



The Bpeace Executive Business Exchange

Program description, candidate selection and program activities

1. Introduction and name of the program: Bpeace Executive Business Exchange (BEBE)

The 2014-2015 Bpeace Executive Business Exchange (BEBE) is an 18-month program that will benefit 28 small and medium-size businesses in El Salvador and Guatemala. It will include four weeks of travel to the United States to improve business competitiveness, as well as business consulting from U.S. experts who will visit each business in El Salvador or Guatemala. The program will provide all travel expenses for Salvadoran or Guatemalan business owners (or their designees) traveling to the United States, and for the U.S. experts traveling to Central America who will provide business consulting.

BEBE is part of the U.S. Department of State's Professional Fellows Program--a two-way, global exchange designed to promote mutual understanding, enhance leadership skills and build lasting and sustainable partnerships among growth-minded Salvadoran and Guatemalan business owners and American business experts. Recognizing that jobs created by fast-growing Salvadoran and Guatemalan businesses are one of the best ways to help their economies thrive, the U.S. Embassies in El Salvador and Guatemala, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) in Washington, D.C., and Bpeace (Business Council for Peace) are implementing an open competition in which 18 Salvadoran and 10 Guatemalan businesses will be selected. In addition to visiting U.S. firms, the Salvadorans and Guatemalans will participate in a Professional Fellows Congress in Washington, D.C.

2. Definitions

Bpeace Business Council for Peace

U.S. Department of State U.S. Department of State's Professional Fellows Program

BEBE Bpeace Executive Business Exchange

Candidates Salvadoran and Guatemalan businesses applying to the BEBE program

Semi-finalists Those candidates selected for in-person interviews

Finalists Those candidates scored highly by Bpeace and recommended to the U.S. Department of State for acceptance into the BEBE program

Fast Runners 18 Salvadoran and 10 Guatemalan business firms (owners and Representatives) accepted into the 18-month BEBE program

Representatives Those English-speaking representatives of Fast Runner businesses who are the designated travelers to the U.S.

U.S. experts Bpeace business volunteers

Host Companies U.S. businesses that Representatives will visit

Team Fast Runners, Bpeace and U.S. experts

3. Description of Bpeace

Bpeace has been successfully increasing the competitiveness of Salvadoran businesses since 2011, and it began operations in Guatemala in 2013.

Bpeace believes the path to peace is lined with jobs. We work with entrepreneurs in conflict-affected countries to scale their businesses, create significant employment for all and expand the economic power of women. More jobs mean less violence.®

Bpeace is a New York City-based non-profit coalition of 350 business volunteers, including experts from U.S. companies like PricewaterhouseCoopers, Wal-Mart, AOL and Morgan Stanley, and specialists from many industries including food processing and manufacturing.

Bpeace offers pro bono access to its experts, capacity development, technical assistance, networks and proven methodologies to help small and growing businesses (Bpeace calls them Fast Runners) expand, increase profitability, create new employment, retain and attract customers, and access markets and capital.

Bpeace tailors a personalized program for each Fast Runner—a mix of consulting, training, mentoring, out-of-country apprenticeships and business site visits, employee technical training, branding and marketing, and networking opportunities.

4. Program goals and expected results

4.1. Goals

BEBE seeks to improve the ability of Salvadorans and Guatemalans to expand their businesses—ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic development—and spark job creation. To accomplish this, BEBE will do the following:

- Provide approximately three to four weeks of practical skills building by arranging for Fast Runner Representatives to visit businesses (Host Companies) in the United States. The expectation is that Fast Runners will acquire the insight to expand their managerial abilities in functional areas such as finance, marketing and sales, human resources, customer service, and business planning. BEBE will also expose Fast Runners to technical knowledge by introducing them to U.S. best business practices in their particular industry—for example, food processing, manufacturing, technology, tourism or services.
- Promote entrepreneurial and market-driven thinking by exposing Fast Runners to new ideas, new markets and successful entrepreneurs in the United States.
- Enable learning and the sharing of experiences by facilitating Fast Runner Representatives' attendance at a global conference during the fourth week of the U.S. visit—the Professional Fellows Congress in Washington, D.C., encompassing 240 professionals from 50 countries.
- Provide on-site business consulting from U.S. experts who will travel to El Salvador or Guatemala and work with Fast Runners on specific projects to improve their business's competitiveness.

4.2. Expected results

Bpeace's expectations of the BEBE program are that its activities will increase:

- Common understanding and lasting, mutually beneficial partnerships between business people and companies in El Salvador, Guatemala and the United States which leads to a deeper understanding of professional practices, society and culture.
- Knowledge of U.S. practices and techniques in their respective industry sector among the businesses in the program.

- The competitiveness of Salvadoran and Guatemalan firms resulting in greater employment and revenue generation for the country.

5. Program dates

Each Fast Runner firm will participate in the program for 18 months. Once accepted into the program, Fast Runners will be assigned to one of two groups:

Group 1: Will consist of approximately 14 Fast Runner firms who will begin the BEBE program on or about March 1, 2014, and complete the program in September 2015. Fast Runner Representatives will travel to the U.S. from May 10 through June 7, 2014.

Group 2: Will consist of approximately 14 Fast Runner firms who will begin the BEBE program on or about June 1, 2014, and complete the program in December 2015. Fast Runner Representatives will travel to the U.S. from October 11 through November 8, 2014.

Note: When completing the online application process, Fast Runners must select from the two sets of program dates above. Bpeace may increase and decrease the number of participants in each group depending on programmatic needs.

6. Program expenses

For 18 Salvadoran and 10 Guatemalan Fast Runner Representatives, BEBE will provide and pay for:

- Round-trip coach airfare from El Salvador or Guatemala to the United States
- Hotel and other overnight accommodations in the United States
- Transportation within the United States as it relates to the program
- A daily per diem to cover food, meals and incidentals during the U.S. visit

For the 18 Salvadoran and 10 Guatemalan Fast Runner Representatives, BEBE does *not* pay for:

- Transportation within the United States to visit family on the weekends
- Non-emergency medical or doctor visits
- Fees for translators or interpreters

For the U.S. experts who will visit Central America, BEBE will provide and pay for:

- Round-trip coach airfare from the United States to El Salvador or Guatemala
- Hotel accommodations in El Salvador or Guatemala
- Transportation within El Salvador or Guatemala as it relates to the program
- A daily per diem to cover food, meals and incidentals during the Central American visit
- Fees for translators or interpreters

Note: Bpeace will not pay any expenses other than those described above. Bpeace does not provide grants or loans to Salvadoran and Guatemalan businesses for any type of activity. U.S. experts will provide pro bono consulting to Salvadoran and Guatemalan Fast Runner firms.

7. Eligibility criteria for program candidates

BEBE is open to business owners in El Salvador and Guatemala who meet the following criteria:

- Own all or part of an existing private business that has been operating formally for more than two years in El Salvador or Guatemala. *Associative groups or cooperatives are not eligible to apply.*
- Are of Salvadoran or Guatemalan citizenship, residing in the country of their citizenship, over the age of 25.
- Guatemalan firms must be located in Guatemala City and its neighboring municipalities.
- Provide full-time employment to at least 10 Salvadorans or Guatemalans.
- Work in manufacturing, services, technology, construction, hospitality, tourism, food processing or other targeted industries. *Firms in agriculture, retail commerce, tobacco, alcohol and security are not eligible to apply.*
- Generated annual 2012 sales ranging from US\$100,000 to \$2 million.
- The person traveling to the U.S. has a working knowledge of English (business owner or representative).
- Have advanced computer knowledge.
- Are able to travel during at least one of the two stipulated sets of program dates *or* can delegate a Representative with proven decision-making power to travel in their place.

Note: Online applications for the BEBE open competition will be accepted from October 15 through December 15, 2013.

8. Participant selection process

8.1. Registration

Interested Salvadoran and Guatemalan business owners can register online using the link www.beace.org/BEBE, where they will provide their first name, last name and an email address. Within 36 hours of registration being completed, Bpeace will send a personal link to an online application form to the email address provided.

If candidates have problems at any time registering or completing the online application form, they may contact BEBE@bpeace.org.

8.2. Online application form

Candidates will use their personal link (see registration above) to fill out an online application form in English. The online application requires each candidate to enter required information before proceeding to the next application page.

Questions 1–20 of the online application are specifically related to the eligibility requirements defined by Bpeace and the U.S. Department of State for the BEBE program. If a candidate's answers indicate that they do not meet the requirements (see Section 7 above: eligibility criteria), the online application will not allow them to proceed with the remaining questions.

Candidates can partially complete their application, save their information and go back to the application before submitting their final application. Should they wish to modify their application before the December 15 deadline, they can do so using their personal link, which allows them to access and edit their application.

Before entering information, candidates should review the entire application so that they are prepared to answer the questions thoughtfully. A PDF of the application can be found and downloaded at www.bpeace.org/BEBE.

Immediately after submitting their final online application, candidates will receive a screen confirmation acknowledging receipt of the application. No online applications can be accessed or modified after midnight December 15, 2013.

Bpeace encourages candidates to be as specific as possible when describing their business's actions, expansion plans and employment generation opportunities. Incomplete application forms will not be accepted for participation in the competition.

8.3. Semi-finalists selection

A Bpeace jury will score the applications based on the following questions and general criteria. Bpeace will then rank all the online applications and prioritize a qualified pool of 30 to 40 Semi-finalists to be interviewed.

Growth potential and opportunities

Is the candidate's business in a growing industry sector?

What is the candidate's business growth potential?

What realistic opportunities has the candidate identified for the business?

How will the candidate's expansion plans increase employment?

Leadership and management structure

Does the candidate's business have adequate leadership and management structure to accelerate and support growth?

If the business owner is unable to travel, what leadership and decision-making power does the person who will represent the firm on the U.S. trip possess?

Match with U.S. businesses and experts

Can a trip to the United States and consulting by U.S. experts provide resources for the candidate's business to overcome its challenges?

Inclusiveness

Does the candidate's firm have ongoing practices and policies that benefit its employees, environment or community?

How does the candidate's business promote the economic empowerment of women?

8.4. Semi-finalist interview

A local Bpeace representative will contact each of the 30 to 40 Semi-finalists through email and/or phone to schedule an on-site interview with one or more Bpeace representatives at the candidate's place of business. The interview team may also include a representative from the U.S. Embassy and/or a visiting U.S. expert.

Bpeace encourages Semi-finalists to be open regarding their business's plans, problems and opportunities so that it can be determined if the trip and U.S. expert consulting will meet candidates' expectations. Business owners can expect a friendly and professional conversation in Spanish lasting approximately two hours. If the business owner has designated a Representative to travel to the United States, this person must also be present during the interview and prepared to conduct part of the conversation in English.

The interview will cover, validate and, most importantly, expand on the same areas mentioned above on the online application. After the meeting, the interviewers will score the interview independently.

8.5. Finalist selection

The 18 Salvadoran and 10 Guatemalan firms with the highest combined application and interview scores will be invited to participate in the Bpeace Executive Business Exchange (BEBE). Finalists and non-finalists will receive formal notifications by email.

Formal notification for the Finalists will include the assigned cohort number and dates of U.S. travel (see Section 5.0 above: program dates).

Should Bpeace conclude that there are not enough qualified candidates to fill the 14 seats for Group 2, it will conduct a second open competition for BEBE applications in 2014.

9. J1 or exchange visa

Bpeace will submit a list of Finalists to the Cultural and Educational Affairs Office of the U.S. Embassies in El Salvador and Guatemala for vetting and approval of all 28 Fast Runners. Once the Finalists have been approved by these offices, they will be asked to submit the J1 or exchange visa application form and follow the normal consular visa requisition processes described in the following links:

http://spanish.sansalvador.usembassy.gov/visas_de_no_inmigrante-.html

http://spanish.guatemala.usembassy.gov/visas_no_inmigrante.html

Although Bpeace will make recommendations for visas, only the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassies in El Salvador and Guatemala can grant J1 visas. Please note that regardless of whether a Finalist has another valid visa to enter the United States (such as a B1 tourist visa), **a J1 visa will be required for travel to the United States for the Bpeace Executive Business Exchange.**

10. BEBE program activities

10.1. Activity timeline

Activity description	Group1 dates	Group 2 dates
BEBE open competition application period	October 15 – December 15, 2013	TBD
Semi-finalist selection and interviews	January 6 – January 31, 2014	TBD
Finalists and non-finalists notified of conditional acceptance*	February 6, 2014	TBD
Finalist J1 visas granted**	March 1, 2014	July 1, 2014
STAGE 1: Fast Runner introduction to Bpeace and BEBE planning	February 2014 – April 2014	July 2014 – September 2014
STAGE 2: Travel to the United States	May 9 – June 7, 2014	October 11 – November 8, 2014
STAGE 3: Long-distance project with U.S. Experts	June 2014 – October 2014	November 2014 – February 2015
STAGE 4: Visit to El Salvador or Guatemala by U.S. experts	October 2014 – November 2014	February 2015 – April 2015
STAGE 5: Part 2 of long-distance project with U.S. Experts	November 2014 – February 2015	April 2015 – June 2015
STAGE 6: Bpeace consulting	April 2015 – September 2015	July 2015 – December 2015

*J1 visas are required for full acceptance into the Bpeace Executive Business Exchange.

** Fast Runner finalists and Representatives are required to compile the required consular paperwork for the J1 as efficiently as possible to meet the March 1 and July 1 deadlines.

10.2. STAGE 1: Fast Runner introduction to Bpeace and BEBE planning

Duration: Three months

Bpeace will organize several group sessions in the two to three months prior to U.S. travel to facilitate group networking, training and orientation. Participation in these sessions is mandatory for all Fast Runner firms. If a Fast Runner owner has designated a Representative to travel to the United States, both the Fast Runner owner and the designated Representative must attend. In addition, Bpeace will meet with both Fast Runner owners and designated Representatives during this period to understand their needs and plan their U.S. Business Exchange agendas.

10.3. STAGE 2: Travel to the United States

Duration: Four weeks

Upon arrival in the U.S., Bpeace will conduct a program orientation that will include reviewing each Fast Runner Representative's customized agenda and individual project action plan, or what Bpeace calls a Forward Plan. The Representative will then travel to their host companies, which Bpeace will attempt to cluster in a geographic area to minimize travel distance as much as possible.

Bpeace will attempt to secure one Host Company for each Representative's entire BEBE experience in the United States. However, should that not be possible, Bpeace will secure two to three Host Companies for five to eight days each, to total three weeks.

At the end of each visit to a Host Company, Bpeace requires that the Fast Runner Representative and the Host Company discuss goals and activities to include in the Forward Plan. During the trip, non-owner Fast Runner Representatives will have a phone conversation with the Salvadoran business owner to discuss progress on the Forward Plan and secure alignment on goals and activities.

10.4. STAGE 3: Long-distance project with U.S. Experts

Duration: Four-five months

Upon returning to El Salvador or Guatemala, Fast Runner Representatives will evaluate the experiences and insights gained from the trip. Jointly with Bpeace, Fast Runner firms will select one project from their Forward Plan that they can begin implementing with long-distance assistance from U.S. experts and Bpeace's support.

Bpeace will recruit the U.S. experts who will provide long-distance technical consulting for the designated project. Bpeace will schedule a series of team phone calls through Skype to monitor the progress of the project.

10.5. STAGE 4: Visit to El Salvador or Guatemala by U.S. experts

Duration: One month planning; Two-week visit

Prior to any U.S. expert traveling to El Salvador or Guatemala, the team will discuss and plan a scope of work for the expert's trip. Once the scope is agreed upon, Bpeace will formally write the Scope of Work document for the Fast Runner and the visiting expert.

The U.S. expert will visit El Salvador or Guatemala for approximately two weeks. The primary focus will be on the Scope of Work, but assistance can be expanded to any other areas the U.S. expert and the Fast Runner consider necessary. At the end of the visit, the U.S. expert and the Fast Runner will complete an updated Forward Plan.

10.6. STAGE 5: Part 2 of long-distance project with U.S. Experts

Duration: Three-four months

After the visiting expert's trip, Bpeace will plan, coordinate and monitor additional long-distance assistance to the Fast Runner, based on the updated needs of the Forward Plan and provided by U.S. experts and local Bpeace representatives.

10.7. STAGE 6: Bpeace consulting

Duration: Six months

Bpeace will consult with the Fast Runner to determine if there are areas, in addition to the Forward Plan priority areas, where its member network can provide additional business consulting. Bpeace will evaluate those needs and attempt to meet them where possible with long-distance assistance from additional experts.

11. Confidentiality and promotion

Candidate information provided through the online application, the BEBE jury panel and any interviews will be handled confidentially. No organization or person outside the BEBE jury panel will have access to any candidate's information.

All Fast Runners will be asked to cooperate with Bpeace and interested media in El Salvador, Guatemala and the U.S. that may want to publish stories about their experience in the Bpeace Executive Business Exchange. Bpeace will consult with Fast Runners prior to any media activity.

12. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

After their acceptance into the BEBE program, Fast Runners will be required to sign a MOU to signify a clear understanding of the program, and their responsibilities.

13. General travel logistics

All Fast Runner firms and Representatives will receive detailed agendas and trip logistical details prior to the Representatives arriving in the United States. Once in the U.S., they will then travel to their destinations using bus, train, taxis, subway, car or airplane.

The program will pay BEBE travel-related expenses within the United States including hotels and overnight accommodations. Fast Runner Representatives will also receive cash stipends to pay for meals and food and incidental expenses including laundry.

Fast Runner Representatives will have access to chaperones, either Bpeace volunteers or Host Company staffers, during their visit, and they will have the contact information of U.S. Bpeace staffers, who will monitor and support all aspects of their trip agenda. For their return to El Salvador or Guatemala, Fast Runner Representatives will depart from Washington, D.C. after participating in the Professional Fellows Congress.