

Introducing VIDA

What is VIDA?

VIDA (Volunteering for International Development from Australia) is Australia's newest international volunteer program. VIDA places skilled Australian volunteers in developing countries in the Asia Pacific region. VIDA volunteers work with local counterparts to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development in the communities in which they work through skills exchange, institutional strengthening and capacity building.

VIDA is funded by the Australian Government's overseas aid agency, AusAID, as part of the Australian Volunteer Program. VIDA is managed by Austraining International in collaboration with CARE Australia and CECI/WUSC (Canadian international volunteer agency).

What kinds of assignments are available?

A range of assignments are available across sectors that include Education, Environment, Gender, Governance, Health, Infrastructure, Rural Development and Trades.

Where does VIDA send volunteers?

VIDA currently sends volunteers to the following countries in the Asia Pacific region:

- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- East Timor
- Fiji
- Indonesia
- Laos
- Nauru
- Philippines
- PNG
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Thailand
- Tonga
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu
- Vietnam

VIDA may expand operations in future years to countries including Burma, China, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

How long are VIDA volunteer assignments?

Assignments can be from 1 month to 3 years in length.

Short term assignments are 1-12 months in length.

Long term assignments are 18-36 months in length.

VIDA places 80% of volunteers in long term assignments and 20% in short term assignments.

Assignment length depends on the needs of the Host Organisation and is outlined in the assignment description when a volunteer assignment is advertised on the VIDA website.

Who can become a VIDA Volunteer?

Australian citizens and permanent residents aged 18+ are eligible to apply. There is no upper age limit.



Volunteer Assignments

VIDA sources volunteer positions from organisations in the Asia Pacific region. VIDA calls these volunteer positions 'Volunteer Assignments' and they are advertised on the VIDA website.

VIDA believes in responding to the needs of partner countries and ensures that no volunteer placement replaces local staff. VIDA also works in line with the Australian Government's overseas aid program priorities when sourcing volunteer assignments.

VIDA volunteer assignments have long term sustainable development goals. VIDA does not send volunteers in response to emergencies.

Host Organisations

VIDA places volunteers with organisations in the Asia Pacific region. VIDA calls these organisations 'Host Organisations' or 'HOs'.

Host Organisations (HOs) are government departments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), educational institutions and private companies who host a volunteer for the duration of an assignment.

Australian Partner Organisations

Australian Partner Organisations (APOs) are Australian government departments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), educational institutions and private companies who partner with a Host Organisation and a volunteer for the duration of an assignment.

In some cases, APOs may also be the Host Organisation if they have offices based in country. APOs work with the HO and the volunteer to help provide support in developing volunteer assignments, creating networks and supporting project outcomes.

Mobilisations

VIDA has two major mobilisations each year; one in March/April and one in September/October. Mobilisations are the periods of time when VIDA Volunteers depart Australia to go on assignment.

VIDA prides itself on being flexible in responding to the needs of both volunteers and Host Organisations. Assignment starting dates are negotiated between VIDA, the volunteer and the Host Organisation.

Australian Volunteer Program

VIDA is supported by the Australian Government's overseas aid agency AusAID as part of AusAID's Australian Volunteer Program (AVP). The program also includes Australian Business Volunteers and Australian Volunteers International.



Volunteer support

VIDA Volunteers will receive the following support:

- Pre-Departure Training
- Pre-departure medical examination and vaccinations
- Comprehensive insurance (travel/medical/professional)
- Travel to your host country and back to Australia
- In-country support from the In-Country Manager (ICM)

Allowances

- Living and Accommodation allowances
- Settlement allowance
- Resettlement allowance
- Assignment support allowance
- Language allowance

Partners and families

There are opportunities for couples and families who want to volunteer together.

If both you and your partner wish to volunteer together there are two options:

1. Find two advertised assignments in the same location for which you both want to apply.
2. Contact the VIDA team to inform us that you have both applied for assignments.

Or

1. Find an advertised assignment for which you want to apply.
2. Contact the VIDA team to inform us of your application and to notify us that you have a partner who would also like to volunteer.
3. VIDA will ask your partner to register online as an interested volunteer and to forward his/her skills, qualifications and work experience.
4. VIDA will attempt to source assignments for partners of successful applicants.

There may be limited support for dependants (partners and children) who accompany a volunteer on long term assignments (over 18 months). This support could be in the form of airfares, medical expenses, and a small living allowance as approved on a case by case basis.

Volunteer contribution

VIDA Volunteers are responsible for obtaining and maintaining an appropriate visa for the duration of their assignment (including fees) and paying for any excess baggage fees.



Volunteer allowances

VIDA Volunteer allowances are structured to take into account the differing costs in each country and will allow volunteers to have a moderately comfortable lifestyle while on assignment. The Volunteer allowance is divided into two parts - an Accommodation Allowance and a Living Allowance.

Accommodation Allowance

The Accommodation Allowance is based on the average cost of safe, suitable and affordable accommodation in each country. If a Host Organisation supplies appropriate accommodation than the volunteer will not receive the Accommodation Allowance. If the accommodation supplied by the Host Organisation is not appropriate the volunteer will receive the Accommodation Allowance and the Austraining Country Manager will assist them in finding appropriate accommodation.

Living Allowance

The Living Allowance is based on the average cost of living for a volunteer in each country. The Living Allowance is calculated by taking into account the costs of a number of factors including food, daily travel to and from an assignment placement, communication and other incidental costs.

The cost of living varies greatly across (and in some cases within) the countries where VIDA operates. In some countries housing may be cheap while some fresh fruit and vegetables may be more expensive than you are used to in Australia - this applies particularly to the Pacific. The VIDA allowances are structured to take these differences into account.



Priority Sectors

VIDA is guided by AusAID priorities in sourcing volunteer assignments. Below are some examples of the kinds of assignment roles sourced in different sectors.

Education

- Curriculum Development
- Research (Science)

Environment

- Environmental Management
- Environmental Engineering
- Environment related Project Work

Gender

- Gender/social research
- Education

Governance

- Accountancy
- Business Management
- Law/Legal and Regulatory Framework
- Public Administration
- Small Business Development
- Communications (including Media, Journalism, Library/Information Management, Marketing, Tourism)
- Community Development (including Youth Development Work, Social Work, Arts/Community Theatre)
- Project Management (Project Officers/Assistants, with NGOs)

Health

- Nursing
- Occupational Therapy
- Community Health Work
- Health related Project Work

Infrastructure

- Engineering (Civil/Mechanical)
- Information Technology
- Urban Planning
- Architecture

Rural Development

- Agriculture
- Marine Science
- Veterinary Science
- Natural Resource Management
- Forestry

Trades

- Mechanics
- Carpentry
- Building

Application Process

Register as a volunteer

You must register as a volunteer in order to be able to apply for VIDA assignments. Registering as a volunteer also gives you the option of receiving emails about information sessions, assignments and application due dates. Registering as a volunteer does not constitute an application to the VIDA program.

1. Go to www.vidavolunteers.com.au
2. Click on 'Register to volunteer' and complete details including CV builder (you will receive a username and password).

Apply to become a VIDA Volunteer

VIDA has an online application process. There are two ways to apply to VIDA:

1. As a general applicant
2. As a nominated candidate

General applicants

General applicants apply online for specific assignments just like they would apply for a job.

VIDA sources volunteer assignments from Host Organisations in partner countries and Australian Partner Organisations in a wide range of sectors. VIDA advertises these assignments twice a year in June/July and November/December online at www.vidavolunteers.com.au.

Nominated candidates

Nominated candidates work together with a Host Organisation and/or Australian Partner Organisation to develop an assignment in the country of their choice that meets the needs of the Host Organisation and matches their skills and experience. Nominated candidate assignments are also published online but only the nominated candidate can apply for their assignment.

Nominated candidates go through the same selection process as general applicants and must apply online for their assignment.

If you are interested in creating a nominated candidate assignment please contact VIDA on info@vidavolunteers.com.au or freecall (in Australia) 1800 995 536

How can you apply?

1. Log in to the website
2. Have a look at assignments advertised online (Volunteer Assignments)
3. Apply online for the specific assignment of your choice (up to 3 assignments) - the apply button is at the bottom of each assignment description
4. Post in a completed Criminal History Form (available via a link from the Getting Serious section of the website) and a photocopy of your Australia passport or permanent residency visa

*VIDA has an online application process. If you are unable to access the internet please call Daryl McMahon, Community Engagement and Marketing Coordinator, on 1800 995 536 (Freecall in Australia) or +61 8 8364 8500.

Selection Process

Successful volunteers will meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Necessary technical qualifications and skills to fulfil the objectives of the assignment
- ✓ Cultural awareness and sensitivity to the needs of others
- ✓ An understanding of the challenges of working in a diverse cross-cultural environment
- ✓ Demonstrated ability to work cross-culturally
- ✓ Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- ✓ Adaptability and flexibility to deal with challenging situations that arise
- ✓ A strong commitment to and understanding of capacity building and sustainable development
- ✓ A willingness to exchange knowledge and develop/conduct activities to build capacity of individuals and organisations

The Selection Process

VIDA has a staged selection process. The selection process is based on merit and VIDA works within the parameters of the Australian Equal Opportunities Act. At any stage of the selection process VIDA reserves the right to withdraw the volunteer assignment.

Stage 1:	Applicant shortlist
Stage 2:	Referee Check
Stage 3*:	Telephone Interview
Stage 4:	APO/HO approval
Stage 5:	Pre-Departure Training Requirements
Stage 6:	Criminal History Check
Stage 7:	Medical
Stage 8:	Visa

Once the first 4 stages have been completed VIDA will send out a first round of offers (a 'Yes Pack'). If the Ranked 1 Candidate turns down an offered assignment, that assignment may then be offered to the Ranked 2 Candidate in a second round of offers.

Stages 5-8 must be completed prior to mobilisation.

*Not all candidates will be interviewed by VIDA. In some cases the Host Organisation or Australian Partner Organisation may also request to interview the candidates before final approval is given.

Pre-Departure Training

Pre-Departure Training includes briefings on insurance, medical information, security and emergency, media and community engagement and cross cultural training.

Pre-Departure Training (PDT) is a four day workshop held twice a year in Adelaide in line with the two VIDA mobilisations (March/April and September/October). All volunteers are to complete Pre-Departure Training. The costs of attending PDT (airfares, accommodation and meals) are covered by VIDA.

In Country

In Country Support

VIDA Volunteers are supported in country by an In-Country Manager (ICM). The ICM lives in that country, often in the capital city, and is the first line of support for volunteers. Each country has its own ICM and the VIDA program employs a combination of indigenous and expatriate staff as ICMs.

When you arrive in country the ICM will take you through an Orientation Program including a security briefing, banking, shopping and transport options.

The ICM also helps volunteers:

- find safe, affordable and appropriate accommodation
- source appropriate language training (as a guideline VIDA will support up to 25 hours for short term and 50 hours for long term assignments)

If any issues arise while a volunteer is on assignment (both personal and professional), the ICM is their first point of contact.

Holidays and Travel

VIDA Volunteers earn one week of paid leave for every three months of service. Volunteers must negotiate with their Host Organisation when arranging leave time.

VIDA Volunteers are encouraged to travel within their Host Country; however any extra costs incurred above and beyond the Living Allowance are the responsibility of the individual. Volunteers may choose to return to Australia or travel internationally during their volunteer assignment and these costs are also the responsibility of the individual.

When travelling, VIDA Volunteers must abide by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade travel advisories. These can be found at www.smarttraveller.gov.au.

Security and Emergencies

VIDA's first priority is the safety and security of VIDA Volunteers. VIDA constantly monitors the security situation in all the countries in which it operates.

In a situation where the safety and security of a VIDA Volunteer cannot be assured, VIDA will evacuate the volunteer. Options for evacuated volunteers depend on the nature of the emergency but can include being remobilised once the situation stabilises, mobilisation to similar assignments in different areas or countries or termination of the volunteer assignment.

VIDA operates in line with recommendations from the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in determining the safety and security of VIDA Volunteers.