

International Citizen Service FAQs

The Scheme

Q. Why has the government created this scheme?

The Government is passionate about the potential of young people coming together to make a real difference to the world and help build a bigger and stronger global society.

ICS has been designed to channel the skills, enthusiasm and energy of young volunteers to make a meaningful contribution to a range of development projects and offer a life changing experience for young people from the UK to improve the lives of some of the world's poorest people.

By living and working in very poor communities, young volunteers will be able to learn firsthand about the challenges of global poverty and how it can be addressed, including how they can themselves have a role in this throughout their lives as active and well informed global citizens. They will also learn new skills, like leadership, communications skills and project planning, which will contribute to their own personal and social development.

ICS volunteers will work alongside local organisations and national volunteers who will be supported to continue their work after the UK volunteers have departed.

Q. Why are there different volunteer agencies involved in ICS? How were they chosen?

To get the ICS pilot up and running quickly and to learn lessons for future scale-up, the Department for International Development (DfID) asked a group of experienced and specialised agencies which seek to achieve development outcomes through volunteering to develop a proposal for delivery of the pilot stage. Their proposal was accepted by DFID.

VSO has been selected as the lead agency. It has a long history of sending young people into developing countries to implement poverty-reduction programmes. The other agencies are: Restless Development, Skillshare International, Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET), International Service, and Progressio.

Collectively, these agencies work with 3,000 international volunteers each year and have networks across over 60 countries. The agencies will use their existing partnerships and experience in developing countries to provide appropriate volunteering placements for ICS volunteers.

The Government will hold consultation events to share lessons of the pilot and will open a tender for scale-up, expected late 2011, which will be open to all.

Q. Why is it only open to 18 to 22 year olds?

The scheme is aimed at people at the start of their careers to enable them to gain experience by working on real development projects overseas.

The scheme is also open to 170 older volunteers (age 23 +) who will provide specific skills and support the younger volunteers.

Q. Why is it running for only one year?

The Government needs to first look at the cost effectiveness of the different types of volunteer placements before making a larger investment over a longer period of time. The ICS pilot scheme will test out different models of youth volunteering, which will be evaluated to assess how to scale them up and provide good value for money for any future programmes.

The pilot phase will send up to 1,080 young volunteers (age 18 – 22) to developing countries for three months to achieve development outcomes, as well as up to 170 older volunteers (age 23 +) who will provide specific skills and support the younger volunteers.

Q. Does it have anything to do with National Citizen Service?

National Citizen Service is also a scheme run by the government supporting young people. From 2013 NCS graduates will be 18 and therefore eligible for ICS. Young people who make an outstanding contribution through National Citizen Service will be in a strong position to progress to International Citizen Service. The two programmes are being run by different specialist organisations.

Programmes**Q. Why can't I apply for more than one ICS programme?**

All the programmes use the same selection criteria so there is no benefit in applying to more than one. You can only go overseas on one programme so it makes sense to apply to the programme you most want to participate in.

Q. How do I know which programme to choose?

There are various resources to help you make your decision. You should go to www.dfid.gov.uk/ics to find out what the different agencies are offering. You can also visit individual agency web pages to find out more information on each programme, and you can contact them to find out more. If you have further questions, email Enquiry@ics-uk.org.uk, or phone the ICS team on 0208 780 7400.

Q. How do you choose who can participate?

ICS is open to UK residents aged between 18 and 22 years old, and a select few 23 years and older for team leader roles.

ICS accepts people from all backgrounds and we actively support recruitment of a diverse range of young people to participate. No prior experience or qualifications are needed, but you will need to demonstrate motivation and commitment to be involved.

Volunteers will be selected against broad competencies and aptitudes such as the ability to work with others, flexibility and adaptability, and demonstration of positive, realistic commitment to the programme.

Q. Are the costs the same for all programmes?

Yes they are. The contribution payments have been set by the Government and are standard across all participating programmes. Go to www.dfid.gov.uk/ics or the Global Xchange pages to find out how much of a contribution you will need to make.

Q. Will any new programmes be available later?

The programme is running for one year as a pilot from March 2011 to August 2012. There won't be any additional programmes during this period, however dates and activities within the year may change. The aim is to extend the programme after the pilot, in which case there would be new programmes available once the full programme has been decided.

Q. What happens if I can't make any of the available dates?

You are best to find another volunteering alternative or come back and visit the DFID or agency web pages in the future to see if dates change or the programme continues beyond the pilot year.

Programme Costs

Q. Why do you have to pay to participate?

ICS will be largely funded by the Government but the younger volunteers (aged 18-22) who can afford to will be required to make a financial contribution depending on their income level. There is a great deal of investment that goes into ensuring ICS volunteers contribute positively in the communities in which they volunteer, through the design of real development projects. By asking young people who come from higher income families to contribute toward some of the costs, we can not only ensure volunteers are genuinely doing work that will help others but it also allows us to offer more places on the programme, including places for young people from lower income families who would otherwise not be able to afford to go. We will provide you with full support to fundraise toward your costs, which will also give you valuable experience of fundraising and the chance to develop your organisation and communication skills. Those without a mandatory contribution, will also be encouraged to fundraise.

There is a three-tier contribution system for ICS participants linked to household income which determines who will need to make a contribution. More details on contribution levels are on the website.

Q. How do I know what my household income is?

The best way is to think about how you are financially supported.

If you are dependent on parents/carers (i.e. you rely on their income to fully or partially support you) your household income is the **total** pre-tax household income for the last tax year – so it **includes** your parents' / carers' income as well as any income you have yourself.

If you are financially independent, your household income is your own pre-tax income for the last tax year.

You must provide information on your household income honestly in your application form for ICS and you may be required to provide evidence to back up the information you have provided before you go overseas.

Q. What happens if I can't fundraise the full amount of my contribution?

The volunteer agencies will do their best to support you in fundraising the full amount by giving you guidance and ideas. We find that most volunteers find it easier to fundraise than they thought it might be. However, contributions are mandatory for those that need to pay, so if you have not raised the full amount within two weeks of departing, you will need to make up the shortfall of funds to meet your full contribution amount.

Q. When do I have to make my payment? Will I be able to go overseas if I can't pay the full amount before I go?

You will need to make your payment two weeks before you go overseas, at the latest. The earlier you can make the payment, the earlier your place will be secured. Unfortunately, as the contribution amount you are allocated is mandatory and contributes to the cost of your placement, you will not be able to go overseas if you cannot make the payment by this time.