

SHORT- TERM MISSION TRIP

How To Plan a Short- Term Mission Trip

Mission**Excellence**

 Mission**Works**

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“How to Plan a Mission Trip” was designed as a quick resource for pastors and church leaders who want to mobilize their church for missions.

Many books have been written on how to plan a mission trip and are helpful tools. The purpose of this booklet is to provide a basic framework for planning a mission trip. It is not a recipe; it will need to be adjusted based on individual needs and constraints.

It is also important to understand that it is not intended to be prescriptive. For example, lengths of trips and meeting times may vary significantly. It is intended to provide a starting point.

Regardless of the size and budget of your church, you can play an active role in missions. Whether your church has sent short-term teams before or is preparing to do so, MissionExcellence can help.

We hope this guide will be an important tool that will enable your church to maximize your short-term mission efforts for His glory!

It is important to start with a solid foundation when planning a missions trip. First, ask yourself, “Why do I want to do a short-term trip?”

In other words, what is your motivation for promoting a trip? God-centeredness is foundational before you begin planning a trip. An excellent short-term trip seeks first God’s glory and His Kingdom.

It is also critical to pray throughout the process.

May God bless you as you embark on this journey.

~ MissionExcellence Team

INTRODUCTION

MISSION TRIP



Trip Determination

(12 to 10 months prior to departure)

- Missions Agency vs. Going Independently
- Determine Ministry Partner and Location
- Mutually Design the Plan



Trip Publicity

(9 to 7 months prior to departure)

- Publicity Content
- Publicity Ideas



Team Selection

(6 to 5 months prior to departure)

- Select Qualified Team Leaders
- Application Process
- Selecting the Team
- Time-Sensitive Next Steps



Team Training

(4 months prior to departure)

- Determine Key Areas for Training
- Train the Team

PLANNING TIMELINE



Increased Church Involvement

(2 months prior to departure)

- Mobilize a Group of Committed Senders



Missions Project

(during the trip)

- Plan for On-Field Ministry



Re-entry and Follow Up

(after the trip to 6 months later)

- Debriefing the Team
- Church Reporting
- Local Cross-Cultural Projects
- Triage
- Final Accounting and Summary



Evaluation

(after the trip and ongoing until next trip)

- Assess Effectiveness of Training
- Determine Accomplishment of Partnership Goals
- Revise as Needed
- Plan Next Steps

STEP 1: TRIP DETERMINATION

Before planning a trip, it is important to consider why you want to do a mission trip. It is important to start with a solid foundation when planning a trip. God-Centeredness is foundational in planning a trip. An excellent short-term mission seeks first God's glory and His Kingdom. At MissionExcellence we center on God's glory, aiming toward His ends. We seek to glorify God through devotion and obedience to Jesus Christ (John 15:5), through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), and for the sake of God's glory and fame (Ps. 115:1, 1 Cor. 10:31).

Once the purpose of God-Centeredness has been agreed upon and there has been a commitment to persistent prayer and dependence on God throughout the process, it's time to take the next steps.

Missions Agency vs. Going Independently

When considering working with a missions agency, it is important to ask how they partner with the local church. It is important to help the church discover and fulfill God's program—not ours!

THE BENEFITS OF GOING WITH A MISSIONS AGENCY

1. Quality training resources = better prepared teams
2. Experience in international travel and security issue
3. Support for smaller churches and busy ministers
4. Assistance with logistics and ministry planning
5. Overseas insurance coverage
6. Follow up resources for continued involvement

STEP 1: TRIP DETERMINATION

THE BENEFITS OF GOING WITH YOUR CHURCH OR DENOMINATION

1. Doctrinally in agreement
2. Opportunity for members to minister in a cross-cultural context so they can expand their worldview
3. Partner with and provide practical ministry support as well as encouragement to supported missionaries
4. Strengthen prayer support by church members for the missionaries by heightening awareness of the needs of the field and the missionaries
5. Opportunity to deepen long-term relationships with supported missionaries
6. Opportunity to build capacity in the church body as senders and trainers

Determine Ministry Partner and Location

- Go Only Where You're Invited or Welcomed
- How To Get Invited?
 - Contact a missionary supported by your church or denomination.
 - Contact a missions agency with which you are familiar or use a resource like MissionGuide that provides an extensive list of opportunities from which to choose.

Determine Ministry Type and Location Selection

- Exposure Team - prayer walking, vision trip
- Evangelism Team - ESL, music, drama
- Service - construction, medical work

Mutually design the plan

Agree on goals with your partner. Focus should be primarily aligned to the long-term goals of the receiver.

STEP 1: TRIP DETERMINATION

Expectations

- Determine purpose of the trip
- Select team size and skills needed
- Clarify resources the team is expected to provide for the ministry

Set Dates

- What would be the ideal time of year for you and your global partner? What works for you, may not work well for your partner. Choose something that is a good fit for all.
- How long should this experience be: 1 week? 6 weeks? Longer?

Establish a Budget

- When planning a trip, consider the following expenses:
 - Airfare and fees
 - Overseas insurance
 - Immunizations
 - Team training expenses
 - Agency admin fee (if applicable)
 - Background checks
 - Contingency funds
- Collaboratively discuss the following in-country expenses with host receiver:
 - Meals and lodging
 - Transportation
 - Project set up fee
 - Ministry materials (literature, equipment)
 - Support staff such as translators, drivers and cooks

STEP 2: TRIP PUBLICITY

This phase is critical for communicating accurate expectations for the trip. All promotional material and presentations should honor God, honor your hosts and honor those you're serving. With that in mind, use appropriate photos and stories that accurately reflect the ministry and honor the people with whom you will work.

In addition to promotional materials and announcements, consider hosting an informational meeting. A tip that eliminates significant frustration later in the process is to include the dates of mandatory training and debriefing in the promotional material. People who apply for the trip need to know that they are required to participate in training and debriefing.

Give people time to plan and arrange their schedules. If you want to do a summer project, then promotion should start no later than February or March. Starting late will only create frustration and may eliminate potential candidates.

Publicity Content

Before you advertise, know the following information:

1. Trip Description (ministry type and location)
2. Cost (best estimate)
3. Time Frame of Project
4. Target Group and Partner
5. Training Dates
6. Team Selection Process (application deadlines and key contact person's number to call for questions)
7. Debriefing Dates (post-trip)

STEP 2: TRIP PUBLICITY

Publicity Ideas

- Church Publications (bulletin inserts, flyers, posters, website, social media)
- Brochure (distribute throughout the church or mail directly to the group of individuals you would like to challenge to go)
- Informational Meeting (provide promotional material and applications. Have people who have participated in the past share about their experience.)
- Testimonies/Videos (brief clips from a previous trip can be a great motivator during a worship service. Promote your project during a missions month or annual missions conference.)
- Photos (use appropriate photos that accurately reflect the ministry and honor the people with whom you will work.)
- Church Display (create a display for a well-traveled area of the church. On Sundays have someone available to answer questions.)

STEP 3: TEAM SELECTION

Select qualified team leaders

The effectiveness of a team is strongly influenced by the team leader:

- Create a job description for team leaders so expectations are clear to all (include character, knowledge, skills and experience)
- Develop and implement training for team leaders so they are equipped to lead
- Provide resources for leaders to prepare and support the team

Application Process

Properly selecting a team takes time but it's worth it. An application is highly recommended because it helps you prayerfully evaluate the motivation and maturity of each potential member. Whether you are a small or large church, this is an important tool for developing a healthy, well-balanced team.

When writing your application, include the following:

1. Full name, address and phone number
2. E-mail address
3. Emergency contact information
4. Birthday, employment and marital status
5. Do you have a passport?
6. Special dietary and medical needs
7. Health insurance info
8. Personal testimony
9. Ministry and missions experience
10. Reason you want to go on this trip
11. References (2-3)
12. Background check release waiver

Be sure to set an application deadline for each trip (typically 4 - 6 weeks before your first team meeting). This will give you time to review all the applications and contact the members.

References

Screening applicants is crucial to a successful project. Please do not overlook this step no matter how difficult it is. Have written forms sent back to you. Contact references.

STEP 3: TEAM SELECTION

Selecting the Team

After you have received a completed application and checked references, if you are still uncertain about an applicant set up an interview. It is better to get to know someone and confirm if they are qualified to serve than to take an unprepared person.

Potential Red Flags

- Medical Problems (depends on the nature of the trip)
 - i.e. significant dietary restrictions or food allergies
- Emotional Difficulties (only a good reference will alert you to any issues)
- Wrong Motives
- Spiritual Immaturity
- Unwise Decision-Making Regarding Conduct
- Abrasive Personalities

Recruit a few leaders to help in the team selection process (pastoral staff, deacon, missions committee member). Their added input decreases the likelihood of selecting someone not qualified to participate. This also avoids the perception of playing favorites or personal agendas when you notify those who were not selected.

Notify Applicants

- Before notifying applicants, confirm the size of the team with the host
- Contact all of those selected to participate. Be sure to tell those who were not selected why and suggest how they can work on the issues in order to apply again in the future.

Time-Sensitive Next Steps

- Apply for necessary documents (passports/visas)
- Establish a timeline for vaccinations
- Determine a timeline for purchasing airline tickets and making other travel arrangements

STEP 4: TEAM TRAINING

Team training should be more than reading a book or getting together to share a packing list. Well-designed and executed pre-trip preparation will result in a more effective experience than a poorly prepared team.

First, develop and implement training for team leaders so they are equipped to lead. Provide resources for them to prepare and support the team.

Determine Key Areas for Training

What do goers need to know, be able to do and be like to be prepared for the mission trip?

Train the team

Training should include a minimum of 6-10 sessions. Meet every other week to give team members a chance to complete assignments. If possible, it is helpful to schedule an overnight team retreat, all day training and/or a few extended meetings to cover topics in detail. Include opportunities to apply what the team has been learning.

Use a training curriculum so there will be consistency in what is taught and there will be no gaps in learning. The curriculum should reflect what the team needs to know, be able to do, and the expected character and conduct on the trip. Here are some things to consider:

- Training can take many forms
- Should we utilize outside trainers
- Should it be a series of meetings or a retreat
- Should it be online or in-person
- Utilize a pre-packaged training program
- Customized: Create and conduct your own training curriculum

STEP 4: TEAM TRAINING

When determining what training will look like in your setting, consider the cost, content, convenience/time, capacity of staff to implement the training and the support available if there are questions.

Training content varies based on what you believe the team needs. Here are some common categories:

1. Character and Conduct based on Biblical Principles
2. Team Building
3. Raising Support
4. Cross-Cultural Adaptation
5. Expectations, Attitudes and Policies
6. Language Learning (songs, basic greetings)
7. Ministry Preparation (testimonies)
8. Evangelism Training
9. Spiritual Development (prayer, journaling)
10. Packing and Travel (passports, procedures, etc.)
11. Health and Safety (team policy)

Some have found it helpful to communicate how the teams were trained with the hosts so expectations for conduct are clearly understood by all.

Concurrently: Continue to monitor status of required documents, vaccinations, support raising and purchase of airline tickets.

STEP 5: INCREASED CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

An excellent short-term mission involves more than those who go on the trip. It is important to mobilize a group of committed senders who can use their spiritual gifts to support the team.

Mobilize a Group of Committed Senders

Here are a few ways to involve your church beyond raising support:

1. Sunday School classes adopt a team member
2. Materials and gifts can be donated for the field
3. Special prayer meetings
4. Commissioning service on a Sunday morning
5. Designate a contact person to serve as a liaison between the church and family members
6. Recruit a prayer team for individuals and team
7. Serve as mentors for the team members
8. Equip church members for team's return.

STEP 6: MISSIONS PROJECT

In addition to fulfilling the mutually agreed upon goals established early in the process, there are some components that should be part of the daily routine. They include team devotions, on-going ministry training and daily debriefing.

Plan for On-the-Field Ministry

- **Team Devotions**
 - Challenge the team daily with the Word of God. The missions project is an accelerated time of spiritual growth. Select scriptures that deal with a variety of issues (humility, purity, fear, spirit filled life, armor of God, forgiveness, etc.)
- **Ministry Training/Preparation**
 - Determine the practical tools necessary for greater effectiveness (cultural clues, evangelism, songs, storytelling, etc.)
 - Often the missionary or national host can provide insight in this area. Be sure to contact them and allow them time to prepare to address the team. Also, it is good to give time each day for teams to plan their day of ministry, decide what materials are needed and address needs and issues.
- **Evening Debriefing**
 - After each day of ministry reflect on what God did during the day. This is also great time of praise and worship, encouragement and growth.

STEP 7: RE-ENTRY AND FOLLOW UP

Debriefing the Team

- Before arriving home or within two weeks of returning you should assist team members to adjust back into their own culture and process their experience
- Some team members may be thinking seriously about ministry and will need direction about where to take the next step
- Have each team member complete an evaluation form
- Determine a follow-through process with individuals
- Have resources available for follow-through

Church Reporting

Before departing on the trip, coordinate with the pastor and plan a special service or time for the team to share testimonies. Capture the ministry project through video, slides and artifacts for a presentation to the church. This is also a time to acknowledge the global partner and many church members, in addition to the goers, who were a vital part of the team.

Some teams who have not been able to get adequate sharing time on the platform during a Sunday service have scheduled presentations between services and during Sunday School. Others have combined a meal and a presentation before an evening or mid-week service. Time is a resource. Consider how to use it most effectively.

Follow-Through

Local Cross-Cultural Projects

- Challenge your team members to become actively involved in missions at home by organizing a missions fellowship, planning a local evangelism project, getting involved with International Students or other local ministries.

STEP 7: RE-ENTRY AND FOLLOW UP

Triage

- When returning from a trip determine how much follow-up to do with each participant. Not everyone requires the same type or amount of post-trip follow-through. This requires prioritizing or doing triage. Asking team members the following questions will help:
 - a. Are you interested in serving in the local church? If so, please explain.
 - b. Would you like to continue your mission's involvement?
 - c. Would you like to be contacted about opportunities for mid-term or long-term missionary opportunities?
- The answers may help you determine the following for each team member's involvement or participation levels:
 - Level 1: Those who are not likely to do another STM
 - Level 2: Those who are likely to do another STM
 - Level 3: Those who may go beyond STM to mid- or long-term ministry
- Church leadership should have a plan for following-through with all participants, but not all participants will receive the same support. For example, those who are interested in long-term service might be encouraged to attend the Perspectives course, while those who are likely to do another STM, might be candidates for team leadership and be prepared for that. All participants should be encouraged to pray for the world.

Final Accounting and Summary

- Be sure to provide an expense report to the elders, deacons, missions committee and/or pastoral staff. Evaluate the overall impact of the project and determine how to improve on the next project.

STEP 8: EVALUATION

The purpose of evaluation is to determine what can be reinforced or improved in the future to make the mission trip better. This will enhance future programs or trips. Evaluation and assessment also help people to reflect upon and process the experience. Consider the following:

- Align questions to your goals
- Ask meaningful questions
- Ask questions that are measurable
- Plan how to use results for improvement
- Ask about things over which you have control

Assess effectiveness of Training

The best time to document the effectiveness of training is at the end of the trip. Some possible prompts might include the following:

- Rate the different topics/activities of the training on their degree of usefulness.
- In what areas do you wish you had received more training?

Determine Accomplishment of Partnership Goals

It is important to use culturally appropriate timing and wise methods in this step. Rather than a written evaluation, information for this step may be done through informal conversations over time. The key is to have established a relationship which provides helpful feedback, not simply what you would like to hear. Possible questions might include:

- How can we become a better partner with you in the future?
- What were your top ministry goals related to this STM?
- To what degree did the team accomplish what was planned?

Revise as Needed

After determining what worked well and what could be improved, adjust.

Plan Next Steps

Use evaluation as a feedback loop for continual growth and improvement.

CONCLUSION

As you strive to make your mission trips better...

- Pray, plan and keep God at the center
- Be intentional about choices you make
- Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit

“The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen”

I Peter 4: 7-11
(NIV)

WHAT NOW?



VISIT OUR WEBSITE

If you would like more information about how to make your mission trips better, visit the MissionExcellence website:

MissionExcellence.global



BECOME A MEMBER

Consider becoming a member of MissionExcellence and benefit from resources and ongoing online training as well as archived webinars.

MissionExcellence.global/membership



CONTACT US

To explore more about The Seven Standards, a Standards Introductory Workshop, or any of our family of ministries email us:

Training@MissionExcellence.global

FAQS

What are the Seven Standards of Excellence?

They are a code of best practices that dive deep into these categories:

1. GOD-CENTEREDNESS
2. EMPOWERING PARTNERSHIPS
3. MUTUAL DESIGN
4. COMPREHENSIVE ADMINISTRATION
5. QUALIFIED LEADERSHIP
6. APPROPRIATE TRAINING
7. THOROUGH FOLLOW-THROUGH

What is a Standards Introduction Workshop?

MissionExcellence Standards Introductory Workshop (SIW) is a 10-hour seminar designed to help short-term mission leaders and mobilizers make their mission trips better. We'll look at all [Seven Standards](#) and how these are key elements of successful, God-honoring mission trips. The workshop is taught by experienced MissionExcellence trainers, is interactive, and uses case studies and small group discussions. You'll discover the benefits of [The Standards](#) and begin applying them to your specific ministry context! The SIW includes a resource notebook.



MissionGuide

Over a thousand trips are featured from hundreds of mission organizations who use MissionGuide to help you find your ideal short or long-term mission trip. Full details about the trips and organizations enable you to discover your mission and use your abilities today. Enlist in a mission trip by searching for your service, ministry and mission preferences.



MissionLinked

MissionLinked has comprehensive and user-friendly tools that help you keep your support team informed as you raise funds for your short-term mission or a special project.



MissionArmor

MissionArmor is travel medical insurance that protects and covers you in the event of an illness or injury when traveling outside of your country of residence by providing key medical benefits in case of an emergency.

RESOURCES

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HOW
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