



**GLOBAL PARTNER
BASIC RECRUITMENT AND PROGRAM INFORMATION
for the
CORE TRAINING PROGRAM**

This document has four sections:

Section I/ Steward Recruitment Guidelines for Global Partners

Section II/ Interview Suggestions for Candidate Screening

Section III/ Program Outline to share with Steward Candidates*

Section IV/ Program Costs to share with Steward Candidates*

***Global Partners must review/share Sections III & IV with all steward candidates**

Section I/

Steward Recruitment Guidelines for Global Partners

- Global Partners (GPs) **must conduct in-person interviews** before nominating steward candidates for MESA's U.S. program. *At a minimum, the interview should assess the candidate's English skills, agricultural experience, training goals, medical history, personality and personal references, and community/family ties that will compel his/her return home.*
- Candidates are in **excellent health** with no prior injury or illness requiring medical treatment in the U.S.
- **Candidates with post-secondary academic degrees must have at least one year of occupational (i.e. agricultural) experience.** *Enrolled college students are not eligible for MESA's J-1 visa Sponsorship for Agricultural Trainees.*
- **Candidates with no post-secondary degree** must a) **have at least five years of agricultural experience** and b) must not be currently enrolled students.
- Candidates must have **sufficient English language skills** to answer questions during their U.S. Consular officer interviews for the J1 visa, and make the most of their U.S. training opportunities.
- Candidates are between **21 and 36 years old.**
- Candidates are **friendly, respectful, hard-working, inquisitive, communicative, open-minded and adaptive.**
- GPs review MESA's *Program Outline for Prospective Stewards and Expected Program Costs* documents with **all potential candidates** before collecting any deposit or providing access to MESA's Steward Application.
- Stewards may reject or accept any U.S. placement offer after reviewing the host information and Training Plan presented by MESA. However, once the placement is confirmed, **stewards expect to live and train at the one U.S. host placement assignment for the duration of the program.**
- GPs assist stewards with flight arrangements to ensure that all approved candidates arrive together in one group and in accordance with MESA's

schedule. Stewards' round-trip airfare to the U.S. should be purchased at least one month in advance of the scheduled arrival date.

- MESA provides monthly \$400USD stipends to stewards to cover incidental and recreational expenses. All additional U.S. program expenses, including: housing, food, medical insurance, domestic travel, J-1 visa sponsorship and coordinator services, are provided free-of-charge to stewards by MESA and/or its U.S. hosts. **MESA strictly forbids stewards to receive payment, other than the monthly stipend, from any other source during the Program.**
- Stewards must not be required to send money home. Candidates whose dependents will experience economic hardship in their absence are not eligible for the Program.
- **GPs** are expected to **assist returning stewards** with career development and/or home country projects. GPs help stewards to share their newly acquired information and skills with other farmers and farming communities.
- GPs may charge each steward candidate a fee to cover pre-arrival Program services described above, within the following limits:
 - If candidates pay their own airfare and visa fees, GP in-country fees for pre-arrival services may not exceed \$300USD per candidate;
 - If GP funding and/or outside agency pays for candidates' international airfare and visa fees, GPs may charge up to \$500/candidate to cover additional expenses related to funding procurement and reporting.
- GPs shall develop written guidelines regarding mandatory repatriation upon Program completion *before* nominating anyone for MESA. GP candidate guidelines shall include:
 - ➔ GP fee and fee payment schedule, if any
 - ➔ Deposit and refund policies.

Upon request, GP will provide a copy of its guidelines to MESA, plus any other home country documentation stewards may be required to sign in advance of their U.S. arrival.



Section II/

Interview Suggestions for Prospective Stewards

Please use these guidelines to assess the applicant's ability to complete a successful and fulfilling MESA internship. While interviewing candidates, please observe and evaluate their communication skills, integrity, and level of enthusiasm (typically, if an applicant is shy *and* also has poor English skills, s/he will not make a good program candidate!) *GPs need not send us the answers to the questions below, however we suggest that you consider asking questions like these at the interview.*

Why did you decide to apply for MESA?

How did you become interested in sustainable agriculture and why do you think it is important to learn more about it?

What are your expectations of the Program?

Do you think that training at a small, alternative farm in the U.S. may differ from the impressions/stereotypes you may already have of most Americans and/or the U.S.?

Are you currently involved in a serious romantic relationship? If yes, are you willing to forego daily contact so that you can focus on your program objectives?

Are you romantically involved or related to any current steward applicant or MESA alumni? If yes, who?

What specific skills/experiences do you hope to gain from participation in MESA?

Upon return to your home country, what career path do you intend to pursue?

If you were a farmer seeking to host a trainee, what 5 qualities would you consider most important for the trainee candidate?

Have you done much physical labor? What are the most hours in one day you have labored manually? Do you enjoy physical labor?

Do you enjoy working both independently and in groups? Which do you prefer when given the choice?

How do you handle conflict with: a) your peers? and b) with those in authority?

Do you enjoy challenging your own preconceived ideas, and exposing yourself to new and unfamiliar experiences? Describe an example of how you have tested your own limits (physical, mental, emotional) and prevailed.

Section III/ Core Training Program Outline for Steward Candidates

Please print and review Sections III and IV with all candidates before they apply.

TRAINING PROGRAM REVIEW

MESA is your official U.S. Program Sponsor. MESA is a U.S. Department of State-designated J-1 Training and Cultural Exchange Program. This means that MESA is responsible for your visa and J1 agricultural trainee status for the duration of the program, and must notify government authorities if you willfully disregard the Program rules or visa regulations. Any trainee (i.e. steward) who violates the Program or J1 visa rules will be disqualified and sent home at his/her own expense, and may be barred from re-entering the U.S.

MESA is a non-profit organization, which means that the organization only receives funding from monthly U.S. host fees and donations to operate and provide steward benefits. Except international airfare, which MESA does not provide, MESA provides all U.S. living expenses for participating stewards. In exchange, stewards live/work full-time at pre-assigned host farms to gain experiential training in sustainable agriculture. Stewards are matched with host farmers according to like agricultural interests. MESA requires that you remain at the same host farm for the full training period, averaging 48 hands-on training hours per week, with one day off/week. Hosts provide a variety of farm activities throughout the Program season. Typically, daily farm assignments are physically strenuous and repetitive during peak season. To help MESA monitor your progress, you must send MESA monthly progress reports and complete short readings & homework assignments, in addition to submitting a mid-season evaluation form and writing a final report.

MESA is a vocational, hands-on sustainable farm training Program. Participants do not receive academic training or study in MESA's Program. Host farmers provide free meals & lodging, training instruction, occasional off-the-farm cultural activities, and send monthly fees to MESA. The host farm fees enable MESA to provide steward Program benefits listed below.

MONTHLY STIPEND and J-1 VISA

Every month the U.S. host farms send fees to MESA to fund the Program. From the fees, MESA sends steward stipends and provides additional Program benefits, including: visa applications, host farm assessment and matching, medical insurance, orientation & exit seminar, U.S. travel, coordinator and administrative assistance. The stipends are US \$400/month if host farms provide food, or \$600USD/month if stewards buy their own food (stewards cannot choose which stipend they will receive; it is

decided by the host farm in advance of placement). This stipend amount may seem like a lot in your country, but in the U.S. it is only enough for incidentals. U.S. living expenses are provided by MESA and the U.S. hosts, in exchange for full-time on-site training. **STEWARDS MAY NOT RECEIVE ANY MONEY OTHER THAN THEIR STIPENDS.** MESA will disqualify any steward who works for extra money on or off the farm. **Steward stipends are not comparable to U.S. employee wages or salaries.** U.S. workers must pay for housing, utilities, food, insurance, taxes, etc., whereas MESA stewards have no such expenses.

The J-1 visa is a special category that applies to foreign nationals participating in a U.S. State Department-authorized Exchange Visitor Training Program. With rare exception and unless otherwise granted an official waiver from MESA and the appropriate government agencies, stewards may not change this visa to another category while in the Program. Some countries require that J-1 visa holders return to their home country at the end of the training Program and remain there for two years before applying for another visa. If a steward leaves the Program without MESA's authorization, MESA will terminate participation and notify government authorities, which will result in visa revocation and possible deportation.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

MESA provides medical insurance for all stewards and will cover the full costs of medical treatment up to \$200,000.00USD. However, **medical insurance will not cover treatment for any past illness or injury.** You must report any history of medical treatments on MESA's application, and provide a Physician's Statement before entering the U.S. **You should not apply to MESA if you have back or knee problems, or any physical limitation that would interfere with daily farm tasks.** Any omission of important health history may result in immediate disqualification. *Stewards should visit the dentist and take care of any tooth or gum problems before coming to the U.S., since dentists are very expensive and stewards must pay for any dental claim over \$200.*

LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS

Hosts provide free accommodations, which may be in the host family home, a small trailer, a rustic cabin, intern house, converted barn or bunkhouse, etc. You will also have access to kitchen, bathroom, shower, electricity & heat, etc. Be sure to carefully review the lodging description on the host training plan, which you will receive before MESA assigns your U.S. placement. Some hosts provide a television, computer/internet and/or telephone but those provisions vary and are not guaranteed. Each host farmer will have different rules regarding cleaning, laundry, etc. Stewards may be expected to help with general house cleaning and daily meal preparation. It is up to each steward to learn their own host's "house rules" upon arrival, and keep his/her lodging clean.

DAILY LIFE

Expect to remain on the farm most of the time. Of course, stewards may travel off the farm with their hosts, and visit nearby places of interest on days off, but should not expect to spend more than one day away without permission from the host farm and prior MESA approval. **MESA's on-the-farm program does not include any vacation-time**, unless the host and steward agree in advance to extra days off to compensate accrued overtime.

MESA SEMINARS

Stewards who arrive on schedule for MESA's March arrival date attend two MESA-sponsored seminars: the 5-day Program Orientation upon arrival and the Exit Seminar in San Francisco in November. During the on-the-farm training, stewards may also be invited to attend farmers' workshops, visit other organic farms, and attend organic agricultural research conferences with his/her host farmer, but only as your host's schedule and seasonal requirements permit.

MESA's MISSION & KEY PRINCIPLES FOR YOUR SUCCESS

MESA's mission is to advance a new generation of agrarian leaders, linking innovations in sustainable agriculture with ancestral knowledge to promote land stewardship, place-appropriate production and cultural awareness. In order to gain the most from participation, stewards must be hardworking, honest, adaptive and open to socializing with people from different ethnic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. The ability to adapt to new situations and maintain a positive attitude enriches each participant's knowledge in agriculture, themselves and other cultures.

Section IV/ Program Costs for Stewards

ESTIMATED PRE-U.S. ARRIVAL COSTS (USD):

1. **\$300 – Global Partner (GP) services fee***. Service fees may be charged by MESA’s authorized Global Partner representative in your home country to help cover recruitment & screening costs, application assistance, administration and pre-arrival expenses. MESA’s GP must provide you with a detailed summary of their fee payment schedule and refund policy. It is your responsibility to request written explanation of the application fees before applying to MESA. MESA does not receive any part of the GP fee.
 - *Any person deemed qualified to participate in MESA, but unable to pay the GP fee, may submit a letter of request, with proof of financial hardship, for a loan or fee reduction to MESA and MESA’s Global Partner.*
2. **\$320 - SEVIS form I-901 & U.S. Embassy visa processing fees** (must be paid prior to your U.S. Embassy interview for the J-1 visa)
3. **\$800 - \$2500 Round-trip international airfare** estimate, depending on your departure country.

Candidates must not apply to MESA unless they have personal resources or additional funding secured to cover visa fees and int’l travel costs.

U.S. PROGRAM COSTS:

= **\$0**. MESA and your host placement provide for all necessary U.S. living expenses, including: free lodging, food, domestic travel, orientation, exit seminar, coordinator assistance, visa documentation & medical insurance. Stewards also receive a \$350 monthly stipend from MESA for incidentals.

**Unless int’l airfare is provided free of charge for the stewards, the GP fees should not to exceed \$300USD per approved candidate.*