

A great short-term mission trip requires...

1. On-the-ground leaders to help plan, lead, and mediate or interpret experiences

- These are “bridge people” between different cultures and contexts (and sometimes languages as well)
- These leaders humbly connect us in the Body of Christ, helping all participants in the short-term mission experience to learn from each other, reflect on how God is present in the place being visited, and perhaps to help us think about what the short-term experience will mean in the long-run after we return home.
- **Who are the “bridge people” leaders with whom you can work when planning and leading your congregational or mid-council mission trip? How might they help you with follow-up after the trip?**

2. Clear trip goals & healthy motivations

- Keeping an open mind and heart, be sure to communicate with and pray with the “on-the-ground” leader about trip objectives. Questions to consider:
 - **Why are we going? Why do we go to _____?**
 - **What do we expect to accomplish? What do we hope to gain? What do we hope to give?**
 - **Are our trip objectives developed together with on-the-ground leaders?**
 - **Are the on-the-ground leaders equipped to bridge cultures and contexts, or language and logistics only?**
- Reflect ahead of time how you will communicate with the congregation about the trip before, during and after it takes place.
 - **What’s the “story” you want the congregation to hear about the trip? How will you paint the picture and set the stage, and with what purpose?**

3. Careful planning and orientation

- Plan *with* the “on-the-ground” leader – not on your own. Let the leaders in the place you’ll be going take a big part in setting the agenda
- Orient your team through face-to-face meetings. Make orientation part of the expectation for the group
- Use various kinds of media for orientation: videos, books, articles. People learn in different ways. Some areas and topics to include in orientation:
 - Prayer; faith reflection to build up team and go deeper into motives: How might we see Christ in our group? In our brothers and sisters with whom we are serving?
 - Personal reflection and group reflection on motives
 - Culture and context
 - History; current events

- ☑ Group roles during the trip
 - ☑ Understanding of the goals and expectations; group covenant – including learning and reflecting before and during the trip, and follow-up afterwards
 - As you plan with the “on-the-ground” leader, seek an emphasis on relationships, learning and reflection. This doesn’t mean there won’t be physical work to do, but it will change the orientation of the trip, how you work with mission partners, and how you use your time
 - Prepare in advance for post-trip follow-up
 - ☑ During orientation and during the trip itself, take time to reflect on how to share the story after you return
 - ☑ Hold group meetings after the trip: set the expectation that meeting together afterwards will be part of the mission trip experience. This should be understood before a person commits to going on the trip
- What challenges do you face as you plan a short-term mission trip? What are particular challenges in planning a trip in tandem with an “on-the-ground” leader?**
- Does that person exist for you in that place?**
- What do you need to best orient your group?**
- Does your group have a group covenant that includes orientation and post-trip group meetings as part of the overall expectations?**

A final note: consider how the short-term mission trip fits with the bigger picture of your congregation’s way of working in God’s mission

- How does the trip fit in with the larger mission plan or program of your church?**
- What are some possible next steps that you could take to explore how mission trips can become more strategically and holistically connected with the “big picture” of mission in your church?**

Looking for more resources to equip and lead your short-term mission trip? Visit www.pcusa.org/missionresources and click on “Plan a Mission Trip” for mission trip best practices, articles on short-term mission, a sample 10-day trip schedule and more.