



Foundation for Sustainable Development International Internship Program Guide

Foundation for Sustainable Development supports the efforts of grassroots development organizations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that are working to better their communities, environments, and the economic opportunities around them. We also educate international communities on effective approaches for sustainable community development.

FSD has been described as the “gold standard for global engagement programs.” Our program sites are in 6 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. For almost 2 decades we have supported more than 300 community partner organizations and trained more than 3,000 volunteers. Our community development efforts have maintained an ongoing project sustainability rate of 80 percent, addressing health, social, environmental, and economic issues by responding to community priorities and offering training, grants, and volunteer support to our community partners.

The **FSD Internship Program** (both development and research) connects students and professionals with community-based organizations in Latin America, East Africa, and India. Through this program, participants will gain firsthand exposure to grassroots development projects, while contributing time, energy and fresh ideas to support the efforts of organizations who are working to better their communities and environment.

The FSD internship experience is a comprehensive training program and a partnership between FSD, your host organization and you. This guide offers an introduction to the components of your internship, and will help you to develop clear expectations for your time in country.

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International Internship Timeline

Arrival	Orientation: Addresses safety and security, personal health, local language and culture, and introduces the FSD participant to our network of support. This intensive Orientation is conducted with the FSD Site Team and fellow FSD participants. At the end of orientation, you are placed with your host family .
Week 2	Work begins with your host organization: In the second week, you begin integrating into your host organization, learning about its mission and the perspectives of the staff and population served. You will carry out a Community Assessment . The outcomes of your assessment will form your work plan for your time in-country.
Week 3	Skills Training: You will begin to develop a Work Plan and budget with your supervisor, to be subsidized by the FSD Seed Fund . Grant Workshop: In this workshop, you will gain a clear understanding of what makes a strong, sustainable development project and the essentials for writing a successful grant proposal.
Week 5	Develop and submit a grant proposal: If additional funding is needed for your project work, you may choose to develop a project proposal collaboratively with your host organization. Depending on the length of your stay, you will submit your grant proposal during or after the fifth week of your internship.
Midway	Midterm Retreat: This provides an opportunity to reflect on your experience so far, to share your experiences with fellow FSD participants and to discuss your ideas about sustainable development.
Ongoing	Progress Reports: You will meet regularly with the FSD Site Team staff to discuss and reflect on your work at the host organization. Educational sessions and cultural activities: You will also meet periodically with fellow participants for workshops on local and international development topics and for cultural activities to gain a richer understanding of the local context and resources.
Final week	Final reporting and evaluation: Towards the end of your program, you will present your achievements and challenges in a Final Report , evaluating the success of the project in relation to initial objectives, methodology, sustainability, and intended outcomes.
Upon return	Increase awareness in your community: We encourage you to share your experiences with friends and family, and raise awareness of international community development issues. Stay connected to FSD by liking us on Facebook , following us on Twitter and Instagram , and joining us on LinkedIn . We use these online portals to post international development news, career opportunities, events, updates on community partners and intern projects, and news from the San Francisco headquarters.



Training

As part of your internship experience, FSD will provide you with the opportunity, resources and training to enrich your understanding of sustainable development and provide you with practical development tools for your project work.

Community Assessment: Through daily observation, background reading, and conversations with host organizations, colleagues, and community members, you will begin to understand the needs of the community. Conducting a Community Assessment is the first step in identifying and defining a focus for your work.

Work Plan: Over the first few weeks of your internship, you and your supervisor will develop a Work Plan. The Work Plan should take into consideration the organization's priorities and your interests and abilities. This work plan will establish goals, objectives, outcomes, specific activities, and a timeline for deliverables, resources, and a budget to support these activities.

FSD Seed Fund: After completion of the Work Plan and budget, you and your host organization will be given a small fund to help carry out the project work for your time in country.

Grant Writing: Your FSD Site Team will orient you to the fundamentals of developing a project idea and writing a grant proposal.

Grant Awards: FSD Interns and the FSD Partner Organizations have the opportunity to collaboratively develop a grant proposal and receive funding for a sustainable development project. Grants are awarded to those projects that embody the mission and values of FSD, respond to the needs of a community in a sustainable manner, and meet other evaluation criteria.

Final Report: You will present your program outcomes and achievements in the form of a final report. This final report will include a written component in which you evaluate the success of your project in relation to initial objectives, methodology, sustainability, and intended outcomes.

Budget Management: You will gain experience in developing, managing, and accounting for a project budget.

Access to FSD Project Database: FSD will provide you with access to past projects and reports that offer a candid view of the opportunities and challenges of development work, as well as useful information about the needs in your host community and effective project models.

Educational Sessions: FSD will facilitate workshops which will further your understanding of local and international development issues through a variety of different educational means, including but not limited to: site visits, presentations by professionals, cultural awareness activities, and discussions.

Partnership

In partnership with your host organization and FSD, you shape your internship experience. We require that you commit to creating a supportive relationship built on dignity and mutual respect. Understanding your responsibilities and those of FSD and your host organization will allow you to develop clear expectations and build the foundation of a solid working relationship.

FSD's Responsibilities

FSD's main responsibility is to cultivate and mediate your relationship with your host organization and provide essential trainings on international development.

Liaison: At each site, FSD has developed partnerships with organizations that are aligned with our



commitment to grassroots and sustainable development work, and offer support and activities for FSD participants. FSD facilitates your placement with an organization where we believe your skills and experience are most closely aligned with the organization's current activities and needs.

Support network: The FSD Site Team provides safety and security training and ongoing support throughout your internship through clear policies and a network of local support.

Capacity building: The FSD Site Team will provide you with trainings and workshops that will help you develop valuable skill sets to use during your internship, as well as in your future academic and career endeavors.

Objective third party and follow up: FSD will hold both you and your host organization accountable to your commitments to one another and to FSD. The FSD Site Team will follow up on the progress of your project after your departure, and do our utmost to ensure its sustainability.

Community Partner Organization's Responsibilities

The main responsibilities of your host organization is to offer exposure to grassroots community development work

Mentorship: Your host organization supervisor will orient you to the mission of the organization, current programs, activities, operational guidelines, and responsibilities.

Performance and progress: Your supervisor and colleagues will schedule meetings and check-ins with you, to set goals, track progress, and offer insight into the work of the organization and the issues it addresses. They will communicate regularly with the FSD Site Team regarding your participation and deliver a written evaluation of your performance upon completion of the internship to the FSD Program Director.

Your Responsibilities

Your main responsibility is to contribute your time, energy and initiative to the collaborative efforts of your host organization and FSD, keeping in mind that your projects and research have real-world implications and consequences. Although it may not be your intention, your actions will shape your host community's attitude towards volunteers like you and other outsiders.

Make use of resources: You should actively participate in FSD activities, workshops, trainings, and meetings with your supervisor and the FSD Site Team members. You should seek out feedback and support throughout the work plan development, grant-writing, and project implementation process from your host organization and FSD.

Practice professionalism and respect: An internship lies along the continuum between a class and a job. Approach your internship with the same enthusiasm and commitment to learning as you would a class, while treating projects and deliverables as seriously as you would in a paid position. Complete the required full-time work-week with your host organization. This will vary depending upon the location and the host organization, but a commitment of 35-40 hours of work per week is expected. Additionally, you should plan personal travel around your work schedule, so you are present for work and training workshops.

Treat the FSD field staff, your colleagues and supervisors with respect. They have invaluable experience and knowledge about the issues and obstacles encountered in development work.

Recognize and respect cultural difference: Re-examine your concept of work ethic. In much of the Western world, work ethic is often evaluated according to one's efficiency, productivity, and punctuality. In



your host country, things may move at a different pace and work ethic may be evaluated by other standards – such as your ability to integrate within the community, the relationships you build, and your ability to work within a cooperative structure. This may be challenging for you at times. However, it is **not** your host organization’s responsibility to adjust their work culture to meet your standards. **This is an opportunity for you to learn about and practice another way of approaching and valuing contributions in the workplace.**

Get to know your host organization and community. Spend time talking with your supervisor, coworkers, and your host organization’s clients, particularly before you initiate any sort of project work. Taking the time to get to know these individuals will be essential to building trust and mutual respect and establishing your intention to learn from and collaborate with them rather than enforcing western-centric, or culturally inappropriate, impositions.

Be flexible. Expect the unexpected. Relax and approach every situation, delay, or disappointment as a learning experience. Practice and encourage a positive and constructive response to the challenges you encounter.

Health and wellness: The FSD support network exists to ensure your safety and security while abroad, but it is your responsibility to care for yourself both physically and emotionally. Take the time to prepare yourself before arriving and be mindful of your well-being throughout your experience.

Shaping Expectations

Understand the realities of your host community, and your place within that context. The following assumptions may cross your mind before and during your internship. Please be aware that the reality you encounter is likely to challenge the assumptions you’ve made.

Assumption: The organization should be grateful that I am here.

Reality: The organization, especially your supervisor, has to invest substantial time and effort to bring you up to speed as a productive member of the organization. The organization expects you to become a contributing member of the organization – akin to an employee. You will find that time with your supervisor will be limited. You may have to seek dialogue with your supervisor assertively.

Assumption: Now I can get a chance to do what I want.

Reality: You may not have the experience, time, or resources to take on substantial self-initiated projects. Depending upon your skill set and the resources available to you, you may spend a great deal of your time assisting and observing.

Assumption: Now I can apply what I have learned.

Reality: This is an opportunity to test prior learning, but there is still much more to learn based on the needs and priorities of the communities and host organizations; application of your skills and experience at this stage must be done with humility as well as creativity.

Assumption: There is nothing to do.

Reality: Your host organization, however well-funded or under-funded, has goals and needs. If you are having difficulty identifying how you can contribute, engage your supervisor and colleagues in a conversation about the organization’s goals. What is the organization trying to accomplish in the short and long term? What are the hurdles they’ve encountered to date? The responses to these questions may shed some light on how you can contribute. Be open to supporting your host organization in ways that may not be entirely glamorous, or exactly what you had envisioned. You can also talk with your FSD Site Team. They will help you look at other strategies for addressing your concerns or facilitate dialogue with your supervisor.



Assumption: I will achieve all the goals I set for myself and my projects.

Reality: Your time in-country may not be long enough to achieve all of your goals. Community development takes time, and there are many factors that are outside of your control. Your efforts will be more fruitful if you focus your energy on supporting your host organization in achieving its goals - it will be in the community long after you depart.

Perspectives

“The internship was a wonderfully enlightening experience that provided a brutally honest look at international development. It broke down any preconceptions or overly romantic ideas about its overall impact and built up a more humble understanding of the complexities and the beauties of cultural differences, and political, economic and environmental realities. For someone about to enter into this field of work, the internship gave enough ownership to demand responsibility while providing strong network of support to assist the intern in all the complexities of the learning process.”

- Melissa Yule, FSD Intern in Ecuador

“Although the problems facing any development initiative are complex, frustrating and pervasive, I invite anyone who believes in the cause to be undaunted by its challenges and pursue the effort of development work. I understand the pressures, but having experienced both the highs and lows, I can genuinely attest to the satisfaction of overcoming the obstacles and making a real difference in someone’s life”

- Jorge Suarez, FSD Intern in Kenya

“My internship in India was at one the most challenging and the most enlightening experience I’ve ever had. It was a welcome and necessary crash course in field research, development work, and building strong relationships in an unfamiliar place. More importantly, however, working in India has opened my eyes to how much I can do in my own community. Even though I felt deeply connected to my friends and co-workers in India, I will never make as much of a difference on the other side of the world as I can here, where I have roots and a history. The development professionals I met, who had spent their entire lives committed to improving life in one region, were a true inspiration. I am infinitely grateful for this experience, which has provided me with the skills and confidence I need to work for positive change within my own sphere of influence.”

- Kitt Healy, FSD Intern in India

“Do not be discouraged by contrasts between your expectations and the work you actually end up doing. Many interns, like me, started the program thinking they would make a huge impact in their host community. The reality, however, is that even the smallest tasks help out in the long run.”

- Vikram Dashputre, FSD Intern in Argentina