ASPIRE
Improving ethical practices AN OLAM PROGRAM

Ethical Practices Spectrum Tool
Global Service

This spectrum is one of several tools and resources offered by OLAM's Aspire program, which is aimed at improving ethical practices in international development. The spectrum pinpoints four stages along a continuum of ethical practices. While few organizations will fit neatly into any one stage, the spectrum allows them to identify potential areas for improvement, and to clarify specific actions they can take to reach the next stage.

❯ TEN COMMANDMENTS

Below you will find "Ten Commandments" of ethical practices in global service. Like the biblical Ten Commandments, these are overarching core principles. The complexities of the issues involved in this spectrum make it impossible to include all elements and relevant information. Please see OLAM's ethical practices resource list to learn more, and for various types of "leading" examples.

Learn more about the Aspire program.

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1 Build your programs with local community partners

Identify a local community partner in each project location that has good standing and influence in the community, shares your vision, and can host and utilize volunteers. Invest in building a long-term relationship with the community partner to establish trust and open communication, and to ensure a mutually beneficial relationship that goes beyond specific projects, or funders' agendas. Be aware of power dynamics and societal structures within the community, and seek out diverse voices, including marginalized populations. See Aspire's Ethical Community Engagement spectrum for more best practices on this topic.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization does not have local community partners.

MOVING ALONG

Organization has identified possible local community partners, but does not take the time to build a relationship with them or understand their role in the community.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization engages in relationship-building and has identified shared goals with local community partners, but the program is driven exclusively by the interests and needs of volunteers and organization.

LEADING

Organization and local community partners are invested in a long-term relationship that is not driven solely by the interests and needs of the organization. The partnership is set up to be mutually beneficial to the local community, organization, and volunteers.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization is not aware of existing community structures in the host community.

MOVING ALONG

Organization is aware of the local community structures, but only engages with people in positions of power.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization engages with various community members, but still excludes certain marginalized populations.

LEADING

Organization engages in dialogue with various and diverse community members, including marginalized populations.

2 Base volunteer project on local needs and assets

Base your project on needs identified by your community partner as those that could be filled by volunteers. Establish clear goals and outcomes for volunteers, the project, and the community, so that expectations are aligned. If there aren't needs that the volunteers can fill, do not move forward for the sake of a volunteer experience.

JUST BEGINNING

The design of the volunteer project is driven by the desires and interests of the volunteers and/or funders, not by local community needs, and does not include community members in the project implementation.

MOVING ALONG

The volunteer project is based on a local communal need, but it prioritizes the desires and interests of volunteers' needs or funders' interests.

WELL ON THE WAY

The project and its implementation are based on a local communal need, but the organization has not identified specific community assets and capabilities that can inform the project.

LEADING

The local community selects a volunteer project that meets its needs, from concept to implementation. The project has measurable goals, outcomes, and outputs for both the volunteers and the project. Project includes community assets in implementation.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization sets goals and expectations for the program without involving local community partners.

MOVING ALONG

Organization and community partners have open discussions regarding expectations, goals, and commitments, but do not have any written agreements.

WELL ON THE WAY

Written agreements detail clear goals for both the community and volunteers, but do not set out clear expectations on time commitments or scope of the volunteer project.

LEADING

The project is established by both the community and the organization, and there is a written agreement that includes clear goals and outcomes.

3 Match the skills of volunteers to the project

Ensure volunteers have the appropriate skills for a project, to increase the likelihood that volunteer efforts will have their intended impact. Do not send volunteers whose skills don't meet a project's needs, especially in sensitive situations, in which they may actively cause harm. Properly train volunteers to maximize their effectiveness.

JUST BEGINNING

Project does not match volunteers' skills or interests, or is only created by the local community to provide an experience for the volunteers.

MOVING ALONG

Volunteers have suitable skills for the project, but aren't properly trained. Project duration and intensity are not clear.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization trains volunteers to ensure they have appropriate skills for the project, but does not provide proper on-site supervision.

LEADING

Volunteers have appropriate skills for the project and are properly trained. Supervision is available on site. Expectations are agreed upon regarding project duration and intensity.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization places untrained volunteers with exceptionally vulnerable populations (e.g., orphans), potentially resulting in emotional harm to those populations and to the volunteers.

MOVING ALONG

Organization places volunteers with populations that are prepared to work with these volunteers, but does not properly train them.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization places volunteers with an appropriate population and volunteers receive proper training, but there is no supervision on site.

LEADING

Volunteers work with populations who are suitable, not vulnerable, and prepared to welcome them. Trusted community members train volunteers and supervise them on-site.

4 Respect local laws and regulations

Adhere to local laws and regulations, including those related to labor, entering the country, bringing in goods, and providing services through skilled volunteers (e.g., doctors.)

JUST BEGINNING

Organization is not aware of local laws that might affect the project. Proper documents to enter the country are not obtained.

MOVING ALONG

Organization is aware of local laws, but does not adhere to them, for the benefit of the volunteers.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization adheres to local laws, but does not ensure that the community partner is doing so.

LEADING

Organization and community partners adhere to local laws, volunteers sign an agreement to comply with laws, and proper entry documents are obtained.

5

Train staff to lead global service programs

Provide proper training for headquarter and field staff, to ensure staff's readiness and ability to lead a global service trip in an ethical way. Training should include sessions on cultural considerations, safety, the educational framework created for the volunteers, ethical communications, and an understanding of project goals.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization does not properly train staff members (local and non-local) who will work directly with volunteers.

MOVING ALONG

Organization is developing a program to train staff members who work with volunteers.

WELL ON THE WAY

Staff has undergone training that includes safety protocols, educational frameworks, program goals, and navigating challenges.

LEADING

Organization provides ongoing professional development to ensure all staff members are updated on the latest ethical best practices in the global service field.

Staff members are equipped to deal with cultural conflicts.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization relies on non-local staff, who do not have experience in the host country.

MOVING ALONG

Organization relies on both non-local and local staff, but non-local staff have limited experience with the host country and local staff are relegated to logistics.

WELL ON THE WAY

Non-local staff have vast experience in the country and some knowledge of the local language, but local staff are relegated to logistics.

LEADING

Non-local staff have significant familiarity with the area, are proficient in the local language, and have a deep understanding of cultural norms and context. Local staff play an active role in leading educational programming and sharing local context.

6 Create an educational framework

Invest in developing an educational framework for volunteers, rooted in ethical global service practices. The framework should provide volunteers with proper pre-trip preparation, learning and reflection sessions in the field, and space to process their experience upon return. Engage in reciprocal learning, allowing the volunteers to learn from the community, and vice versa. Proper context, local voices, and speakers should be an intentional part of the design. If a program contains Jewish content, the Jewish framework should align with and enhance the content and subject matter of the program.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization has no established educational framework for curriculum for volunteers.

MOVING ALONG

Organization has a generic educational framework that is not adapted to the local community or subject matter.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization has an educational framework that is adapted to various locations and issue areas, but does not emphasize local voices or ongoing reflection.

LEADING

Educational framework includes reflections, discussions, and sessions before, during, and after the trip. Sessions include local voices and perspectives, and are adapted to address the specific location and issue areas the volunteers are experiencing.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization does not engage volunteers in conversations on the positive and negative effects of global service.

MOVING ALONG

Organization engages volunteers in conversations about the 'good' they are doing, but does not offer them space to think critically about their service work.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization engages volunteers in deep conversations on the value, and potential harm, of their service, and exposes them to ethical best practices of global volunteering.

LEADING

Organization exposes volunteers to big-picture conversations on privilege and power dynamics in the fields of global service and international development. Organization encourages volunteers to examine and challenge their preconceived notions of global service, vulnerable communities, and their place in the world.

6 Create an educational framework cont.

Invest in developing an educational framework for volunteers, rooted in ethical global service practices. The framework should provide volunteers with proper pre-trip preparation, learning and reflection sessions in the field, and space to process their experience upon return. Engage in reciprocal learning, allowing the volunteers to learn from the community, and vice versa. Proper context, local voices, and speakers should be an intentional part of the design. If a program contains Jewish content, the Jewish framework should align with and enhance the content and subject matter of the program.

JUST BEGINNING	MOVING ALONG	WELL ON THE WAY
Organization does not hold discussions around cultural humility or expectations with regard to volunteers and local community members.	Organization speaks to volunteers about the local culture, but does not prepare local community members for the cultural differences with the volunteers that they may encounter.	Organization and local community partners run separate conversations about cultural norms and expectations, but the organization and local community partners do not consult each other first.

LEADING

Organization and local community partners collaborate on discussions around cultural humility, sensitivities, and norms for both the volunteers and local community members. Sessions on the historical and societal context of the local community are a part of the educational framework.

JUST BEGINNING	MOVING ALONG	WELL ON THE WAY
Organization does not include issues that the volunteers' work addresses (e.g., housing, women's rights, immigration, climate change) in its educational framework.	Educational framework includes issue-based education, but does not present a holistic view of the historical and social context, or root causes of the issues within the community that the volunteers' work is addressing.	Educational framework includes issue-based education, and expands volunteers' understanding of the root causes and solutions to the problems their work is addressing.

LEADING

Educational framework provides deep analysis of the issues being addressed by the volunteers' work. If offering Jewish content, the content is anchored in these issues, and offers volunteers a Jewish perspective on ethics, societal issues, and global responsibility.

7 Establish financial cooperation and openness

Establish expectations and be transparent with your community partner on where money comes from and how it's being used. Ensure the partner shares decision-making power on fund allocation. Purchase goods and services in-country when possible, to support, rather than compete with, local businesses. Appropriately compensate staff, host families, and other local project participants.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization makes all financial decisions. The community partner is unaware of where funds come from or how they're spent.

MOVING ALONG

Organization is transparent about funds with its community partner but makes financial decisions unilaterally.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization consults with its community partner about financial decisions, but partner doesn't monitor and evaluate expenditures.

LEADING

Decision-making regarding financial expenditures is transparent, and organization makes decisions together with the local community partner. The community partner has the resources to monitor and evaluate expenditures.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization allows volunteers to bring donations, without regard to local needs or cultural appropriateness.

MOVING ALONG

Organization has discussed expectations about donations with community partners, but has no formal policy on the issue.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization has a formal gift-giving policy, but created it without input from local community partners.

LEADING

Organization establishes a gift-giving policy in conjunction with community partners, and shares it with partners and volunteers. The policy states whether donations are expected, and in what capacity. It aims to mitigate community inequities related to distribution of goods.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization does not engage in the local economy, and imports most of its food, supplies, etc. from outside the country.

MOVING ALONG

Organization supports local businesses (e.g., restaurants) when possible, but doesn't compensate community members for planning and implementing the volunteer project.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization discusses its economic impact and disbursement of resources with the local community. Volunteers are encouraged to support the local economy by purchasing goods in-country.

LEADING

The program maximizes economic benefits to the local market by ensuring program participants' needs are addressed through local sources when possible. The local community partner, host families, and other community members are properly compensated for time spent planning and implementing the volunteer project.

8

Be adaptive: Continuously monitor and evaluate your program

Evaluate your projects in collaboration with your community partner, and ensure you are adapting to the needs of the local community and volunteers. Do this in the moment and don't wait for the next project to make adjustments. Create a system for feedback that gives both volunteers and your community partner a voice. Define measurable outcome and output indicators that will allow you to ensure a positive impact on the community. See Aspire's Ethical Monitoring & Evaluation spectrum for more best practices on this topic.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization does not elicit feedback from local community partners, volunteers, or funders.

MOVING ALONG

Organization elicits feedback from volunteers, local community partners, and funders, but does not prioritize learning from the results nor sharing information with stakeholders.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization has a system in place to elicit feedback from volunteers, local community partners, and funders, but it is not culturally appropriate for the local community.

LEADING

Organization evaluates all of its projects, and does so in collaboration with local community partners, in a culturally appropriate way. There is a system in place to collect feedback, discuss learnings, and make adjustments to the projects on an ongoing basis.

9

Mitigate negative environmental impact

Create and implement a strategy to reduce your program's local and global environmental impact and carbon footprint. Include these strategies in the design stage of your project, not as an after-thought.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization does not consider ways to mitigate its environmental impact on the community (e.g., wasteful use of water) or the world (e.g., unnecessary travel).

MOVING ALONG

Organization considers ways it can mitigate environmental impact, but has no formal environmental policy.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization has a policy to mitigate environmental impact, but it is not implemented consistently.

LEADING

Organization has an environmental policy that is shared with its volunteers, and consistently used. The policy includes ways to decrease volunteers' carbon footprint by using sustainable, locally-sourced materials and food supplies, and to limit resource consumption and waste generation, when possible. Organization considers ways to limit plane travel and mitigate its harmful effects (e.g., carbon offsetting).

10 Share stories about the community with dignity; don't be a "savior"

The stories we tell, the language we use, and the images we show are often the only narratives the public sees and hears about the communities to which you send volunteers. This is a great responsibility, and you must fulfill this responsibility carefully, correctly, respectfully, and with integrity. Establish ethical communication guidelines or policies, and share these with volunteers. Don't place yourself as the center of the story or as the savior. Share stories about the community with their consent, in a manner that does not perpetuate victimhood or portray a one-dimensional story. See Aspire's Ethical Communications spectrum for more best practices on this topic.

JUST BEGINNING

Images or stories focus solely on organization or volunteers, and present them as "saviors" of the local community.

MOVING ALONG

Images or stories feature local community members, but remain focused on volunteers or the organization.

WELL ON THE WAY

The local community and organization or volunteers are presented as equally important characters in the story.

LEADING

Community members are presented as the center/hero of the story and the organization as a supporting character, not the main character. When a story profiles a volunteer or staff member, the piece highlights what that person has learned from the local community, or their relationship with the community.

JUST BEGINNING

Organization has no formal mechanism to obtain consent from community members for their images, content, or stories.

MOVING ALONG

Organization is developing a system to ensure consent is always obtained.

WELL ON THE WAY

Organization has created a methodology to obtain consent, but does not do so on all projects.

LEADING

Organization and volunteers obtain prior and informed consent from all people featured in their materials and social media for use of their images and information. If children or people with disabilities are unable to comprehend the implications of sharing their image or story, consent must be obtained from their parents or guardians.