



STUDENT MISSION TRIP LEADER GUIDE

This guide is designed to outline the responsibilities and timing for implementation of the requirements for leading a Custom Students mission trip. This guide addresses the following:

1. Responsibilities of a Mission Trip Leader – *Page 2*
2. Building Your Team – *Page 2*
3. Prep to Get Started – *Page 4*
4. Student & Parent Meeting – *Page 5*
5. Team Meetings – *Page 6*
6. Trip Logistics – *Page 8*
7. Funding & Fundraising – *Page 9*
8. Tying Up Loose Ends – *Page 10*
9. Managing the Trip – *Page 11*
10. Re-Entry & Post Trip – *Page 12*

When it comes to communication and reporting, you will be working with the Custom Students team for all things that relate to missions. Your point of contact for student mission trips questions, concerns, or any need that may arise is:

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1. Responsibilities of a Custom Mission Trip Leader

Thank you for taking the time to lead a Custom Student Mission Trip. This is big commitment and we are blessed to have you leading with us. Our commitment to you is to provide you with the right training, preparation and tools to make this the best mission year ever for Custom Students. We just ask that you own the commitment to lead with excellence and with the heart of a pastor.

Understanding who you are leading and for whom you are leading is very important. Our Custom Mission trip leaders are responsible to lead students who apply and are accepted for the trip. This is an awesome opportunity to be part of the student's faith journey! With this, you are committed to communicate and work with parents to keep them involved and with the Church to follow our mission trip requirements.

Custom Mission trip leaders commit to following the direction and guidelines outlined in this leader guide. The Student Missions Director will coordinate with the Seacoast Global Mission team and keep them informed as needed and get additional support if the issue cannot be addressed by our team.

2. Building Your Team

Custom Students and the Seacoast Global Missions team set your trip dates and sizes with the mission partner, will pay the mission partner deposits and invoices, and will begin the process of marketing trips to students through announcements, website and event updates, and social media promotions.

Here is what you should be doing during this time:

Initial Planning/ Recruitment (6-9 Months Out: September-November)

- **Prayerfully make a list of all potential team members.** Reach out to individuals who went on the trip last year. Sit down with the Custom leadership and ask them who has expressed interest in missions throughout the year. Ask them to identify individuals who are leaders amongst their peers or who would benefit from the mission you are leading.
- **Begin contacting individuals who expressed interest and their parents.** Ask them to begin praying about potentially joining your team. Remember, information is power!! The more informed a parent feels, the more likely they will be willing to agree to send their child off on a mission trip with you. Invite them to meet after a

service to hear more about your specific trip or have a cup of coffee with them if there are deeper concerns.

- a) Mass emails can be beneficial, but personal emails connecting people to the mission usually work best – You can tell them specifically how their skills would personally benefit your overall mission. Post on social media platform as it's this generation's tool for communicating. Post specifics on Facebook and Instagram. Get the students excited to want to be a part of the trip.
- b) Attend Custom One Nights and campus weekend small group services to promote your trip! Bring a laptop or items that would peak their interest to want to see what you are doing. Candy or sweets sitting on the table NEVER hurts to grab their attention.

Application Process for Trip (6 Months Out: December)

- All your hard work has paid off!! You now have students ready to commit to your trip. They will need to apply online at: www.seacoast.org/missions and be prepared to pay the \$50 non-refundable mission deposit.
- Applications will be taken from December 1 through January 15.
- Have them choose the trip of their choice and click “apply for this trip.” After the application is submitted a copy of the application will be sent to the Student Mission Director and to you as the trip leader.
- The student will receive a confirmation that their application was submitted and that their leader will be in touch.
- It is during this time that you can read over their application. The trip lead team should review each application. If there are any “red flags” on the application, please speak to Custom leadership or reach out to parents, if necessary, prior to approving the student for the trip. Our goal is to make sure we are setting each student up for success.
- If you have no reservations about the student or their application, then please let the Student Mission Director know to approve the student in Ministry Platform.
- After they are approved, send out the customized e-mail to the student and to their parent with all pertinent information for your trip and make sure you let them know

how excited you are that they will be a part of your team! Encourage them to begin fundraising ASAP providing them with the link to access their profile on the trip webpage.

- Check the trip webpage periodically, you will be able to see if students have added their profile pic and story and if any funding is coming in for them. Follow up periodically to make sure students are working on their trip and are serious about their commitment to go as part of the team.

3. Prep to Get Started **(5-6 Months Out: January/February)**

Now that your team is put together (or mostly put together), you need to get familiar with your other team leaders and get familiar with the trip requirements. **Please note the process from this point forward is expedited if your trip is a spring break trip!**

Seacoast Missions maintains a training and resources website that will help you with this: <http://training.seacoastmissions.org/documents/>

This website has the training videos but it also has access to all the forms, documents and guidance you need to lead your trip. Here is what you need to do between the time the team is formed and when you start your team meetings:

- Meet with your mission trip lead team. Get to know one another and develop and define trip leadership roles (who is going to do what for your team). Some of the leadership roles include
 - primary point of contact between team and Custom Missions Director
 - primary communicator with students and parents (including funding updates)
 - primary meeting leader/trainer
 - primary logistics planner with mission partner
 - team spiritual lead/team devotions.
- Set a date, time and location for the **student/parent kickoff meeting**. This should be sometime in early February. Go ahead and set your **team meeting dates** for February through May. You will want to meet at least monthly as a team initially and may want to step this up to twice per month in May as you get closer to trip departure. Know where you want to hold your meetings. If you want to use a room as a Seacoast campus, you will need to contact the Custom staff at that campus to arrange for a room reservation – **DO THIS IN ADVANCE PLEASE!**

- Determine a strategy for keeping in contact with students and parents. We highly recommend the following:
 - All important info is emailed to student and parents
 - All students and parents are put on text group. We recommend having everyone download **What's App** or **GroupMe**. Use the text chat for quick reminders and updates and to let them know when to check their emails.
- Determine your strategy for communicating and involving students who are not in the area and will not be able to attend your onsite mission meetings. Use technology such as facetime or WhatsApp video to keep them involved over your team's preparation for the mission.
- Think through any fundraisers that the team can do together during the spring semester. These take time to plan and execute, so get out in front of this. Please note, these do not bring in a lot of money per person typically. It is still best to encourage students to be missionaries and to ask for funding support.
- During this time, continue to monitor funding and profile updates (you can do this on your team's mission page at seacoast.org/missions). Keep building excitement in the team with periodic updates and encouragement to get moving. Communicate meeting dates so they can be put on calendars and conflicts can be avoided.

4. Student and Parent Meeting (5-6 Months Out: January/February)

Each team will set a student and parent meeting to kick off the mission trip meeting season. This meeting date needs to be set well in advance and communicated to the students and parents. It is a **mandatory** meeting; any student and at least 1 parent who cannot make the meeting will need to be met with individually. This meeting can be done as a virtual meeting.

The following will be addressed in this meeting:

- Confirm both student and parent(s) contact info on your team roster. We want to make sure everyone is getting the info.
- Use this time to go over your spring semester meeting schedule and attendance expectations. Make sure every student (if they have phone) and parent has downloaded the texting app (GroupMe or WhatsApp) and are in the group. This is important!

- Use this time to go over the trip and what type of things the team will be doing, where you will be staying, how you will travel, packing list (trip logistics).
- Use this time to go over funding and fundraising. Talk them through the website and using it to get online donations through their personal funding link. Talk funding target dates (50% funded by 4/1; 100% funded by 6/1).
- For international trips, go over passport requirements and vaccination recommendations. Collect passport copies at this meeting for those who have their passport (you will need this info to the Student Mission Director in order to purchase tickets). For those who do not have passports, confirm that applications have been submitted – these need to be received before April 1 and preferably by March 15.
- For international trips – please confirm that all of your students and leaders have submitted their **passport application no later than January 15**. Get a copy of the passport info page from all team members at your first meeting (or as soon as they are received).
- Have each student and their parent review and complete the following forms:
 - Code of Conduct
 - Liability Waiver
 - Minor Consent to Travel (use the mission partner form if they have one)
 - Packing List Expectations Form
- Allow time for parents to ask and have questions answered. If you do not know the answer, submit question to the Student Mission Director.
- The above forms need to be completed and originals kept by the team leader. All forms will be scanned together and emailed to the Student Missions Director by March 15.

5. Team Meetings **(0-5 Months Out: February-early June)**

Set your meeting schedule with dates, times and locations (if possible) and give this out at the student/parent meeting. At a minimum student teams should be meeting monthly between February and the trip departure month. You can meet more frequently, especially consider this in May and June as you get closer to trip departure.

The following MUST be covered and addressed in your meetings. **Please note that we will cover the 4 training topics as part of an all-teams mission training for all Custom Students mission trips – this date will be announced and will be in early February.**

- Regular updates and encouragement for student and team funding status – you can check this in your team webpage as a leader.
- Mission Training Videos – these 4 videos are NOT optional; they must be viewed. **Videos can be found at:** <http://training.seacoastmissions.org/training/>

The training videos cover the following topics:

- 1) Team Unity & Conflict Resolution
- 2) Cultural Sensitivity & Cultural Shock
- 3) Evangelism & Spiritual Growth
- 4) Spiritual Warfare & Re-entry

NOTE: team training may be conducted in person by the Custom team and all teams invited to participate. If this is done, this is a mandatory training.

- Each video is between 7-9 minutes in length. The content covered is in the Seacoast Mission Manual (also available on the training website). Use the mission manual (handbook) for jumping off points for discussions with your team. Have the entire team (including leaders) to take the personality test and walk them through the importance of conflict resolution. These discussions will give you a snapshot of where each student is spiritually and how you will be able to challenge them to grow while on your trip.
 - Every trip has elements of spiritual warfare they will encounter so discuss this ahead of time and give them Truth to speak against it. Even if you are not taking a team internationally, there will always be some sort of “re-entry” emotions the students will experience. Make sure you prepare them and explain to them that this is normal. Many students come home feeling guilty for what they have after serving in impoverished areas. Give voice to this feeling and help them to walk through how to navigate this in a healthy way.
 - You can break the videos up and do one or two each meeting, or you can do all 4 videos at your last meeting. Whatever works best for your leadership team!
- We also suggest organizing a team building or a social activity. It can be something as simple as going bowling as a team, having a pizza party in the park, or as elaborate as putting together a Goose Chase scavenger hunt for your team or doing a ropes course. This will allow the team to begin forming bonds between both the students and the leaders and allow everyone to begin to feel more comfortable with each other.

- The last thing your mission meetings need to do is prepare you for the trip. As your lead team works with the mission partner to identify specific tasks and activities, put a plan into action to get your team prepared. For example: have them develop a VBS plan if you will work with kids. Many times, these parts of training and preparation will be closer to the trip itself. Have students help in developing trip devotions that can be used each day while on the mission field.

Remember: these are student mission trips so the more you encourage and empower students to do the hard work, own the mission and be prepared, the better this trip will be. Sometimes leaders have a tendency to be the front of the mission too much – don't do this; make this about the student growth and development through their making a difference.

- Don't forget to have regular email updates to students and parents followed by your text app reminders to read the emails and to make the meeting dates. Before and after team meetings, plan on sending communication out with your team (students and parents). They need to be hearing from you on a regular basis, especially right before the trip. Email is the best way to do this with parents, but it is also helpful to set up a GroupMe or WhatsApp to connect with the students and parents as well. Having this set up ahead of time will make it easier when you want to disseminate important information while you are on the trip and starting to head back home.
- Have a plan of how you will include students who do not live in the area. They can join some of the meeting through facetime or skype. They need to watch the training videos as well. And there should be at least 1 meeting designed where every student attends for team building purposes – and, if possible, even if the student is from out of the area.

6. Trip Logistics **(1-5 Months Out: February-May)**

Custom Missions and Seacoast Missions has taken care of the big details – dates of trip, flight and insurance purchases, invoice payments. We need the trip lead team to work with the mission partner directly to set up the details – what your team will be doing.

- Work with the Student Mission Director to get in contact with the mission partner. Begin to plan out a series of phone calls or video calls to meet with them and plan out the trip.
- In some cases, a lot of the real detailed specifics cannot be planned in February and March and will need to wait until you get a little closer; however, start those conversations early.

- Develop an idea what you want to accomplish. Keep in mind that we want to serve the mission partner and their vision; however, we also want to make this trip meaningful and exciting for our students. If you want to get your hands dirty, plan something with construction. If you want to impact teens, plan a youth day camp or VBS for younger children.
- Remember that you do not have the authorization to add cost items to the trip; however, if the mission partner says they have a real need and the team could help do it if they had project costs, find out what that cost would be from them and let us know so we can check in to see if it is possible.
- Work to try and build a fun day or fun activity into the trip if possible. These are great for team bonding and solidifying the missions experience. The reason we go is to serve and make a difference; however, it is ok to have fun along the way.

7. Funding and Fund-Raising (1-5 Months Out: February-June 1st)

Team meetings and preparation is important, but don't lose sight of the funding for each person and the target dates. Make sure to communicate the schedule for fundraising goals to your team members.

Team members will need 50% of their funds raised for their trip by April 1st. At each team meeting discuss how fundraising is going and hold them accountable for coming up with a plan for raising the required amount for their trip. If a student is not 50% funded at April 1, you will need to discuss with parents to determine if they are committed to moving forward with the purchase of their ticket.

Get your completed Team Roster sheet (the one from the Missions resource website) to the Student Missions Director by April 1. This is needed to purchase airline tickets and secure trip insurance.

- Encourage students and parents to work on funding a little every week.
- Encourage them to look at the team page and funding status often.
- Encourage them to reach out for support through letters and communications – do not just try to work and earn your trip costs. Building a group of financial supporters and prayer warriors is important for the team.
- Make sure team members create urgency. Encourage them to set mini-target dates and go after those hard. For example: let people know they need \$400 by the end of next week to stay on target and please consider giving now.

You can consider a team fundraiser. These can help individuals raise money and are also great sources of team building. Talk over ideas as a group and come up with a plan. Ideas used in the past have been: Chick-Fil-A Nights, yard sales, bake sales during Custom One Night, babysitting, chili cook off, clothing consignment, lawn care, Go Fund

Me Campaigns, Bonfire T-shirt sales. Give them the tools they need to plan appropriately for these events.

- If you would like to do a fundraiser and your plan would be to do something on the church property, please contact your campus Custom staff first to make sure it is possible based on room availability and Campus Pastor approval.

8. Tying Up Loose Ends (1-2 Months Out: April-May)

You are almost ready to depart on your trip, there are just some last team logistics issues that you plan for:

- Follow up with the Student Mission Director to make sure everything is in order for your trip. Make sure if you are flying that the hosting organization has copies of your flight itinerary, so they can pick you up from the airport. Make sure they have a copy of your team roster with photos, so they can begin to get to know everyone who is coming.
- Make sure the mission partner has all required paperwork, applications, minor release forms, etc. needed – don't let these be last minute surprises!
- Make sure as the trip is getting closer that you are communicating with parents and team members. The key to a successful team is making sure everyone is informed throughout the process.
- Follow up with your trip logistics teams of students to make sure their individual projects are coming along well. Do they need your help with anything in particular?
- Follow up with your individual team members about their fundraising. They should be getting close to having the majority of their money collected. Certain team members may need additional encouragement and help, so be aware of those who may be struggling to meet financial deadlines. How can you and the fundraising chair help them?
- Get a list of emergency contacts for people at home (1 or 2 people) – These people will be emailed once the team has successfully arrived at their destination by the Custom Missions. Send this list to the Student Missions Director once it is completed. Your team may or may not be able to update people regularly while you are gone. Make sure you tell your team members how much their family should expect to hear from them. For some trips, it may be very little. It is important to manage expectations in advance.
- Organize your Airport Handbook that you give to each team member at the airport. This should include:

- Team Roster
 - Information on Mission Partner
 - Flight Itinerary/ Trip Itinerary
 - Travel Insurance Information--**INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL**
 - Address Where You Will Be Staying (when filling out custom forms)
 - Trip Devotional
- Send a list of everything you need printed with specific instructions to the church. Email these to the Student Mission Director who will work with Custom staff to have everything printed for you – if you need assistance with this. Make sure you do this with enough time to make corrections if necessary - ideally 2 weeks prior to leaving.
 - Make sure you have your team cash from the Student Missions Director – this is spending cash that your team will use for entry visas, activities not included in the mission partner invoice and emergency spending. Note: you will need to include receipts and/or a detailed spending log for each amount spent including date, what was purchased and exchange rate.

9. Managing the Trip (0 Months Out: June)

Be prepared physically, mentally and spiritually to lead your students – **remember that team unity is a direct result of effective leadership.** Remember to take your lead team meetings away from the students, work through any issues and come back to the students with a united approach to leading each day.

- Arrive at the airport (or meeting location if not flying) in advance of your team members so you are there when they arrive – Remember that team members may be feeling anxious about traveling and leaving their friends and families. They need you to support them from the beginning. Be specific on the meeting location and time and leave time to get checked in without having to rush.
- Have a daily schedule that encourages team unity and spiritual growth – Pray and worship together in the morning and share your team devotional. Allow quiet time for journaling. At night, give your team members a chance to share with the team about their day. This may not always be positive - your team members may reveal struggles they are having which you need to be in tune to as well. One way to do this is to have each person share a “high” and a “low” from their day. Worship together and give people an opportunity to share their testimonies with the team at night if they are comfortable and end the night in prayer.
- Assign prayer partners daily. It is important that we are praying for each other and growing as a team while on the trip. You can assign this to a specific person to be in charge of each morning and be creative!

- Communicate and debrief with your host missionaries daily throughout the trip. Make sure they have a chance to tell you if they have any problems or concerns and work through these together as one leadership team.
- Make sure you're in tune to your team members needs throughout the trip – Some people will need extra grace and attention and that is okay. Make sure everyone is comfortable and that their basic needs are being met. For example, is there someone who is not eating much or drinking enough water or who does not seem to be connecting with the rest of the group?
- BE FLEXIBLE – Your plans may not always be God's plans. Be willing to change the course if necessary. Remind students often through encouragement to embrace the plan for the day, serve well with love and lots of smiles and to not complain on the mission field – they can bring any issues to team time or to the leadership team to discuss at a later time.
- Always be thinking about the next step – Anticipate what is happening next and stay in constant communication with your host missionaries about their plans to make sure you are on the same page. Remember that your team may not need to know everything that is happening until you have the final details worked out – There is no need to worry people about something that may not be going according to plan. Let your team know things as appropriate.
- Review the Re-Entry part of the mission manual towards the end of your trip with your team members to help them begin preparing to come home. Offer suggestions about how to communicate their experience effectively to their family and friends. Encourage them to write a statement about this in the journal on the way home.
- Encourage each team member to develop a 30 second and a 3-minute *specific* story about their trip as way to be prepared when someone asks them “How was your trip?” – This way our answer isn't just “It was great.”
- Where wifi is available, assign trip leaders to do updates on GroupMe or WhatsApp once each day (if possible or at least every other day). Reassure parents that things are great and give them a photo of something from the mission that day. This goes a long way to keep parents feeling a part of the trip and eases any nerves.
- Cell Phones – we allow phones on trips but when and how they are used is at the discretion of the team leaders. Phones should not be allowed to be a distraction and should be used to primarily take photos, listen to music, and to contact parents as needed.

10. Re-Entry and Post Trip (0-1 Month Back: June-July)

It is important to remember that one of the main purposes of a mission trip is to challenge and grow the student through the experience to come back and be ready to take on making a difference at home. With this in mind, the mission trip is not over when the plane lands or the van returns.

There are some important things that need to be managed:

- Encourage the team to complete the Trip Evaluation within 1 week of returning home. The sooner they do this, the better. This is great feedback for us to see where we can do a better job in putting together future trips.
- Plan a debriefing meeting for team members and their families. ***This date should be set from the beginning of the planning process.*** This should be an opportunity to get together to share stories and pictures, reminisce on the trip, and help people during the re-entry phase. We recommend doing this within the first few weeks of returning home.
- Make sure you share pictures and video footage from your trip.
- Make sure everything is completed for your team with Custom Missions such as your final budget, expense report and leadership evaluation. Return any unused funds. This should all be done with 2 weeks of the end of your trip.
- Continue to be there for team members following the trip. Email them and make contact with them to see how they are doing every so often for the month following the trip. Leave the GroupMe or WhatsApp group live and let them talk to each other and share things and plan things to do together.
- Communicate with the Student Mission Director if any issues arise that cause you concern. We want to help you process these and reach out and discuss with the student and parents. Let's make sure the trip experience launches them into their next.
- Continue to pray for your team. They are dangerous now that they are on fire for the Kingdom and a target of the enemy.
- Consider doing a local serve project together in the future such as Kidscoast on a First Wednesday or perhaps serving the Dream Center or local outreach organization that the Seacoast works with. Let them see that serving can be fun and impactful at home just like it was on the mission field.

We are so excited that you have decided to lead with us this mission season! We really do believe that this will be the **BEST YEAR YET** for student missions and you will play a huge role in that. Please let us know if you have any questions regarding the material in this leader packet. We are here to make your role as mission leader easier and impactful.

Thank you for all you have done and will continue to do to invest in and shape this generation of students and helping them see that they are world changers who are making a difference!