



## Washington, D.C. Educational Exchange Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: What is the cost of the program?**

The program's cost is free to you as a participant. Flights, housing, ground transportation, and meals are covered by the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation. We recommend checking with your agency's ethics protocol to confirm your agency's requirements. This is an educational program of the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation (CALF).

### **Q: What is the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation?**

The foundation, which has been in existence since 1962, is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit public benefit corporation committed to leadership training and transformational learning experiences in partnership with five California universities: Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo; Cal Poly, Pomona; California State University, Fresno; University of California, Davis; and California State University, Chico.

*\*\* For more information, please visit our website: [www.agleaders.org](http://www.agleaders.org) \*\**

### **Q: What is the application and interview process?**

The application link is posted online. It should take about 15-20 minutes to complete. If you are selected for an interview, we will schedule a 30-minute virtual interview with two to three of our selection committee members based on the availability provided in your application. The interview committee is comprised of California Ag Leadership Program alumni. We will be conducting interviews virtually from Monday, April 27 through Friday, May 1.

### **Q: How do you decide who you will take?**

Our selection process is grounded in diversity. We want as much agency/public policy diversity as possible. Therefore, we attempt to interview individuals from all arenas that connect to California agriculture – from USDA, EPA, FDA, Department of Labor, Department of the Interior, State Department, and even outlying agencies like the Center for Disease Control, OMB, Health and Human Services, and the Library of Congress. This happens for two reasons - 1) to create a new networking web amongst the participants (enabling you to meet new colleagues tackling issues similar to yours) and 2) to provide our California agriculturalists with a diverse group of contacts for their future reference.

Please keep in mind that we also look at organizational hierarchy – we attempt to strike a balance between taking individuals with the capacity to enact change in the most immediate future and candidates with the longevity and commitment to agriculture to impact long-term needs. We take up to 25 participants who provide a blend of legislative and agency input.

**Q: When and where is the program?**

The 2026 program will be held in regions 1 and 2. The Exchange trip is a weeklong, Wednesday to Wednesday, and will run from September 16 through September 23.



**Q: When do I find out if I have been selected?**

We will email applicants their status and extend an invitation to those selected by May 8. We give individuals three weeks to respond, and those who don't respond are deemed ineligible for that year. We will also send notices to the candidates that we could not take this year and confirm if they would be interested in reapplying the following year.

Because we strive for organizational diversity, we limit the number of candidates we may accept from a single agency in a year, but we highly encourage individuals to be considered the following year.

**Q: What is the dress attire during the trip?**

Our goal is comfort, so we encourage participants to bring casual clothing and comfortable walking shoes. Closed-toed shoes are required for most of the facilities we will tour. You will want clothes that layer and provide sun protection while keeping you cool. More specific clothing recommendations will be provided based on the regions you will be visiting.

**Q: What are the basic physical requirements for the site tours?**

There will be a great deal of walking and, in some cases, hiking, along with a few opportunities for harvesting crops or other "farming & ranching" activities. Basic good health is required to stand and walk short distances on field tours.

**Q: What issues will be covered?**

Topics generally covered include water, labor/immigration, food safety, pest exclusion and management, animal husbandry, crop protection, trade, urban agricultural interface, conservation resources, and environmental issues. Please note these topics are not set in stone, and we work diligently to create a program covering important matters or those of interest to our participants. Once selected, individuals will have the opportunity to provide information on issue preference.

**Q: What are homestays like?**

Homestays, considered by most past participants the greatest highlight of the program, are an opportunity for each fellow to experience first-hand life as an agriculturalist. We attempt to match participants with families whose area of production relates to the individual's area of interest. The time together, usually a half-day to a day and an overnight or two, is spent doing various activities – touring facilities, meeting staff, discussing adversities and successes, and sometimes getting "hands-on" with farming operations. Most importantly though, this is an opportunity for participants to understand a family farmer or agriculturalist's life and the impact felt by federal legislation and regulation. This visit also provides an opportunity for that agriculturalist to understand the perspective of the legislator and regulator. It is a two-way discussion, and we encourage both parties to share their perspectives.

*NOTE on Home Stays:*

The farming community is rural, and most families have pets in and around the home. It can be challenging to place fellows in homes allergic to dogs, cats, horses, and bovines. If you are selected and have these allergies, please consult your physician for medical assistance on ways to make yourself comfortable in a rural environment.

The homestay hosts are volunteers and want you to be comfortable; the enrichment from the two-way discussion is key to the program. Since many homes are in rural areas, not all "urban conveniences" are available.

**Q: Is this a lobbying activity?**

No. As a 501 (c)(3), the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation cannot

participate in formal lobbying activities. This is purely an educational program that encourages dialogue between participants and California agriculturalists. We hope to learn as much from you – how Washington D.C. works, what the processes are, etc. – as you do from us. Ultimately, education is the most powerful tool in creating the best public policy.

**Q: Still have questions?**

If you have additional questions about any aspect of the D.C. Exchange (application, interview, the trip), feel free to contact Alumni Engagement and Events Manager Anna Nicholson at [anicholson@agleaders.org](mailto:anicholson@agleaders.org) or 530-574-1554.