

# MS 340 Opening a Post

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## Attachments

Attachment A – New Country Assessment Guide

Attachment B – New Country Entry Guide

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## 1.0 Authority

22 U.S.C. 2501, 2501a

## 2.0 Purpose

This Manual Section provides Peace Corps policy for opening or reopening a Peace Corps post in a country. Procedural guides for opening or re-opening a post are set out in the Peace Corps New Country Assessment Guide (Attachment A) and New Country Entry Guide (Attachment B).

### **3.0 Policy**

In keeping with its founding principles, the Peace Corps works only in those countries where it is invited by the host government to serve. An invitation from the host government to the Peace Corps to open or re-open a Peace Corps program evidences this interest of the host country, and serves as the foundation of all actions to be taken by the agency to explore a possible Peace Corps program in that country. Generally, the Peace Corps requests that a formal invitation from the host government be sent to the Director of the Peace Corps as a serious expression of interest and as the basis for further steps in the process of opening a potential Peace Corps program. Once an official invitation has been received by the Director, the Director may send an assessment team to the country to conduct a New Country Assessment (NCA) to study the feasibility of opening or re-opening a program (see Section 4.1).

The decision to proceed with a NCA is further informed by the Peace Corps annual Country Portfolio Review (CPR), a transparent and consistent process used to make decisions about (1) Volunteer levels at existing posts, and (2) whether or not to recommend a NCA. When looking at making decisions about Volunteer levels at existing posts, the CPR is designed to enable the agency to evaluate a country's commitment to the Peace Corps program and need for assistance; and to undertake an analysis of Volunteer safety and security, country program costs, the effectiveness of management of posts, and the alignment of the country's interests with the Peace Corps' mission and strategic priorities.

The CPR process for deciding whether or not to recommend a NCA consists of presenting external, and sometimes internal data if the country is a re-entry, which helps to make the decision concerning the appropriateness of an assessment. This data typically concerns population sizes, crime rates, economic need and other information available in published external sources.

## **4.0 Responsibilities**

### **4.1 The Director**

The Director is responsible for:

- (a) Authorizing the initiation of discussions with the Department of State and other relevant departments and agencies, as well as the host country government, regarding possible operations of the Peace Corps in a particular country;
- (b) Directing senior staff to conduct comprehensive assessments of relevant indicators and considerations necessary to determine the feasibility of operating a Peace Corps program in the country, including, but not limited to, the country's need and support for a Peace Corps program; social and political stability, including the impact of adverse events in the

country's history such as conflict and major natural disasters; safety and security and health concerns; as well as programming, administrative and financial aspects of operations;

- (c) Making final decisions on whether, and under what conditions, to proceed with opening a post; and
- (d) If the decision is made to open a post, selecting the Country Director.

#### **4.2 Office of the General Counsel**

The General Counsel is responsible for:

- (a) Providing legal review of and advice on the Director's decision memo regarding opening of a post, and any required consultation with and notification, including written notification, to Congress regarding the opening of a new post;
- (b) If a country agreement does not exist or a country agreement needs to be amended, notifying the Department of State that the Peace Corps intends to start negotiations and drafting of a new or amended country agreement between the United States and the host country government in accordance with the blanket authorization provided by the Department of State, regarding the establishment and operation of a Peace Corps program in the country;
- (c) Negotiating and drafting the country agreement, and any other agreement, including memoranda of understanding with applicable ministries and interagency agreements with U.S. government agencies, as needed, coordinating with the Department of State, and managing the signing of all such agreements;
- (d) Reviewing and providing legal clearance for collocation and setback waivers for office space; and
- (e) Providing general legal advice and support, as needed.

#### **4.3 Office of Global Operations**

The Associate Director for Global Operations and the appropriate Regional Director are responsible for coordinating the primary activities in opening or re-opening a post in the Region, including:

- (a) Overseeing and conducting the country assessment;
- (b) Working with Regional staff on all operational aspects of the proposed post, including defining its strategic direction;
- (c) Discussing with Peace Corps Response whether Peace Corps Response Volunteers (PCRVs) should be assigned to the new post;

- (d) Working with the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection (VRS) to assess the availability of qualified applicants;
- (e) When a decision has been made to open a post, coordinating between Regional staff and VRS to incorporate new Trainee requests into recruitment plans;
- (f) In coordination with VRS and/or Peace Corps Response, developing a plan and timetable for the arrival of the first group of Trainees or PCRVs, taking into account other support needs of the new post;
- (g) Establishing preliminary liaison with:
  - (1) The United States Embassy, other United States government agencies, host country ministries and agencies, third country agencies, and other organizations in-country, such as non-governmental organizations;
  - (2) Peace Corps support staff at headquarters or overseas; and
  - (3) Officials of the host country's Embassy in Washington, DC, the Department of State (particularly the desk officer), and other US public and private organizations;
- (h) Coordinating with the Department of State, including the United States Chief of Mission in the host country with respect to:
  - (1) the date for the Peace Corps' entry into the country and such other matters as may be appropriate;
  - (2) NSDD-38 approvals for United States Direct-Hire (USDH) and Foreign Service National (FSN) staff; and
  - (3) Obtaining any required clearances;
- (i) Determining the staging and other pre-departure needs of the program;
- (j) Working with Office of Management, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Office of Chief Financial Officer, Office of Acquisitions and Contracts Management, Office of Health Services, Office of Safety and Security, Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, and other offices as appropriate to support opening the post;
- (k) Establishing the staffing patterns for country of entry in consultation with the Office of Human Resources (OHR);
- (l) Coordinating and requesting funding of operational costs for the opening year and the following years;
- (m) In coordination with OSS and OHS, ensuring that all systems necessary to support Volunteers and Trainees (V/Ts), to include safety and security and medical, are properly

established and functioning prior to the arrival of the first Trainees or Volunteers (transfer-extensions or PCRVs); and

- (n) Maintaining the records associated with the NCA and entry.

#### **4.4 Office of Safety and Security**

The Associate Director for Safety and Security is responsible for:

- (a) In coordination with the Associate Director for Global Operations and the appropriate Regional Director, conducting a comprehensive safety and security assessment for the Director's review and providing recommendations and mitigating strategies required for regarding the viability of Peace Corps operations;
- (b) Working with Global Operations and the appropriate Regional Director and Country Director to ensure that necessary security waivers and approvals have been obtained for the Peace Corps office, in accordance with the applicable directives in the Foreign Affairs Manual and Foreign Affairs Handbook, prior to the arrival of the first Trainees or Volunteers (transfer-extensions or PCRVs) in country; and
- (c) Working with the Country Director to ensure that the safety and security policies and programs to support V/Ts are properly established prior to the arrival of Trainees.

#### **4.5 Office of Health Services**

The Associate Director for Health Services is responsible for:

- (a) In coordination with the Associate Director for Global Operations and the appropriate Regional Director, conducting a medical and psycho-social assessment, which shall consider and document the medical and mental health capabilities, risks, and challenges in the country, in order to determine if conditions in the country are conducive for Peace Corps operations;
- (b) Recommending the principal components of the medical and mental health care program required for V/Ts in the country, which should include access to clinical resources, medical supplies, and medical evacuation options; and
- (c) Ensuring that an appropriate medical and mental health care program has been established prior to the arrival of the first V/Ts.

#### **4.6 Office of Congressional Relations**

The Director of Congressional Relations is responsible for coordinating with the Office of the Director, the Associate Director of Global Operations and the appropriate Regional Director, the Office of the General Counsel, and other relevant offices, and providing any required prior consultation with, and notification to, Congress regarding the opening of a new post.

#### **4.7 Office of Management**

The Associate Director of Management acts as the Senior Agency Official for Records Management (SAORM) and is responsible for coordinating with the Regional Director and Country Directors to establish a records program for new posts that meets the legal requirements under the Federal Records Act and other legislation and regulations.

## **5.0 Procedures**

Procedures implementing this Manual Section will be proposed by the Office of Global Operations and will become effective when approved by the Office of Global Operations, Office of Safety and Security, Office of Health Services, Office of the General Counsel, Office of Management, and the Office of Human Resources.

## **6.0 Effective Date**

The effective date of this Manual Section is the date of issuance.