



Mission Trip Planning Guide

Overview

Drawing on lessons learned by Lions who have conducted medical and humanitarian missions for the past several decades, this guide was developed to not only help clubs plan a successful mission trip that will benefit a community in need, but also help Lions make the most of the project while developing new friendships and having an enjoyable experience.

Getting Started

When planning a mission trip, there are many things to take into consideration such as site preparation, team orientation, transportation and logistics, event promotion, and fundraising.

The steps outlined in this guide will help you think through some of the preparations you will need to make in order to avoid unnecessary challenges/issues that could negatively impact your project.

Specific steps include information on:

- Establishing a planning committee and developing an action plan;
- Obtaining necessary resources and approvals;
- Organizing and training the mission team;
- Implementing your project; and
- Reflecting on lessons learned and planning your next steps.

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Before conducting a mission trip, clubs should be able to answer the following questions:

Why is this trip important?

How will the community in need benefit from this project?

How will your mission team benefit from this project?

Do the benefits to the community outweigh the benefits to your mission team?

Are similar resources or services already available? How will your mission affect local healthcare providers?

What is the unique value added by your mission team?

What is the long-term impact of this project?

How will the resources/services provided by your team be sustained in the future?

What are some of the challenges your team may face before, during, or after the trip?

How will these challenges/issues be addressed?

Do you have the necessary financial and human resources to successfully carry out the project?

Do you have the support you will need from the community and local authorities?

Step 1: Establish a planning committee and develop an action plan.

Once you have determined where your mission project will take place and what specific needs will be met, it is important to designate a planning committee that will help ensure the success of the project.

The planning committee should consist of Lions representing both the sponsor and host clubs, as well as individuals who can offer additional expertise related to the logistics, approvals and clearances, cultural orientation, language (translation/interpretation), fundraising, as well as communication and promotion strategies. (See the appendix on page 5 for a suggested list of sponsor and host club responsibilities.)

When developing an action plan, it may be helpful to keep the following preparations/arrangements in mind:

Materials and Resources

Determine what supplies, equipment, and resources are needed for your project and how these will be attained. Clubs should consider sourcing materials and resources locally to avoid unnecessary shipping costs and customs barriers, and be able to support the local economy.

Site Preparation and Coordination

Sponsor and host clubs should work together to obtain the necessary approvals for the use of facilities and carrying out work that may be regulated by the local government. When conducting medical missions for example, the local government (such as the ministry of health) may have specific guidelines related to medical practices within that particular country.

Before any services are offered, it is important to determine staffing and on-site coordination needs, as well as standard operating procedures. When providing services to a large number of people over a short period of time, for example, it is important to determine how incoming patients will be managed (and pre-screened if needed). It may be necessary to designate a specific number of patients (by appointment) to each service provider and assign volunteers to direct incoming patients to where they need to go. When faced with a language barrier between patients and providers, additional staff may be needed to provide interpretation services. It is also important that both the providers and patients have access to water and food.

NOTE: While specialized services may be provided by members of the mission team (typically outside of the community that is being served), there may be opportunities to build capacity through training of local providers who may be able to offer similar services in the future or on a more long-term basis.

Mission Team Travel Arrangements

Because travel by members of the sponsor club may be costly (particularly when traveling internationally), it is important to give careful consideration to the number of people who will join the mission team and whether any services can be offered by the host club.

When traveling outside of your home country, it is important to review travel warnings (typically issued by the state department), obtain official travel documentation and entry visas, look into travel/emergency health insurance coverage, and consult with a travel clinic on any additional vaccinations and medications.

NOTE: Before purchasing airline tickets, it may be helpful to check with airline companies on any discounts or special programs for non-profit humanitarian projects. It is also important to book your tickets early and understand what can and cannot be carried onboard an airplane or packed in your luggage.

Shipping, Customs, and Other Logistics

When shipping supplies and materials (such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, or medical equipment), it is important to determine the most cost-effective options and whether you can take advantage of any discounts or programs for non-profit humanitarian projects.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges related to the shipment of supplies and materials is getting them cleared through customs. It is therefore important to understand the restrictions and/or customs fees associated with the shipment of supplies and materials from one country to another. This is where the host club can be especially helpful in making special arrangements, particularly when working with local authorities.

Lessons Learned: Shipping of Eyeglasses

“On two missions, the glasses that were shipped to another country were detained at the border. We were forced to examine patients for three days without the glasses and told them to return on the fourth day to get their glasses. The local host Lions were able to ‘pry’ the glasses loose and we were able to dispense 2,000 – 2,500 glasses in one day.”

- Dr. Gary Anderson, OD
Grand Rapids Lions Club

Budget

When planning a mission trip, it is important to take account of all the necessary expenses and how they will be funded. A detailed budget should cover all aspects of the mission, including mission team travel and lodging, supplies and materials, logistical support, facility/equipment rental, taxes and fees, and other expenses. Some of these costs can be leveraged by sourcing materials and resources locally, drawing on assistance by the host club, or by individual donations and/or grant funding.

Fundraising and Promotion

In order to obtain funding and support for your project (that may come from individual donations or grants), it is important to be able to demonstrate the need for your project and how it will make a difference.

When applying for grant funding, you will need to understand what can and cannot be covered by the grant, be able to meet all the grant criteria, and give yourself sufficient time to prepare the grant application and receive the award (grant reviews often take several months).

After completing your project, special attention should be given to acknowledging your sponsors/contributors and demonstrating the success of your work. Hearing stories of how the project touched the lives of disadvantaged individuals can be especially rewarding for someone who has helped to fund your project (and may do so again in the future).

To learn about the various grant programs offered by the Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF), visit the LCIF Web site at www.lcif.org.

Step 2: Obtain necessary clearances and approvals.

In addition to guidelines and regulations related to international travel and shipment of supplies and materials, it is also important to understand what approvals may be needed for the use of facilities and/or provision of certain services. Whether this means seeking an approval from a local authority or a specific office/individual, the sponsor and host clubs should be aware of what approvals are needed and make sure they are obtained before any services are provided to the community.

Step 3: Organize and train the mission team.

Decide on who will be part of the mission team and what specific role each member will serve on the project. It is also important to determine what specific responsibilities will be carried out by the sponsor and host clubs.

When serving a community outside of your home country, the traveling mission team should have a basic understanding of what to expect in terms of cultural norms, language, dress code, food, climate, lodging, and on-site transportation. The host club can be especially helpful in providing insights and orient the team on what to expect when preparing for the trip. It may also be helpful to provide the mission team with an on-site contact list and a few key phrases and words in the local language.

Step 4: Implement your project.

When the mission team arrives, the host club should be prepared to provide on-site transportation, accommodations, and any other support as decided during the planning stages of the project. It is important to understand who is responsible for each aspect of the

mission and have sufficient time to make changes and address unanticipated challenges.

Step 5: Reflect on lessons learned and plan your next steps.

After completing the project, it is important to reflect on lessons learned (what worked, what did not work, where changes are needed) and arrange for special recognition of everyone who contributed to the project. A follow up visit with local authorities and key sponsors may also be helpful to express your appreciation and obtain support for future projects.

A Story from the Field

“On my first mission to Guatemala in 1990, one of the patients I saw was a young mother who made tortillas for a living. After examining her, I discovered that she was extremely nearsighted. We did not have glasses that would enable her to have good vision for distance. Since she does not drive and she used “ped-power” as her mode of transportation, I decided that it would be best to correct her vision so that she would have clear vision ~ 4 – 5 feet in front of her. When the glasses were placed on her face, she looked around and around, since she was finally ‘seeing’ her surroundings for the very first time. She then started to cry and said that she would now be able to see her baby clearly.”

-Dr. Leila Chinn, OD, MBA
Walnut Creek Ygnacio Valley Lions Club

Share your story

Be sure your club secretary includes information about your mission project in the Lions monthly service activity report where they can provide a description of the project, upload photos, and share this with other clubs.

For More Information:

Visit the LCI Web site at www.lionsclubs.org and keyword search “missions,” or contact us at missions@lionsclubs.org to be connected with other Lions who are active in missions.

Appendix: Suggested Sponsor and Host Club Responsibilities

Sponsor Club	Host Club
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide specialized services ▪ Take care of travel arrangements for the mission team ▪ Provide orientation (in consultation with the host) for all members of the mission team ▪ Work with local health professionals (at the host site) and provide training as needed ▪ Provide oversight for services/health professionals as needed ▪ Provide equipment/supplies as needed ▪ Provide supplemental funding as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure and prepare on-site facilities ▪ Promote the event to the local community ▪ Recruit and manage volunteer and paid staff ▪ Establish and maintain local partnerships ▪ Obtain support/approvals from local authorities ▪ Recruit local healthcare providers ▪ Source equipment/supplies and other resources ▪ Handle logistics such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Patient appointments ○ On-site coordination/in-take ○ Volunteers/support staff ○ Translation support ○ Water/food for patients, staff, volunteers ○ Shipments (receiving/customs/storage) ○ Safety/security ○ Troubleshooting ○ Mission Team orientation ○ Follow up
<p>Sponsor and host clubs should work together to develop a detailed action plan that applies to the project/ local context and outlines the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Goals and objectives for the project with specific outcome indicators, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of patients to be served ○ Number of staff to be trained ○ Services to be provided 2. Action steps and specific roles and responsibilities for the sponsor and host clubs 3. A list of materials and resources needed for the project 4. Detailed budget with information on how the necessary funding will be secured and shared by the sponsor and host club 5. Evaluation and communication/promotion strategy for the project 	