Developing an Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Partner Profile

Partnering with an NGO abroad can be a great way to engage in an international experience. Before committing to work with an organization, use the following questions as a guide to help you conduct research and establish credibility of the possible partner.

Goals and Philosophy

- What are the mission and vision of the organization?
- How does the organization approach community development work (top-down/bottom-up, asset based community development, etc.)?
- Why does the organization see it as beneficial to host a student from a U.S. university?
- What skills, knowledge, and experience is the organization looking for?
- What are some examples of projects students have completed in the past?
  - How did students add value to these projects?
  - Were the roles and tasks clearly defined?
  - How sustainable were the projects?
  - Did the projects lead to a substantial learning experience for the students and the host organization?
- How do the organization’s projects meet a pressing community need?
  - In what ways are local community members involved?
  - How does the local community participate in, or conduct project evaluation throughout, a project’s lifecycle (before, during, after student involvement)?
  - Does student involvement in these projects displace local workers or detract from the capacity of the organization to achieve its own mission?

Establishing Credibility

- When was the organization established (is it a leader in the field, new, etc.)?
- Where is the organization’s headquarters? Where do they have other branches?
- How many people do they employ? Who do they employ (host-country nationals, internationals)?
- What universities or other U-M units have partnerships with this organization?
- Has this organization hosted students in the past? If so, how many?
  - Is there an alumni network of previously hosted students?
  - Are testimonials from former participants (especially U-M students) available?
- What other information is available about or by this organization (reviews, news articles, publications, etc.)?
- Does the organization collaborate with other reputable or well-known organizations? If so, which ones? How can it be verified that these organizations truly collaborate?
- Are the projects implemented by the NGO consistent with their mission and vision? If so, how? If not, where are there discrepancies?
- How does the NGO receive funding for its work? How is this reflected in the values, project work, and ethics of the organization?
Program Details

- How are students placed with the NGO? Are there pre-set placements or will I be able to customize or create my own experience?
- What is required for the application process (cover letter, resume, online applications)?
- What are the costs associated with participating (program fee, housing, meals, transport)?
- Will I receive compensation or other support (stipend, salary, housing)?
- Does the organization offer scholarships? If so, how do I apply?
- How immersive will the experience be?
  - Will I be the only international student?
  - Will I be with a group of other international or local students?
  - Will I interact mostly with local staff or students?
- What language is needed to participate?
  - If a language is needed, what level of proficiency is required (beginner, conversational, advanced, fluent)?
  - Are language classes included or coordinated by the organization?
- When will I know what my placement, location, and dates will be?
- Does the organization have a contract or participation agreement for participating in the experience?

Support Services

- What level of pre-departure preparation, support, and training does the organization provide?
  - Will there be an in-person pre-departure orientation? If so, where? If not, how will the organization help me to prepare for my trip?
  - What logistics will the NGO organize on my behalf (accommodation, transport)?
  - What support will the NGO provide in helping me obtain a visa or work permit if required?
- How will the organization support me upon arrival?
  - Who will be my in-country contact and how will I receive their name and phone number?
  - Will I be picked up at the airport? If so, how will I connect with that person?
  - What should I do if no one is there to meet me or if I can’t find that person?
  - If there is no airport pick-up, how will I get to my accommodation?
- Will the organization provide me with a designated mentor or supervisor?
  - If so, what is this person’s role in the organization?
  - Do they seem to have the time and interest in supporting me?
  - How will the organization assist in resolving conflicts or difficult situations between my mentor/supervisor and I if it should arise?
- How does the organization evaluate both student performance and student satisfaction with the experience?
- How will the organization support me if the projects I’m assigned to are not a good fit for my skillset or interests?

Visit [global.umich.edu](http://global.umich.edu) to find additional travel resources.