

# What's Your Volunteer Abroad Style?

It's your time – share it wisely! To make the most out of your service abroad, it's important to carefully examine your interests and skills, and your openness to partner with community members abroad who will have different perspectives.

## Ask Yourself

**Do you want to go on a program for a couple of weeks, a few months, or as long as two years?**

**Are you interested in being part of a group project or would you rather work individually with local community members?**

**What skills do you want to contribute? Some volunteer projects involve a lot of physical labor, such as trail maintenance, building construction, or archeological digs. Others require skills such as teaching, community organizing, or public health training.**

**Do you want to combine the experience with academic coursework and training?**

**What amount of direction or freedom do you want on the project? Some organizations provide volunteers with clear tasks to accomplish; others provide a general framework and leave it up to the volunteer to determine the specifics from listening to the community.**

**Are you interested in being in a bustling urban area, a rural village, or even in a wilderness area?**

**Do you want to use or improve your foreign language skills during the program, or do you want to use your native language?**

**Would you like to volunteer with your friends or family, including children?**

**How much money can you fundraise or afford? With a few exceptions, most volunteer-sending organizations charge a program fee and expect volunteers to cover their own travel and living expenses.**

At this stage, focus on how you want to contribute, what you want to learn about communities abroad, and the type of program that fits your expectations – rather than on accessibility abroad and disability accommodations.

Once you identify potential opportunities that align with your goals, reach out to the staff at the sending or receiving organization for answers to your accessibility questions, from availability of orientation and mobility guides on-site to overseas health insurance coverage.

While it is not your role as a volunteer abroad to swoop in and save the day by helping others, neither should it be a situation where you are sidelined from participating because no one thought to plan for access. After all, interdependent partnerships rely on recognizing the contributions of everyone.

