



## *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)*

### **Membership Criteria**

#### **1. What has changed in the USJC Membership Criteria?**

USJC has broadened its membership criteria for Council Leaders. Our Board of Directors approved the broader criteria to include individuals committed to supporting the work of the Council, regardless of heritage. This change will be effective beginning January 1, 2017. Prior to the change, the criteria focused on Council Leaders who were Japanese Americans or Japanese living in the United States as permanent residents, and Japanese Americans living in Japan or other countries.

#### **2. Why is the Council making this change?**

There are a number of reasons why the Board of Directors approved the change to include individuals who are committed to supporting the work of the Council, regardless of heritage. One of the primary goals of the founding Board members was to enable greater engagement by Japanese Americans in contributing to U.S.-Japan relations. The Council's support of these goals has helped build a stronger people-to-people relationship in U.S.-Japan relations and this will remain a priority. However, the Board of Directors recognized that just as the definition of Japanese American is increasingly more diverse and inclusive, the Council should also be more diverse and inclusive. Additionally, the Council has 350+ Council Leaders who are working with Americans and Japanese committed to our mission and would like to build on this membership with others who share the same goals. The Board has also recognized, for instance, that in certain regions in the United States there may only be a small population of Japanese Americans but a strong interest in supporting the USJC mission from individuals of other heritages. Furthermore, this change towards diversity and inclusion will align more closely with the goals and objectives of USJC's public partners and corporate funders who support the Council's work and initiatives. The Council views it as important to be more inclusive in recruitment, which will strengthen and sustain the organization in the future.

The Council has several non-Japanese Americans who are currently Friends of the Council who support USJC and give their time, talent and resources to the organization. In many cases, they are married to Japanese citizens, are raising Japanese American children, and have spent their careers as a bridge between the two countries. There are

individuals who were adopted by Japanese American families, as well as individuals who have some Japanese heritage but may not identify as Japanese American. The Council's network includes individuals who have been raised, educated, or otherwise firmly immersed in Japanese culture who are not Japanese American; and Japanese who have spent a significant portion of their lives in the United States who have worked closely with Japanese American organizations and support the role of Japanese Americans in the relationship. Such individuals identify strongly with USJC's mission and are closely integrated into USJC's network.

**3. What was the process for making the change?**

The recommendation to make this change came from discussions among the USJC Executive Committee at an August 2015 strategic planning meeting. The Committee's recommendation was discussed with several USJC Board Committees, and then presented to the USJC Board of Directors for approval in November 2015. At that time, the Board determined additional discussion was warranted, and a Task Force was established, that included founding board members, former board members, current board members, and Associates (alumni of our Emerging Leaders Program). In July 2016, members of the Board of Directors voted to broaden the membership criteria.

**4. Does this mean that USJC is no longer focused on Japanese American leaders?**

No, USJC's mission, vision, and goals remain the same. In that context, USJC values, showcases, and increases opportunities for Japanese American leadership in the U.S.-Japan relationship. USJC will continue to have programs tailored to Japanese American leaders such as the Japanese American Leadership Delegation (JALD) and Emerging Leaders Program (ELP). The Council will continue to feature Japanese American leaders in educational programming for USJC and signature TOMODACHI and Silicon Valley Japan Platform activities. USJC will continue to make concerted efforts to identify, recruit, engage, and support Japanese American leaders in all sectors and throughout the country. USJC will still consider a core qualification for USJC membership to be a recognition of, appreciation for, and support of the continued leadership of Japanese Americans in U.S.-Japan relations—regardless of that individual's own heritage/ethnicity/race. Members' interest in sharing the Japanese American experience with the Japanese people, addressing the absence of racial diversity in leadership positions, and desire to provide leadership opportunities for younger Japanese Americans undergirds the Council's work. Additionally, there are many individuals whose partnership and collaboration with Japanese Americans provide value and advance USJC's mission. The Council seeks to create an organization that welcomes their contributions and integrates their efforts with USJC's activities.

**5. Will USJC retain programs targeted to Japanese Americans?**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs authorizes and funds the JALD program, and ultimately sets the criteria for participation. JALD participants will continue to be drawn from the Japanese American community. USJC will continue to recruit ELP candidates as part of a dedicated leadership pipeline that focuses exclusively on the Japanese American community. Candidates are drawn from the Council membership as well as non-members.

**6. Will the Boards be open to leaders of any background/heritage?**

Yes. USJC currently has Japanese, Japanese Americans, and other Americans serving on the Board of Councilors. Our Board of Directors is currently all Japanese American, but there is no restriction based on heritage for board membership. USJC will continue to recruit the best talent for its Boards in consultation with the Nominating & Governance Committee, drawing from Council Leaders who are actively engaged in supporting USJC and are committed to its mission.

**7. What differentiates USJC from other U.S.-Japan related organizations?**

The active role of Japanese American leaders in USJC, in combination with its focus on creating a platform for Japanese American leaders to engage in U.S.-Japan relations, remains a key differentiator between USJC and other organizations. This will not change simply because USJC has broadened its membership criteria. USJC remains the premier leadership organization committed to strengthening U.S.-Japan relations through people-to-people connections. It is unique from other organizations due to its national and bilateral reach (as compared to many other community-based organizations). USJC's action-oriented, forward-looking, member-driven agenda also differentiates it from many other organizations.

### **Membership Categories**

**8. I noticed that USJC refers to "Council Leaders" instead of "Council Members," and "Associates" instead of "Associate Members." What is the reason for this change?**

USJC has always been a platform for engagement by select individuals, but has never been a formal membership organization, which implies certain governance and structure. Moreover, the Council recognizes its membership as leaders in their professions and through their accomplishments. These leaders bring their time, talent and resources to the Council and show their support for the mission through their active involvement in Council programs. Accordingly, USJC adjusted its terminology to reflect the focus on leadership and engagement.

**9. Does the expanded criteria mean anyone can join as a member?**

No, membership in USJC will remain by nomination of individuals who have demonstrated leadership (in the case of Associates, strong leadership potential) and are

committed to the mission of USJC. In the past year, the Council has worked to put stronger nomination and approval procedures in place to ensure that nominated individuals reflect the level of accomplishment, leadership and commitment that provides value to the organization. As the Council transitions to a more diverse membership, it will reinforce the standards for membership review and approval.

**10. What if someone is neither Japanese nor American? Can they still join?**

Yes, as long as they meet all the criteria outlined.

**11. What are the characteristics we are looking for in new members?**

- Leadership – demonstrated history (or potential in case of Associates)
- Interest in and support of U.S.-Japan relations – through education, professional engagement, community investment, or personal interest
- Americans with a personal connection to Japan – this includes heritage, but also extensive living/studying/working in Japan, marital connections, etc. (Other nationalities may also meet this description, such as Brazilian-Japanese living in the United States.)
- Japanese with a personal connection to the United States – this includes heritage, but also extensive living/studying/working in the States, marital connections, etc.
- Understanding and appreciation of the Japanese American experience
- Willingness to engage in support of USJC's mission – with time, talent, and resources

**12. Will there be any changes to the criteria for Associates?**

No, those age 40 or younger are eligible to be Associates. This criteria will not change.

**13. I have someone I want to nominate who is under 40, but is clearly already an established leader. Which category do I choose when I nominate him or her?**

Associate. This category includes those individuals with a history of demonstrated leadership as well as those with potential.

**14. What happens when an Associate turns 40? Are they automatically made a Council Leader?**

We are still determining the process of transition from Associate to Council Leader and will be working with an ad hoc committee that includes current Associates for their input and guidance.

**15. Will USJC still have Friends of the Council? If heritage is no longer one distinction between a Council Leader and a Friend of the Council, what is the criteria?**

There are some individuals who for various reasons—usually due to professional stature—are not able to be actively engaged in the Council’s activities. They may not be able to attend events or participate on committees on a regular basis, but continue to support the Council’s work and initiatives, and want to affiliate with and support the organization. These individuals become Friends of the Council. Examples of the kinds of individuals who might fit this category are: governors or other elected officials; senior government officials; heads of other U.S.-Japan related institutions; some academics; and some members of the media.

### **Nomination Process**

#### **16. What is the process for nominating individuals for membership? Can anyone nominate an individual?**

USJC members (of any category) who are in good standing (i.e., dues are current) can sponsor a new member through the nomination process.

When USJC members nominate individuals, they are serving as sponsors for that individual. As the sponsor, the nominating member is expected to help support the successful onboarding of the new member and assist with membership issues such as renewals. The sponsor must identify an additional USJC member in good standing to support the nomination as well. The Council strongly encourages members to consult with USJC leadership (local Board members, regional chair, or staff) during the process of recruiting and nominating individuals for membership. If the individual is new to the USJC network, the Council may ask the sponsor to introduce him or her to others in USJC before moving forward with a formal nomination.

There is a simple online form members must complete as part of the nomination process. The nomination will be reviewed by key USJC leaders in the region and on the Membership Committee before being approved and an invitation being extended.

#### **17. Sometimes people tell me they want to join USJC? What should I tell them?**

If you know them well, and they seem to meet the criteria for membership, you should discuss the Council with them and confirm they are willing to join as a dues-paying member and are prepared to be actively engaged. It is best to share this individual’s name and background with someone more closely related to the membership process, such as a Board Member, regional leader, or Membership Committee member in your region. You can also reach out to staff and share the prospect’s information. Assuming everyone agrees, you can start the nomination process as the lead sponsor for that prospect.

If you don't know them that well, or aren't confident that they are a good fit, introduce them to other USJC members and invite them to join USJC activities as a guest so others can get to know them, and vice versa. It's always a better experience for new members if they already know more about the organization and have multiple points of entry among membership.

If you do know them, and do not think they are a good fit, you can refer them to staff for follow up. We'll do our best to handle the situation with sensitivity and discretion. Together, we will work on ensuring that our network continues to recruit only genuinely committed leaders who will actively work toward and support the Council's mission of people-to-people relations.