

Frequently Asked Questions



What do Leave for Change volunteers do?

Leave for Change (L4C) is all about capacity-building. This means volunteers train others in their field of expertise. Volunteers do not act as employees, but as advisors who transfer skills to local staff so as to build their host organization's capacity in a certain area. Country preferences of volunteers are taken into consideration but Uniterra can not guarantee that a volunteer will be sent to his/her preferred country.

What are the qualities of the successful volunteer?

Adaptability and the capacity to relate on a human level are key. Volunteers must have the required professional qualifications for their particular posting, but personal qualities and relevant experiences are also very important.

I don't see a position that fits my interests or skills, can I still apply?

The positions advertised on the Uniterra website have been developed by the local partner organizations and are part of their capacity-building and organizational development plan. They represent just a small percentage of the skills and knowledge from which Uniterra's local partner organizations could benefit. If you do not see a position that matches your skill set, do not be discouraged. You are encouraged to apply anyway during the recruitment period. In your cover letter, please include the professional skills that you think you could contribute to local partner organizations. If you are selected for an interview, the L4C Program Manager will provide you with additional informational about the possible positions that would match your skills and experience.

To what are participants committing?

Volunteers commit to giving time and a lot of themselves! Before departure, volunteers must participate in a two-day training session, generally on a weekend. During their three to four week volunteer assignment abroad, volunteers share their knowledge, skills and expertise within a particular project with one of our overseas partners. After their return to Canada, volunteers create their own public engagement activities to raise awareness about the importance of international cooperation. They also take part in debriefings.

When will I be expected to leave on my volunteer experience?

The exact date of each mandate will be determined by your availability and the schedule of the partner organization

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with whom you will volunteer. The earliest you could depart is two months after the date of selection and the latest you could depart is December.

What happens if I'm accepted into the program, but I leave the University? Can I still participate?

Participants need to be employed with the University of Guelph at the time of the volunteer opportunity.

What happens if I'm accepted into the program, but am unable to attend during the year due to unforeseen circumstances (parental leave, sick leave, etc.)? Will I lose my spot and have to re-apply the following year?

Generally speaking, you would lose your spot. However, Uniterra will consider each situation on a case-by-case basis.

Am I considered to be working for the University of Guelph when I am overseas?

Your participation in Leave for Change is done on your own time. You will not be traveling as a representative of the University. All successful participants will sign volunteer contracts with Uniterra.

Do I have to use my vacation time to participate in the program?

Yes, as this is a volunteer opportunity, staff and faculty are expected to participate on their own time.

Can spouses / significant others participate?

No.

What type of accommodation is provided?

Accommodations are consistent with local standards. They will be clean and basic.

Can I make stopovers to and/or from the country I will be volunteering in? Can I extend my stay?

No, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, which finances the Uniterra program does not allow volunteers to extend their stay in their host country following their mandate. For reasons of security and legal responsibility, volunteers can not make changes to their flight itinerary, even if the volunteer covers the cost of changing their plane ticket. Uniterra will issue the airline tickets with no stopovers or extensions built in. There will be no exceptions to this rule.

Do I have to pay for part of the travel costs?

No, because the University of Guelph has accepted to cover part of the costs and Uniterra covers most of the rest including, among other, required vaccinations and health insurance, pre-departure training, visas, flights and lodging. Volunteers also receive a per-diem to cover meals and local travel to their place of volunteer work.

In case of accident or disease while I'm abroad, am I insured?

Yes. Uniterra provides all its volunteers with an insurance policy that includes important items such as hospitalization and medical evacuation, reimbursement of medication and vaccines.

Successful applicants are encouraged to review their out-of-country medical insurance to ensure that they have the appropriate coverage. Eligible University of Guelph employees can access Emergency Travel Assistance through Sun Life. It is critical that you review your eligibility and the type of coverage that is available based on the country to which you are traveling.

Is there an evacuation policy in case of serious problems in the host country?

Yes. Uniterra has an office in each of the countries where Leave for Change assignments take place. There is an emergency protocol established in each country. Uniterra staff in the host country are responsible for assisting volunteers in case of serious social, medical or environmental problems in the host country.

Who is my primary contact when I am overseas? Who do I contact if I need immediate assistance?

Uniterra will provide a contact person at your destination point. They also provide pre-departure training and covers the cost of vaccinations, insurance, airfare, lodging and daily stipend. In addition, the program also coordinates transportation, in-field logistics and monitors security and well-being of volunteers.

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