

## ICMA International Management Exchange Program (IMEP) Frequently Asked Questions

**What is it?** The [International Management Exchange Program](#) (IMEP) provides a unique opportunity for in-service U.S. members to participate in a two- to three-week professional exchange with a counterpart from one of ICMA's [international affiliate organizations](#).

**How is IMEP funded?** ICMA members are expected to cover the bulk of exchange-related costs (airfare, ground transportation, meals, incidental expenses) themselves. Limited financial support for travel-related expenses is available through the John Garvey Scholarship fund (for young professionals) and the Bill Hansell Scholarship Fund (for mid-career professionals).

To keep exchange costs down and enhance the cultural experience, exchange partners generally stay in each other's homes. ICMA and participating affiliates provide complimentary registration, hotel, and per diem at their respective annual conferences for exchange participants.

**How does the application process work?** Each year, ICMA solicits applications from in-service U.S. members. Applicants are asked to list their choices for an exchange destination in priority order, and to provide information about their professional experience, community, and objectives for an international exchange. You can [download the application here](#).

**How are "matches" made?** The "match-making" is not an exact science. Applications from U.S. members are sent to the appropriate affiliates, and, in turn, affiliate organizations are expected to send applications from their members to ICMA. The ICMA IMEP coordinator and his/her international counterparts do an initial screening of applications to identify potential matches, based on similarities in job responsibilities and community size (and, to the extent possible, geography).

Applications are then shared directly with potential exchange partners so that they can evaluate for themselves whether there appears to be a good match and communicate this to the ICMA IMEP coordinator and affiliate counterpart. Once an agreement has been reached by two parties that they would like to pursue an exchange, the individuals begin communicating directly with each other to work out the specifics. How long this process takes depends on when ICMA receives applications from participating affiliates.

**How long does the exchange last?** The exact length of each exchange is determined by the exchange partners and typically lasts two to three weeks. To maximize the experience, U.S. exchanges generally take place in conjunction with ICMA's annual conference, and the ICMA

exchange partner will often schedule his/her trip to coincide with his/her counterpart's annual conference or another professional event.

**What does an exchange program look like?** The specifics of each program are worked out between the exchange partners. They may include “shadowing” each other through the course of a typical work day, attending council and community meetings, and meeting with different departments to gain an understanding of how they are structured and funded and to learn about the services and programs they manage. The host partner may also arrange for his/her counterpart to meet with colleagues in neighboring communities, other levels of government, local nonprofits, and/or private-sector organizations. Sightseeing and cultural activities are also, of course, part of the experience!

**Can my spouse and/or children join me?** Yes, if your exchange partner agrees and has room to accommodate them! Many long-term friendships have blossomed between exchange partners, their spouses and kids through IMEP exchanges.

**How are language barriers addressed?** English is widely spoken in participating IMEP countries, especially among younger professionals, and applicants from affiliates where English is not the native language must have a strong command of English to participate in the program. Where necessary, the host partner serves as a resource and translator for his/her U.S. exchange partner.

**How can state associations get involved in IMEP?** In our global economy, an international perspective is increasingly important to local government managers. State associations can play a key role in fostering this perspective by encouraging their ICMA members to consider applying for an IMEP exchange and recruiting IMEP alumni to “market” the program at their meetings. In addition, a number of state associations have established their own scholarship funds to support member participation in IMEP and other international professional activities.

**What happens if I don't get “matched”?** ICMA makes a good faith effort to place all applicants. However, depending on the volume of ICMA applications and the number and type of applications received from participating affiliates, it is not always possible to find a good match for everyone in the year they apply. When this is the case, ICMA contacts these members to find out if they wish to carry their application over to the following year.

**Who should I contact for further information?** For additional information, please contact Shraddha Kharel-Pandey ([skharelpandey@icma.org](mailto:skharelpandey@icma.org), 202-962-3516) or Lauren Crawford ([lcrawford@icma.org](mailto:lcrawford@icma.org)).