

Assessing International Opportunities



There are literally hundreds of different programs and potential opportunities to intern, work, or volunteer abroad. When you come across a program or an organization that sounds promising, be sure to ask these questions to make sure it is legitimate, and that it is a good fit for you.

Questions to ask a potential program or organization:

Goals and Philosophy

What are the goals or components of the program or organization? Do they coincide with my values and lifestyle? Will I feel sufficiently challenged?

Qualifications

Are there age or gender requirements? Do I need to be able to speak another language? What other skills will be required of me?

Work

Are there choices concerning work opportunities within an organization or program and if so, who will be making the final decisions? Is the work described clearly by the organization and/or work site? Do I know what is expected of me?

Living

Will I be living alone, with a family or with co-workers? What is the living situation (house, other building type, etc.)? Is the neighborhood safe? What kind of transportation is available?

Finances

Will I be paid hourly, is there a stipend, or is the work unpaid? Will I have enough money to cover expenses such as housing, food and transportation?

Loans

Can my student loans be deferred (check with your lending agency about this)? Will the program or organization help me with that paper work, if necessary?

Health

What type of health insurance does the organization provide, if any? Before going abroad, what immunizations are required? Are there medical facilities nearby?

Training

Is there a training and orientation program at the beginning? What does it consist of? Will job training be available? Will there be language training involved? Will there be closing activities at the end of the experience?

Support

Will the program or organization provide support at the work site or in the form of site visits? Who can I contact if emergencies arise or just to discuss my experience?

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Dates

How long will I be abroad? When does my work start and end? What happens if I decide to end my experience early? Can my term be extended?

Safety

What are the safety concerns regarding the area in which I will be working, traveling through, and living? Is the political situation stable?

Former Volunteers

Will the organization provide me with names of former U.S. and/or college-aged employees or volunteers so I may contact them to discuss their experiences? Does the program have a history of working with college-aged students?

Application Process

What is the start-to-finish process for applying? What are the deadlines? How long will the process take?

Other Questions

Who pays for travel to and from the work site? If there is an emergency, can I take leave and travel back home? Do I get vacation time (how much)?

Here are additional sites to review:

[International Volunteer Programs Association, Principles and Practices](#)

[University of Minnesota's Learning Abroad Center, Questions for Program Providers](#)