovers that an ambassador did not provide full and truthful information, that person may be removed from the journey at his/her own expense.

Because journeys have differing physical requirements, the Ambassador Coordinator shall not automatically accept club members for a journey. Only applicants who are able to demonstrate to the Coordinator their ability to fulfill the physical requirements of the journey shall be accepted.

If the Ambassador Coordinator has concerns regarding an applicant's ability to fulfill the physical requirements of a journey, he or she may ask the applicant to provide references pertaining to the applicant's physical abilities. At

the discretion of the Coordinator, this could include a requirement to provide a doctor's statement supporting the applicant's ability to carry out the requirements of the journey. In such cases, the Coordinator should provide the doctor an accurate statement regarding the type of activities and the expected living conditions on the journey. NOTE: This provision is to protect the health and safety of the ambassador applicant.

Host Capabilities: While the question of physical activity applies primarily to the ambassador applicants, Host Coordinators shall also ensure that only qualified hosts are selected for the journey. Since hosts are often expected to participate in various journey activities, as well as provide a variety of individual activities for the ambassadors, only those capable of performing these activities shall be selected as hosts. Furthermore, if the host is required to drive the ambassador during the journey it is essential that only those who are fully qualified to carry out this responsibility are accepted. Host clubs are encouraged to use day hosts and other support as needed to assist hosts who may have limitations.

## **VIII. Visas**

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

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

The Ambassador Coordinator should meet with Embassy or Consular officials of the host country as soon as possible to determine what steps are required to apply for visas.

FFI and the host clubs should respond promptly to any requests for documentation regarding the Friendship Force experience. However, the ambassador club should not expect that individual host families will be able to issue private invitations that include guarantees of financial support.

The Ambassador Coordinator should thoroughly screen all applicants for the journey and reject any who may be a risk for not returning home. This is very important because any violations will make it difficult or impossible for future Friendship Force ambassadors to receive visas for that country.

The Ambassador Coordinator should ensure that all qualified applicants apply for their visa interview as soon as possible in order to avoid last-minute decisions.

Host clubs should recognize that visa decisions are beyond the control of the ambassador club and that often the decision is made at the last minute. In such situations, the host club is encouraged to keep open the possibility of hosting the journey but to avoid making firm commitments until the visas have been issued. In some cases this may mean waiting until just before the journey to make the final hosting and program arrangements.