



U.S. Peace Corps | Armenia

Guidelines for Organizations Requesting Response Program Volunteers

Thanks for your interest in requesting Peace Corps Response Program Volunteer!

Below you will find guidelines for requesting a Peace Corps Response Volunteer (PCRV). These guidelines are designed to respond to your expectations and to help you answer questions concerning Peace Corps policies and procedures starting from the application process, continuing with preparations for the assignment and, ending with a PCRV's arrival at your site. Here you will find outlined different stages that an organization needs to follow to request a volunteer. The guidelines will create a clear understanding of what your expectations should be in regard with the assignments, recruitment, and other Peace Corps policies and procedures.

Application Process

Stage 1 – Application Form

When applying to the Response Program, at the first stage, after thoroughly reading these Guidelines, you will need to complete an Application Form. The application form outlines general questions regarding the organization and also some specific questions concerning the nature of the assignment. You will need to include general information such as field of your work, number of your employees, activities undertaken by the organization and others, also the details concerning your request, nature of the PCRV assignment/project, timeframe, etc. Please outline at least a general idea of how PCRV (Peace Corps Response Volunteer) can support you, and specify in which areas and fields. *For example:* Volunteer will provide trainings for staff members; volunteer will design English language curriculum; volunteer will help our department to develop a program, etc. These details will help us to determine what type of assistance you need.

In the Application Form, a special section will be devoted to your statement letter. Please pay particular attention to this part. We need to learn more about your reasons for requesting a PCRV. Your detailed motivation will help us to estimate real needs and clearly visualize our role in your program.

Our goal is to respond to the needs that organizations cannot respond to with only their own resources. We need to have a clear understanding of our role, and how beneficial our program will be for your organization and community.

Important: Peace Corps Volunteers are placed in organizations and communities where there is an expressed need for such assistance and where there is the greatest interest in and support for the Volunteer work.

Volunteers will not/must not replace or substitute qualified and available Armenian workers of the organizations to which they are assigned.

While completing the Application Form, please keep in mind that our program priorities are fields of **English Education** and **Community & Youth Development**, and spheres such as capacity building, program development, and community development, etc.

Stage 2 – Drafting Project/Position Description

After the application is submitted, along with other applications, it goes through selection process. Our selection criteria are: motivation, real need, field of work, feasibility of volunteer's assignment, support available for volunteer, host family/housing options, security and safety and medical considerations, region, organization type and others.

After the application is selected, jointly with the organization we develop a **Project/Position Description (PD)**. The PD outlines PCRV project, objectives, duties and responsibilities, qualification requirements, working and living conditions and others. You will receive the template of position description, the sample and brief instructions of how you should fill out the PD.

Please keep in mind Peace Corps Armenia does not manage recruitment, Washington, D.C. leads recruitment. Therefore, a PD is a very important document. It is based on this document that the Response Program in Washington, D.C. recruits volunteers. It is crucial that a PD outlines all the information that will be essential for a PCRV to manage their expectations and Washington, D.C. to recruit and select compatible candidates to your requirements and qualifications. Therefore a PD should be as detailed as possible and should clearly state the organization's needs, how a PCRV can respond to these needs, and also PCRV living and working conditions and others.

A PD is developed jointly with the PC Response Team. The PD is reviewed and approved by Peace Corps Armenia Director of Programming and Training (DPT) and Country Director (CD). A PD might go through several stages of review, so do expect that Peace Corps comes back to you for more information or with request for revisions or amendments.

Stage 3 – Approval of Position/Project Description and Recruitment

After we agree on the final draft, it is sent to Washington, D.C. where Response Program representatives review the PD and provide feedback. At this stage we might also come up with some additional questions for your organization. All PDs need to be approved by Washington, D.C.

When a PD is approved by Washington it is open for recruitment.

Recruitment takes time. Identified candidates go through the application process and also through the medical and police clearance; therefore the process of selection might take 3-4 months. The process might be even more prolonged if the Response Program in Washington, D.C. has challenges in identifying candidates whose work experience and education are strongly related to qualification requirements outlined in the PD. The Response Program Team will update you regularly about the status of your request and important deadlines.

Stage 4 – Signing Memorandum of Understanding

Organizations will need to sign a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** with Peace Corps to officially become a Partnering Organization. A copy of the MOU in English and in Armenian will be provided to you upon your request during the application process. The MOU should be signed before a PCRV arrives at site.

Selection Criteria and Standards

In this section you will learn more about the standards and criteria based on which, Peace Corps selects applications and partnering organizations. Please, read carefully the policies outlined below. This set of criteria/standards will help you to understand your role and responsibilities in the process of collaboration with Peace Corps and respond to your expectations. It is the organization's sole responsibility to get familiar with these criteria and share them with relevant agencies or any official representatives, involved in the application process. Please make sure that the criteria regarding host families/housings are also shared with potential host families/landlords and that they have clear understanding of these criteria.

If the organization or host family/housing do not comply with the criteria and standards outlined below, their application won't be considered.

Organization

- ❑ Partnering Organization (PO) should provide necessary support to Peace Corps in the process of developing assignments, organizing orientation sessions and supporting PCRVs throughout their service.
- ❑ PCRV should have a **Supervisor** who will be available to collaborate with them.
- ❑ Organization should identify a **Counterpart** for PCRV. It is highly important for Peace Corps, to ensure the skills transfer. One of the major goals of this program is to develop capacity of the organizations. If PCRV will be working alone on his/her own, then most likely nobody will benefit from this. That is why it is important for a volunteer to have a Counterpart. This should be one of the employees at the organization, who knows English, and who will be able to get actively involved in the PCRV assignment and continue the work when PCRV leaves the site.
- ❑ The head of the organization and other members must be able to clearly communicate the needs, develop a position description/project with clear goals and objectives and envision how the partnership with a PCRV will help meet those needs.
- ❑ The head of the organization and PCRV's Counterpart should form an action plan with the PCRV based on the position description.
- ❑ The head of the organization, as well as other members, should be willing to cooperate with the PCRV;
- ❑ Supervisor or the Counterpart should not leave PCRV alone at the site for long period of time.
- ❑ There must be a workplace provided to the volunteer that is appropriate to local workplace standards.
- ❑ Organization must cover all business related expenses of the PCRV such as business related transportation, per-diem, conference cost, etc. at the same level as the local employee, in case the organization assigns the PCRV for that.
- ❑ Partnering Organization must appoint a person (Counterpart or somebody else) who will be dealing with housing issues of the PCRV. This person will must identify potential host families and separate houses/flats for PCRVs. Please, keep in mind that we do not have information about the gender of PCRVs, so make sure that the selected host families/landlords are flexible with gender preferences, or at least identify options for female as well as male PCRVs. The reason why we request more than one option is pretty straightforward. In the process of selection, certain families/landlords opt out, or do not make it through the process of interview, clearance, simply do not comply with Peace Corps standards. Please provide host family/housing options on a timely manner, as the delay might impede the process.
- ❑ The Partnering Organization should possess an attitude for partially subsidizing PCRV's host family/landlord payments. This is considered as strong sense of partnership from the side of Partnering Organization. For example, this can be by paying the half of even less amount of the rent; paying the Host Family certain amount of money for covering PCRV's food expenses, etc. U.S. Peace Corps Armenia staff member will discuss in detail with the competent representative of Partnering Organization and/or Counterpart in order to find the best and mutually acceptable option.
- ❑ If partnering organization (PO) and hosting agency (HA) are not the same, PO should ensure that roles of all involved parties are clearly defined. **Example.** One of the State agencies in Yerevan might request a volunteer for one of the institutions in the region. In this case, we develop project/position descriptions with the agency in Yerevan who applied for the program, and it becomes our partnering organization later and PCRV is placed

in the region with the institution, which becomes host agency. The agency must ensure that the roles of PO and HA are clearly defined in the project and questions like: What is the role of PO and its representative? Who is the supervisor? Will PCRV have two counterparts one from PO another from HA? To whom volunteer will report? – are clearly answered.

- ❑ If PO and HA are not the same, PO/applying organization must ensure that local institution is informed about the whole application process, is involved in the process, is actively looking for the host family options, realizes the value of the project and is motivated to host a PCRV.
- ❑ The organization must be within 30-40 minutes walking distance from the PCRV's home and/or there should be some reliable forms of transportation available. In case of big cities (Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor) there is more flexibility.
- ❑ The staff and members of the organization should be open and willing to assist the PCRV with cultural integration.
- ❑ The organization should conduct orientation session for the arrived volunteers
- ❑ The organization will need to Sign Memorandum of Understanding with Peace Corps.

PCRV Projects:

- ❑ PCRV project must be based on a particular expressed need of the population or an organization and involve their active participation.
- ❑ The project, to the greatest extent possible, must strengthen local institutions, encourage local participation, and promote skills transfer or capacity building.
- ❑ The project should be feasible and should be accomplishable in the set time frame.
- ❑ The project should have clear objectives, responsibilities and qualification requirements.
- ❑ The PCRV is considered a value-added resource to the project, and is not expected to take on duties that are inherently those of paid staff.
- ❑ Volunteers' role in the project is to support the department, unit or a person at your organization in designing, implementing, conducting programs, activities, etc, which envisions collaboration and active involvement of Armenian Counterpart in the process. PCRV should not be working alone on the project.
- ❑ The project should be outlined in special format called Project/Position Description. (You will be receiving the PD sample with relevant instructions, after your application is selected).
- ❑ PD should clearly define the roles of involved parties in the project.
- ❑ The formulation of the responsibilities outlined in the PD, should be in the format which presupposes cooperation. **Example:** PCRV will assist the department to conduct trainings; PCRV will help Unit manager to develop training manual.
- ❑ PD should include the detailed information about Working and Living Conditions. **Example:** Throughout the assignment/project PCRV might be required to visit, observe several organizations/institutions, or schools in the community. In the working conditions the organization will need to outline that PCRV will be provided with transportation. If the staff members do not possess English language, the organization should include this in working conditions and also explain how PCRV will communicate with staff members or who will be helping them with translation. If in the community there are frequent electricity breakdowns, or the road situation is difficult, you should also include this. In short, try to outline as much information about living and working conditions as possible.

Housing

- ❑ Organization's appointed a staff member who deals with PCRV housing issues should be in close cooperation with Peace Corps relevant staff member, in order to make sure that the identified host family/housing options meet Peace Corps standards.
- ❑ Host families should acknowledge in mind that PCRVs are not solely their tenants, therefore money paid for the host families is not a rent but additional resource to help families host volunteers (provide food).
- ❑ Host families should understand that they are part of the selection process.

- ❑ Host families should expect Peace Corps staff member to visit them for house check and provide brief training concerning Peace Corps rules and procedures.
- ❑ The host family must be able to provide the volunteer with a private room that can be locked and with basic furniture; a bed, desk/table and chair, and a place to store clothing (wardrobe and/or dresser).
- ❑ Host family should provide three meals a day.
- ❑ Volunteers must have keys to the main doors and have easy access to the house.
- ❑ Toilet facilities must be located inside the house or not far from the house. In the case of a latrine, it must be clean, well-ventilated, and located at least 20 meters from the well.
- ❑ The Volunteer should be able to heat water for a bath/shower and to bathe/shower in a clean, private place.
- ❑ The Volunteer needs to have an access to facilities for washing clothes and an access to cooking facilities.
- ❑ The house must have a reliable source of heat (electricity, electric or diesel heater, kerosene balloon, wood stove, etc.).
- ❑ There should be access to a land line phone either within the home or at a neighbor's house, or a post office with land line connection in at least 40 minute walking distance.
- ❑ There should be at least one member of the host family who can speak a little English.
- ❑ Members of the host family should be open and eager to exchange cultural information with the Volunteer.
- ❑ The details about the payments made to the Host Families by Peace Corps will be provided, as well as the rent ceilings that Peace Corps can pay for Volunteer living arrangements, can be provided additionally, upon request.
- ❑ Similarly, suggested Landlords should be cooperative and willing to accommodated PCRV's reasonable needs.

*Thanks for taking your time to read through the guidelines.
Good Luck with Your Request for Peace Corps Response Volunteer!*