

# WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN GLOBAL SERVICE LEARNING

## 6 STANDARDS OF PRACTICE TO GUIDE YOUR DECISIONS

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### 1 ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT

**Do** the sending, intermediary, and host community entities really share the same mission, commitment and capacity to collaborate? Or is one using another to achieve different goals? Do the people involved have the proper credentials to deliver what they promise? Or are they working in an uncoordinated and complex space without proven competencies?

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- ✓ Aligned missions, equitable relations, critical thinking, and dialogue among stakeholders
- ✓ Evidence of long term commitment to collaborative practices and common goals
- ✓ Professionals with related academic preparation and professional experience in international education and community development

#### WHAT TO AVOID

- ✗ Organizations that are aimlessly jumping on a trend of internationalization without partners
- ✗ Conflicting academic, commercial, cultural, or community visions, values, and methods
- ✗ Amateurs with an abundance of enthusiasm and a shortage of pertinent qualifications

#### WHY IT MATTERS ●

Aligned sponsoring, intermediary, and community organizations produce more defined reciprocal public benefits and less vague mutual private benefits that advance the overall aims of global education and community development.

### 2 SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

**Are** the organizations ethically managing their legal, financial, administrative, and human resource functions in compliance with formal requirements and best practices? Or are they taking advantage of unregulated spaces to operate informally? Is there openness and in-depth transparency or reluctance and superficial sharing?

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- ✓ Civic licences to operate and written partnership agreements with communities and stakeholders
- ✓ Proactive disclosure and explanation of financial statements and access to substantive information
- ✓ Staffing policies and manuals, codes of conduct, fair remuneration, and professional development

#### WHAT TO AVOID

- ✗ Organizations that are operating without any public status or established local partnerships
- ✗ Simplistic and one-time financial reporting that boasts of low overhead and imprecise high impact
- ✗ Exploitation of people in uneven power relationships with less access to resources

#### WHY IT MATTERS ●

Sustainable and ethically operated sponsoring, intermediary, and community organizations have a long-term, accountable presence that engages local authorities, extends public networks, develops local capacity, and supports collective initiatives.

### 3 RESPONSIBLE MARKETING

**How** are words, images, and symbols used to promote engagement and outcomes? Respectfully, realistically, accurately, and consensually? Or do they perpetuate stereotypes, reinforce clichés, provoke pity, glorify individuals, exaggerate claims, or misuse cultural icons? Does content analysis lead to clear and mission-relevant messaging? Or to faulty assumptions and slacktivism?

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- ✓ Text that uncovers assumptions about power, privilege, outcomes, and personal agency
- ✓ Images that are genuine, balanced, and dignified that provide context and perspective
- ✓ Modest and qualified use of short and long-term claims reflective of both success and limitations

#### WHAT TO AVOID

- ✗ Text that presents short and easy solutions and predicts grand outcomes and amplified impact
- ✗ Images that gratuitously use or idealize children and vulnerable populations without consent
- ✗ Symbols or unverifiable statistics that over-simplify complex issues and wicked problems

#### WHY IT MATTERS ●

Responsible marketing materials inform and inspire local and global engagement rooted in reality not illusion, and invite multi-faceted collective participation not one dimensional individual solutions.

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### INTEGRATED IMPLEMENTATION



**Is** the program and/or project identified, designed, prepared, and implemented within a shared theory of change and operationalized in a logic model? Or is it segregated solely by function and convenience based on assumed roles? Are there common strategies, resources, and decisions? Or unrelated independent activities?

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- ✓ Shared processes, roles, responsibilities, and solutions across organizations
- ✓ Comprehensive pre/during/post experience materials and itineraries for all parties
- ✓ Connection between systemic local and global issues; interdependence not independence

#### WHAT TO AVOID

- ✗ Northern organizations assuming substance, Southern ones relegated to logistics
- ✗ One-sided attention to broadening the participants, but not communities, service learning experience
- ✗ Adventure-destination and consumer-oriented international travel that appropriates cultures

#### WHY IT MATTERS ●

Integrated design and implementation reduces neo-colonial tendencies while challenging and raising the capacity of all entities to demonstrate true partnership and a more equitable distribution of responsibilities, risks, and rewards.

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### PROTECTION OF PEOPLE & PLANET



**What** safeguards are in place to protect children, vulnerable populations, and the environment from harm? Is the need for them articulated and reflected in policies, procedures and training? Or are boundaries and obligations forgotten in the excitement of travel and absence of regulation?

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- ✓ Protocols for contact with children and vulnerable populations that protect privacy, prevent interference, exploitation or abuse
- ✓ Codes of conduct for photography that honor cultural norms and require respectful use of images by individuals and organizations
- ✓ Health, safety, and conservation practices for visits to urban, rural, natural, wildlife and heritage sites
- ✓ Carbon offset mechanisms for air travel

#### WHAT TO AVOID

- ✗ Unrestricted access, contact, and voyeurism of children and vulnerable populations
- ✗ Unbounded photography of people as objects, posting of images without consent, and use of images in marketing materials without recognition
- ✗ Lack of evidence of due diligence, health and safety risk mitigation, and carbon offset strategies

#### WHY IT MATTERS ●

The rights of children and vulnerable populations merit respect and legal and moral obligations exist to protect all people and our planet from harm.

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### REALISTIC EVALUATION



**How** are inputs, activities, outcomes, and indicators chosen to be monitored, evaluated and shared effectively? Is reliable and valid quantitative and qualitative data collected? Or are reports mostly anecdotal and episodic? What metrics are employed and who benefits from analysis? Or do feedback loops appear self-serving?

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- ✓ Data collected by a variety of means over time from a sufficient number and scope of consenting sources
- ✓ Recognition of the complexity of evaluation and the limitations of findings – for example, deadweight, displacement, and drop-off effects
- ✓ Credibility gained from failure reporting, external evaluators and on-going research efforts

#### WHAT TO AVOID

- ✗ Findings derived from unreliable or invalid data
- ✗ Organizations that invest a little in evaluation and a lot in promoting simplistic results as impact
- ✗ Resistance to external critique or performance analysis

#### WHY IT MATTERS ●

Realistic evaluation measures allow organizations to incrementally improve their efficacy and efficiency in a credible and constructive context.