



Open World Program

The Open World Program enables emerging political and civic leaders from Russia and other selected countries to observe the American democratic system firsthand. The Open World Leadership Center operates on the principle that accountability, governance, and the role of citizenry in government are most effectively illustrated through direct interaction between participants and their U.S. professional counterparts and through hosted community and cultural activities.

The program brings groups of four to five participants accompanied by a facilitator for ten-day theme-based visits to the United States. The visits usually begin with an orientation in Washington, D.C., followed by eight days in a local community. Participants are placed in home stays and attend professional meetings and cultural events throughout the week. In-depth professional programs address topics such as economic development, environmental issues, health and social issues, local governance, rule of law, and women as leaders.

Hosting Partnership: AED and Sister Cities International

Since 2002, the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and Sister Cities International have partnered to support the Open World Program, providing unique local hosting capability. AED works with Sister Cities International and other program administrators to place delegations with sister city communities and attempts to identify delegates from their sister city communities overseas. AED and Sister Cities International also handle delegate nominations for Sister City communities capable of identifying prospective delegates from their sister cities. By involving the sister cities network, the Open World Program strengthens existing partnerships and encourages the formation of new relationships between U.S. communities and those in the participating countries.

Over 130 of Sister Cities International's U.S. affiliates have established sister city partnerships with cities in Russia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, the countries where Open World has programs currently or had programs in the past.

By the end of 2006, 47 sister city chapters in 25 U.S. states will have hosted 107 Open World delegations. Twenty-eight of these sister city communities nominated and hosted delegates from their Sister Cities in Russia. To date, a total of 208 nominated Open World delegates visited their U.S. sister cities.



The Open World Program Provides Delegates with Opportunities to...

- Exchange views with influential representatives of appropriate federal, state, and local government agencies; civic organizations and other NGOs; and the business community.
- Participate in community events, to gain an understanding of the role of community organizations' interactions with the government.
- Receive an overview of the relationships among:
 - a) the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government;
 - b) the business and civic communities and government; and
 - c) individual citizens and government.
- Interact with American professionals and hosts who are interested in maintaining contact beyond the eight-day community visit.

Sounds Interesting! How Do I Get Involved?

The Academy for Educational Development (AED) in partnership with Sister Cities International invites U.S.-based sister city chapters to take part in the Open World Program. We seek local communities interested in establishing or strengthening ties with Russia and Ukraine and capable of conducting short-term exchange programs for emerging leaders from these countries.

To become part of the Open World hosting network, your sister city chapter needs to have:

- Capacity to host an eight-day exchange visit, including a substantive professional program and an exciting cultural program in your community;
- Aptitude for community-wide participation in the program, from school children to the local media;
- Interest in collaborating with Russian or Ukrainian partners beyond the 8-day exchange visit;
- Ability to work effectively with the Open World Program administrators in Washington and to adhere to deadlines;
- Stamina and energy for hard work and lots of fun with your visitors;
- Commitment to internationalizing your community and to taking a step toward a more active and vibrant Sister City partnership.



Responsibilities of a local hosting community:

- Coordinate in-depth professional program
- Plan cultural activities
- Provide home stays to all participants
- Arrange local ground transportation
- Hire professional interpreter
- Work with the local media to gain coverage
- Manage local program budget
- Submit program deliverables on time and in the proper format

How AED supports local hosting communities:

- Mini-grant to cover administrative and direct program expenses
- Hosting Notebook and access to AED's program Web Site: openworld.aed.org
- Guidance and support before, during, and after the delegation's visit

How Do I Get More Information?

- Visit the Open World Program main Web Site: www.openworld.gov
- Visit Sister Cities International Web Site: www.sister-cities.org/sci/Openworldrussian
- Contact the Sister Cities International office: 202-347-8630.





Open World Program Overview

Since its founding by Congress in 1999, the Open World Program has enabled nearly 10,750 current and future leaders from Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Uzbekistan to experience American democracy and civil society, work with their American counterparts, live in American families and communities, and gain new ideas and inspiration for implementing change back home. Open World is today the largest U.S.-Russia exchange program and a proven model for exchanges for leaders from other Eurasian countries. Among Open World's key features are its large size, competitive selection process, emphasis on regional and local leaders, focus on interactive professional experiences, homestays, and lack of an English-language requirement.

A typical Russian Open World exchange begins with group orientations in Moscow and Washington, D.C. that cover cultural differences and basic information on U.S. government. Participants then travel in small delegations to different U.S. communities for the core of their program: an intensive week of site visits, workshops, group discussions, and other activities related to their professional or community work.

Objectives. Open World aims to enable participants to see and experience: what makes American democratic institutions accountable, transparent, and responsive; how U.S. citizens solve problems through civic activism and volunteerism; and how business, the nonprofit sector, and all three levels of government in the United States operate and interrelate. The overarching goals are to build mutual understanding between the United States and participating countries, and to support emerging leaders in these countries in their efforts to effect change and develop lasting ties with American counterparts.

Organizational History. Congress established Open World in May 1999 as a Library of Congress-run pilot exchange for emerging Russian leaders. This legislative initiative was spearheaded by Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska and inspired by an April 1999 speech on Russia by Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. In late 2000, Congress created the Open World Leadership Center as a separate legislative branch entity to manage the program, which had already hosted 3,500 Russians in 48 states. In 2003, Congress made the other New Independent States and the Baltics eligible for Open World and expanded the Russia program to include cultural leaders. One year later, Congress extended Open World eligibility to any countries designated by the Center's board. Today the original Russia program and the pilot-country exchanges are collectively called the Open World Program.

Delegates. Open World delegates come from all levels of government, the NGO sector, the media, and the business world. In addition to targeting decision makers and opinion leaders—especially those at the regional and local levels—Open World's selection process intentionally produces a delegate pool that is young (the average age in 2005 was

37), and politically, ethnically, and geographically diverse. Women have made up 49 percent of Open World delegates over the life of the program.

Partnerships. Open World conducts its programs with the help of many respected government agencies and NGOs in the United States and participating countries. A large pool of prominent U.S. and foreign government bodies and international NGOs nominate most candidates. Finalists are then selected by committees composed mainly of U.S. Embassy staff. The U.S. visits are carried out by some 20 organizations (including the Academy for Educational Development) with exchange-program expertise that the Center competitively selects each year. These organizations either host groups themselves or recruit local affiliates, civic organizations, educational institutions, and government bodies to do so. In addition to arranging the professional agendas, these local host organizations provide meals, lodging, and cultural and social activities.

The nonprofit American Councils for International Education handles international travel and other logistical and administrative arrangements for the program.

Focus Themes. Open World delegations and professional agendas are organized around a handful of set themes, which vary by country. The Center evaluates these themes at the outset of each program year for their continuing relevance to Open World's mission, the participating countries' needs, and U.S. foreign-policy objectives. For the 2006 Russia program, the themes are accountable governance, healthy communities, rule of law, and women as leaders.

Activities. With only five members in a typical delegation, participants can engage in hands-on experiences, direct observation, job shadowing, and in-depth exchanges with their U.S. counterparts. Activities range from accompanying a political candidate on the campaign trail to joining a newspaper editorial meeting; from attending a corporate planning session to discussing a sentence with the judge who just imposed it. Most delegates have homestays, enabling them to experience American family and community life and to share information about their own countries with their hosts. Delegations and hosts regularly report that the homestays led to new friendships and broke down Cold War-era stereotypes and mistrust on both sides.

Alumni Activities. Open World conducted its first alumni activities in Russia in 2000, holding 10 conferences across the country. Since then, the alumni program has expanded to include seminars, professional development workshops, web-based forums, listserves, and an alumni bulletin. The program seeks to encourage the formation of local, regional, and national networks of Russian leaders who will work together on self-initiated projects. The October conference in Sochi will highlight sustainable development.

Impacts. Surveys of delegates taken throughout Open World's seven-year history demonstrate that the program has had a high success rate in improving delegates' understanding and assessment of American institutions and their willingness to work with American leaders. Most delegates also report that their Open World exchange was definitely useful and a substantial majority say that they achieved their purpose in participating. The Center is now looking at ways of measuring the long-term impacts of the Open World experience on the participants themselves and their communities and on their American hosts and professional counterparts.