

Church Partnership Team Member Selection Best Practices

In our model of Church Partnership, World Orphans realizes that our US Church representatives and leaders have relationships with short-term team applicants. In the process of building Church Partnership trip teams, we rely heavily on the discernment of the US church partner leader. In accordance with the [Standards of Excellence in Short Term Missions](#) we always look through the lens of having a team dynamic that will benefit and serve all parties involved – the sender (World Orphans and the US church), the goer (US church team members) and, most importantly, the receiver (our international church partners). For the sake of longevity of our ministry and maintaining our focus on equipping the church to care for the vulnerable, occasionally World Orphans and/or the US church partner may decide an applicant simply isn't a good fit for a particular trip.

Vision Casting

Part of serving your partners well means preparing your team for a healthy experience, and that process begins from the moment you present the trip to your congregation.

- Clearly communicate what the trip will (and will not) be in terms of its purpose, activities, and goals.
- Present a clear narrative regarding the visit's focus and the long-term commitment required.
- Since the purpose of an effective visit is to learn from and encourage local believers, participants must also be emotionally resilient enough to navigate the heavy things they will encounter.

Application

- All applicants complete an application
 - World Orphans has a basic, required application to collect essential information such as contact, passport, insurance, emergency contact, health/medical, and basic skills/gifting/language information.
 - World Orphans encourages you to ask some cross-cultural awareness/intelligence, emotional health and spiritual maturity questions to be able to best compile your team. We have more detailed questions that can easily be added to our basic application in order for you to better tailor your team.
- World Orphans encourages you, as the team leader, to interview the applicants. This could include reference requests or a short essay assignment. We encourage you to rely heavily on the testimony of those within your church who know the applicants well.
- Screening questions might include:

Questions are most beneficial when posed as open-ended questions rather than yes/no questions.

- Why are you interested in participating in this trip? What do you hope the outcome of the trip will be? What do you hope to learn from this trip?
- How would you define poverty? What do you think causes poverty?
- What experience do you have in interacting with people who are materially poor?
- Are you already engaged in missions, poverty alleviation, caring for the vulnerable in your own community? If so, how?
- Share what you know about factors that separate children from the care of their family?
- Have you ever been immersed in a culture different from your own, whether in your own city or internationally? If so, what did you learn from that experience?
- Describe a time when you submitted to authority despite disagreeing with that authority.
- Are you willing to commit to mandatory meetings both before and after the trip? How do you feel about team meetings?
- How will you personally contribute to ensure the cost of the trip is covered?

Questions to help *you* as the leader think through the screening process:

- Is the team a combination of people who have traveled before versus new travelers?
- Are there families traveling? Are there family dynamics that might impact the larger team that need to be considered?
- What are my observations of motives to travel? Does an applicant have an agenda consistent with the mission?
- What do other people say about the applicant's ability to follow instructions and work on a team?
- In regards to all parties (sender, goer, receiver) are there observable habits or patterns of behavior that would be a particular benefit or detriment to an applicant being part of the team?
- Is church leadership in agreement that the applicant is a safe person to be working with children?
- How spiritually mature is this person?
- How emotionally healthy is this person?
- How cross-culturally aware is this person?
- What are his/her gifts and abilities?
- Will this person serve in humility? Will this person interact in ways that defer to and honor the culture of our international partners?
- Does the person have a health or medical diagnosis that may need to be further considered?
- Are there any major life issues/changes occurring that would make this person potentially unstable or unsuitable for this trip?
- Is a couple trying to fix their marriage by going on a mission trip?
- Are parents bringing/sending a child in an effort to curtail rebellious behavior they have seen exhibited at home?

Selection

- Determine criteria for selecting team members. You should not open the team to anyone wanting to go and promising to raise money. Avoid major problems by wisely choosing each team member.
- Participants need to be humble and mature enough to accept your leadership, willing to listen and engage in pre- and post-trip learning, and able to submit to the local hosts on the field.
- It is important to establish parameters: with an eye towards serving and encouraging your international partner; based on length/depth of partnership, location, goals of the trip and cross-cultural dynamics you will be encountering on the field.
- After the screening process you have a responsibility to say no if you are truly concerned that 1) an applicant may respond poorly to a learning and serving alongside approach, 2) there are observable habits or patterns of behavior that would be a detriment to an individual being part of the team, 3) an applicant lacks the emotional and spiritual maturity to navigate the experience, 4) an applicant cannot be sufficiently managed by the team leaders and in-country staff, or 5) an applicant may struggle with the cross-cultural aspect of the trip.

Materials based on Helping Without Hurting in Short-Term Missions Leader's Guide by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, and an article The Short Term Mission Team Leader by R. Wayne Sneed.