



INTERNATIONAL YOUTH INTERNSHIPS Self-Assessment

Thank you for your interest in the Atlantic Council for International Cooperation's (ACIC) International Youth Internship Program (IYIP). ACIC and six of its member organizations have been funded by Global Affairs Canada (formerly DFATD) to provide 40 internships with overseas partner organizations over the next two years.

We ask all applicants do a self-reflection/evaluation on the following questions at this point. It is our hope that the following self-reflection questions will help you in deciding if applying for an IYIP position is right for you.

We do not require a written response to these questions, but just ask that you are honest with yourself when answering them in determining if this internship is right for you. Many interns find the experience to be life changing, and they have learned and grown considerably both professionally and personally. However, it is also a very challenging experience, with many ups and downs in both Canada and overseas.

The overseas placement can be a challenging experience where you will need to be adaptable. Finding yourself overseas requires adjustments; food, living quarters, pace of life, forms of entertainment, language, and companionship are very different. *Please think about the adjustment process you underwent in previous situations in your life and assess how adaptable you consider yourself to be.*

While you may be given a job description before you arrive there is no guarantee your activities will be exactly as outlined. You may find some decisions require your input and initiative, or you may find a set work plan with little room for innovation. Your job description may also change to reflect the immediate priorities of your partner organization in both Canada and overseas. *Please assess your previous experiences in and reactions to situations, which required considerable flexibility on your part.*

People you will be working with have varied backgrounds, cultures and languages. Their values could be far different from yours. *Think of problems you may have had with co-workers or acquaintances, in Canada and, where applicable, in other countries. How did you react to these problems? How successful were you in communicating with the people concerned (i.e. discussing your point of view and understanding theirs)?*

Considerable demands can be placed on interns' physical, mental and emotional health during the course of an internship. Due to living in a different cultural and physical environment, you may not have the same access to those things that have helped you stay healthy in the past (familiar foods, going to the gym, a close friend or family member to talk to, etc.). You will need to find new ways of staying healthy while overseas (discovering new foods, learning a new sport, finding someone you can talk to when facing difficulties, etc.). However, do not put yourself at risk if you are aware that you have any existing conditions that may jeopardize your health, either physical or mental. *Take some time to think about how you might cope with the exciting - but challenging - experiences you may face while living and working in another country and perhaps another part of Canada.*

If you do not have a basic understanding of the history and social reality of the host country, we urge you to do some research in the event you are invited to an interview and before deciding whether to accept a position, if offered.

Finally, consider if the position is right for you at this time in your life by asking yourself the following questions:

- Are you ready to accept an internship position that while providing you with the opportunity to gain valuable skills will demand a professional level of work with minimal financial compensation?
- If you are not from the location of the Canadian hosting organization, are you willing and able to travel to the area *at your own cost*?
- Do you have short-term accommodation options in mind during the Canadian portion of the internship?
- Are you prepared to be away from friends and family for up to 8 months?
- Are you prepared to live on a very tight budget for the Canadian portion of the internship?
- Have you thought about your motivations for applying to this internship?
- Are you prepared to work long hours and to be given tasks that will require much self-direction and initiative?
- Are you interested in doing practical hands-on work that will give you a variety of skills in areas not exclusively confined to your internship job description?
- Are you willing to do basic administrative work (i.e. filing, answering phones, writing letters), as well as work on projects?
- If you applied to an internship requiring Spanish, is your level of comprehension and expression, written and oral, adequate to ensure that you are able to function well in a professional environment?

Successful interns are flexible, sensitive to the values of others as well as their own, eager to take on new challenges in different environments and responsive to change. Other qualities include: initiative, resourcefulness, ability to cope with stress, persistence, independence and a sense of humour!

If you have had a hard time with any of these areas in the past it doesn't mean that you are not appropriate to the internship, but rather that you can identify that particular area as a challenge that will need to be recognized and personally addressed during your time in Canada and overseas, should you be selected.

Internships through ACIC are designed to improve the knowledge, skills, and experience of youth and to increase their options for career choices after the internship. During the internship, interns are exposed to a wide variety of people, workshops, and training sessions, both in Canada and overseas. Work is conducted in Canada and overseas to improve the intern's awareness of the linkages between national issues and international issues, and to give interns the opportunity to share and apply learned skills with overseas partner organizations, and to equally learn from their partner organizations' own experience.

If chosen to participate in an internship, you can expect lots of job satisfaction, strong friendships and the opportunity to work closely with a team in an international setting. However, it is important that you are aware of the conditions of an internship before you move forward. On completing the internship, you will have had the opportunity to gain valuable international experience, increase your employment skills and enhance your awareness and understanding of international development issues.