



IVPA PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

Membership to the International Volunteer Program Association is based on general adherence to and acceptance of Principles and Practices. IVPA supports and advocates these Principles and Practices as a means of ensuring program quality and appropriate volunteer behavior in international/intercultural settings. They are also meant to give prospective volunteers a reliable basis on which to choose worthwhile program experiences.

The criteria stated in the Principles and Practices document are not intended to be either exhaustive or restrictive, although member organizations are expected to meet the standards of organizational responsibility stated in the qualifications for membership.

All volunteer programs may not include every aspect, depending on their design and purpose. They do, however, provide guidelines and standards for the field. All IVPA member organizations recognize and agree to the spirit of these principles and practices

PRE-PROGRAM

1. Materials are clear, accurate, and current regarding fees, activities, expectations, criteria for involvement, refund policies, and other aspects of the program. Enrollment forms clearly explain refund policies in case of cancellation by (a) the participant before or during the program, and (b) by the organization.
2. Application is open to all based on stated criteria, but applicants are evaluated as to maturity, motivation, skills, responsibility, physical and mental health, and cultural sensitivity. Organization is willing to reject applicants who do not meet the stated criteria.
3. Intentionally encourages diversity in recruiting participants of varying backgrounds, skills, income levels, ethnicities, age, gender and abilities/disabilities. When possible, devotes a portion of organizational income, or seeks funding support, for this purpose.
4. Has a system in place for communication between potential and former volunteers.
5. Suggests means of fundraising to participants.
6. Provides thorough pre-departure and orientation descriptive materials well before the program. Materials include: (a) Information about the country, culture, language, and issues of the society. (b) Clear, accurate, and up to date information on lodging, meals, transportation, and logistics of the program. (c) Detailed information on volunteer work sites and placement expectations. (d) Clear, accurate, and up to date information about health, safety, travel, passport and visa requirements.

7. Requires that all volunteers/participants have international travel medical insurance. If insurance is not provided by the organization, requires that all volunteers/participants provide proof of international medical insurance prior to departure.

8. Clearly defines expectations and consequences of behavior violations in the program including responsibilities during the volunteer service, behavior offensive to the host culture, or violation of local laws. Includes statements about the organization's policy in regard to the involvement of the volunteer in in-country politics and social advocacy activities.

PROGRAM

1. The organization has at least one in-country staff member per program that meets the follow criteria: (a) Their primary responsibility is to oversee the management and well-being of volunteers during the course of their experience abroad. (b) They reside within the country where a volunteer is serving and are on call in the event of an emergency. (c) Are employees of the IVPA member organization (i.e. they are not "subcontractors" from an organization separate to the IVPA member). Employees may work on a volunteer or paid basis and may be seasonal, part-time, or full-time. In addition, organizations have staff or in-country partners who are reliable with ongoing community relations, connections in the society, and commitment to the ideals of the program.

2. Collects detailed emergency contact information for each participant. Has a clear system to explain how and when emergency contacts are notified.

3. Advocates how language fluency can enhance the volunteer experience. Provides appropriate and ongoing language instruction where applicable.

4. Wherever possible places volunteers with local and ongoing agencies and projects rather than creating its own. The agencies or projects should be those that allow volunteers to encounter directly the social and developmental issues of the other culture and society.

5. Housing or home stay should be clean (in accordance with local standards), hygienic, and safe.

6. Engages volunteers in written and oral critical reflection on their experiences. This may be formal (e.g. for academic credit), informal (e.g. discussion sessions), public (e.g. regularly scheduled meetings) or private (e.g. keeping of a journal).

7. Allows and encourages opportunities for volunteers to broaden their experience of the host culture by field trips and experiences beyond the basic obligations of the program.

8. Suggests to volunteers ways that they might bring resources/materials to their agency/project. Has a clear policy on donations to host families, partner organizations, and members of the community.

9. Provides clear guidelines and procedures regarding policy on avoidance of proselytizing. Expects volunteers to be sensitive to and respect cultural norms surrounding issues of politics, culture, and society.

10. Has a standardized disciplinary procedure for handling infractions to rules, policies, and expectations of the program. Explains to volunteers how they have acted incorrectly and whenever possible allows them the opportunity to correct their behavior prior to being dismissed from a program.

11. Demonstrates commitment to providing quality customer service by giving timely responses to inquiries and complaints.

POST-PROGRAM

1. Conducts a survey/evaluation of volunteers about their experiences.

2. Suggests ways that volunteers can share their experiences and continue their work on return.

3. Provides support for an alumni network through which volunteers can stay in touch with each other, contribute to the work of the organization's programs, and be involved in fundraising and recruitment.

4. Surveys global partners at least once annually to assess the impact and quality of the volunteers' contribution and to ensure that a volunteer program is not exploiting the community in which it is operating.

ORGANAZATIONAL OPERATIONS

1. Conducts a yearly financial audit where required. For fee-for-service model programs, clearly outlines how funds are used. Detailed information on how program fees are spent is available to the public.

2. Provides a 24 hour emergency contact number for friends and family of volunteers to reach a representative of the organization. Volunteers have a 24 hour contact number for in-country staff.

3. Holds current and adequate domestic and foreign liability insurance.

4. If a non-profit, has an active Board of Directors that meets at least twice annually.

5. Provides clear, accurate, and consistent information in all online and printed materials.

6. Does not exploit the misfortunes of communities or vulnerable populations in marketing and program material. Practices this by using images and vocabulary that empower and celebrate local culture.

7. Takes measures to secure the privacy and identity of participants. Only uses volunteer's likeness (photos, quotes, written evaluations) with prior consent.

8. Runs programs in accordance with local, state, and federal laws both domestically and abroad.

9. Promotes conservation and waste reduction practices in all offices.

10. Responds promptly to complaints, refund requests, and other issues regarding dissatisfied volunteers. Has a complaint and refund policy clearly explained in enrollment forms.

11. Asks that all participants sign a declaration stating that they fully understand the nature of the program they are undertaking and the physical and mental demands that may be involved.

12. Organization has an operating manual and universal crisis management plan that is available to all staff.