

Panama Jobs Expertini®

Community Environmental Conservation Promoter

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Company: Peace Corps

Location: Panama

Category: other-general

Project Description

Panama is commonly referred to as “puente del mundo, corazón del universo” (bridge of the world, heart of the universe), and is a land of mixed realities. Its strategic geographic location influenced the construction of the canal, which accelerated immigration and contributed to Panama’s diverse population. Panama is an international logistics, banking, and tourism hub. For this and other reasons, the isthmus holds distinct social and economic realities which impact structural inequalities.

Panama is connected to worldwide efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change effects by promoting sustainable development throughout the communities where Volunteers are invited to serve. In the Community Environmental Conservation (CEC) program, Volunteers collaborate with community members to assess environmental needs, promote environmental conservation practices, and support youth to develop life skills including self-awareness, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, and empathy. Volunteers also support environmental activities in the local school(s), collaborating with teachers and students to co-plan and co-facilitate environmental themes, as well as addressing the needs identified by community members through hands-on activities outside of the classroom.

Volunteers serve in communities located in areas of the country with high environmental conservation priorities related to protected areas, buffer zones, and important river

watersheds, including the Panama Canal watershed. Volunteers collaborate with the community to strengthen environmental and youth groups (youth and adult) with a focus on their environmental needs.

Work partners and Volunteers co-develop identified opportunities for local youth in leadership and life skills, promote positive environmental stewardship, and encourage civic participation. Youth in leadership and life skills are the foundation of achieving environmental stewardship. Additionally, Volunteers support community-led after-school programs and youth in various activities, including the promotion of youth clubs, facilitation of environmental hands-on activities, and community environmental events.

Work partners and Volunteers co-develop environmental activities such as organic gardening, nursery/reforestation, and waste management, and promote the use of appropriate technologies like eco-stoves and renewable energy (e.g., solar panels). In collaboration with strategic partners, Volunteers support the development of sustainable living strategies and techniques that promote conservation of the local ecosystem and natural resources.

During service, Peace Corps Panama provides learning experiences to strengthen Volunteers' general and technical competencies, such as: community conservation techniques, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and positive youth development. Volunteers are expected to self-assess and self-evaluate the development of these competencies. This will positively impact the Volunteer's experience and service to the community.

The most important resource Volunteers will need to be successful is the ability to communicate ideas clearly and to develop strong interpersonal relationships. Creativity in using locally available resources will also be important. Volunteers must be prepared to be proactive, self-driven, and to motivate others.

Climate Change Activities

As the impacts of climate change become ever more evident, the social, economic, and environmental conditions faced by local communities will become increasingly problematic, particularly for vulnerable households in low-lying areas and historically marginalized communities. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will be trained to use a participatory

approach and tools to identify locally determined priorities and conditions, including those related to the impacts of climate change. The types of interventions undertaken will be guided by national and local priorities for climate change adaptation as identified in your country's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and those environment-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 6, 12, 13, 14 & 15) that have been identified for local action. As an Environment Volunteer, you will be trained to use this knowledge to work with government, local, and community stakeholders to mitigate some of the adverse impacts of climate change while promoting resiliency, and engaging in projects and activities that:

- strengthen the ability of vulnerable households and communities to respond to extreme weather events such as cyclones, hurricanes, and typhoons;
- enhance local and community capacities for effective implementation of NAP and SDG priorities;
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions through promoting the expansion of renewable energy technologies;
- support the development of sustainable mechanisms that incorporate the “3 Rs” (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) of effective solid waste management practices; and
- work with Volunteers in other sectors to integrate climate change adaptation practices into their activities (e.g., work with Health Volunteers to reduce respiratory health issues of women and girls through use of improved cook stoves; work with Education Volunteers to mitigate the impact of heat waves on local teaching or establishing tree nurseries and planting trees to reduce the time that students use in collecting firewood).

COVID-19 Volunteer Activities

As a Volunteer, you will be trained in how to best protect yourself from COVID-19 exposure and understand the impact of and steps to reduce stigma related to COVID-19. You may also have the opportunity to engage with your community on implementing or enhancing COVID-19 mitigation activities, such as COVID-19 prevention and risk reduction strategies including social distancing, hand washing, mask wearing, addressing myths and misconceptions related to these practices, and vaccine hesitancy. Activities will be tailored to address the COVID-19 circumstances in the communities where you will serve.

Required Skills

Qualified candidates will have an expressed interest in promoting environmental awareness in schools and communities, and one or more of the following criteria:

- Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science degree in any field

OR

- 5 years' professional work experience

Desired Skills

Competitive candidates will have one or more of the following criteria:

- Bachelor of Science/associate degree in forestry, Watershed Management, Natural Resources, Environmental Science, Ecology, or other related fields

- 3 months experience working in environmental science, environmental education, or related fields.

- Experience leading non-formal environmental education activities, co-planning/co-teaching with teachers/ school personnel, working with youth groups, organizing, or initiating environmental awareness activities (e.g., Reduce, Reuse, Recycle campaigns)

- Experience working in one or more of the following: climate change/renewable energy, biology, marine biology, natural resources management, reforestation, organic gardening, waste management, agro-ecology.

- Experience teaching or facilitating activities outside of a school or classroom setting (camp, club, etc.)

- Experience with public speaking or facilitating classes/workshops/presentations

Required Language Skills

Candidates must meet one or more of the language requirements below in order to be considered for this position.

A. Completed 4 years of high school Spanish coursework within the past 8 years

B. Completed minimum 2 semesters of Spanish college level coursework within the past 6 years

C. Native/fluent speaker of Spanish

Candidates who do not meet the language proficiency levels above can take the language placement exams to demonstrate their level of proficiency. Competitive applicants typically attain a score of 50 on the Spanish College Level Examination Program CLEP exam or a score of Novice High on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL OPI).

Pre-Service Training (PST) will have an emphasis on language acquisition through structured and unstructured language-building learning experiences, while also focusing on strengthening intercultural competence. These critical skills will help create a foundation to successfully serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Panama. The technical knowledge and skills that Trainees arrive with and/or gain during training will not be effective if Trainees do not have the necessary communication and intercultural skills. Trainees are assigned to a Language and Culture Facilitator (LCF) who will facilitate the resources and opportunities needed to build language competence.

Trainees receive three Language Proficiency Interviews (LPI) during PST. By the final LPI Trainees are required to achieve a Mid-Intermediate level of Spanish as outlined by ACTFL Guidelines to qualify for service. Intermediate-mid level speakers are expected to be able to start, sustain, and close simple conversations at the sentence level and connect them. Additionally, they can ask and answer simple questions. LCFs support Trainees to achieve the required level as Trainees adapt to a new method of language learning. They will persistently challenge Trainees to speak out loud, make mistakes, and converse and build relationships with native speakers, such as members of your host training community. LCFs are also an important cultural informant and guide as Trainees adapt to the local culture.

Living Conditions

Housing

Conservation Volunteers are placed in non-indigenous communities. Houses in Panama vary among communities and may include simple concrete block walls and cement floors; stilted wood houses; adobe structures with mud floors; and/or furnished apartments.

Communities generally have basic utilities and infrastructure, including cell phone signal, treatable water, and sometimes electricity. The reliability of these services varies from community to community; and may be impacted by seasonal changes. All Volunteers receive training on how to treat their drinking water should they need to. Solar panels and other means to charge or run electronics can be acquired in Panama. Peace Corps Panama assesses each

community before selection to ensure that basic health and safety criteria are met.

Volunteers live with a host family during pre-service training and may live with a host family during their first three months of service. After three months, Volunteers may opt to live in pre-approved local housing that meets Peace Corps Panama's housing criteria.

Food and Diet

The Panamanian diet varies according to the region and the ethnic makeup of the population. Most often the diet consists of rice, beans, bananas or plantains, yucca (cassava), and corn. Rice and beans (kidney beans, lentils, and pigeon peas) is a staple dish. Corn is commonly served in a variety of ways, including ground, boiled, fried or even in stews. Sancocho is a traditional soup prepared with root vegetables and chicken. Most rural areas have many fruits available in certain seasons, including mangos, papayas, pineapples, avocados, oranges, and guanábanas (soursop). The availability of garden vegetables, such as tomatoes, sweet peppers, and cucumbers, varies according to the region and the season. The most common meats are chicken, pork, and beef, which are often deep-fried or stewed. Fish is available sporadically in coastal regions and riverside communities.

Panamanians frequently follow diets based on their region, culture, and seasonally available produce. Depending on the Volunteer's diet, they may be inclined to start a garden, plan for trips to larger cities to acquire products at supermarkets or adjust to locally available options. Larger towns and cities have at least one familiar chain restaurant.

Computer, Phone, and Internet Access

Host communities generally have reliable cell phone service, though it might be a 10-minute walk to reach. Volunteers assigned to communities with poor communication connectivity will be assigned satellite phones for emergency purposes. The availability of internet access (Wi-Fi) will vary in speed and reliability depending on the geographic location of the community. Volunteers may access Wi-Fi through the local public school, visit a community internet center, or visit a private internet café in a larger town. In Panama City, Volunteers have access to Wi-Fi, desktop computers and printers at the Peace Corps Panama office. Peace Corps Panama does not provide Volunteers with a cell phone or data plan but does provide all Volunteers with a SIM card on arrival. Many cheap data plans are available in Panama. Many Volunteers bring an unlocked cell phone from the United States or buy one in

country. Should Volunteers choose to bring electronics, it is the Volunteers responsibility to maintain and insure them. Be aware that service providers in Panama do not fully support phones with eSIMs or will charge extra, which will be at the Volunteers expense. Also, currently serving Volunteers have reported that newer iPhone models have difficulties connecting to local phone data signals, causing them to purchase another phone model.

Serving in Panama

Learn more about the : Get detailed information on culture, communications, housing, health, and safety -- including health and crime statistics -- in order to make a well-informed decision about serving.

Couples Information

Peace Corps Panama cannot accommodate cross-sector couples. Therefore, your partner must apply and qualify for the following positions: Community Environmental Conservation Promoter.

During Pre-Service Training, couples live in the same home and are requested to speak Spanish with each other and the host family to improve language learning. During their service, they will live together, sometimes for three months with a host family and then on their own, or directly into private accommodations. Couples will be placed in medium to large communities, to ensure sufficient work is available for both Volunteers.

The Peace Corps works to foster safe and productive assignments for same-sex couples, and same-sex couples are not placed in countries where homosexual acts are criminalized. Because of this, same-sex couple placements are more limited than heterosexual couple placements. During the application process recruiters and placement officers work closely with same-sex couple applicants to understand current placement opportunities. For more information please visit: <https://www.peacecorps.gov/faqs/lgbtq/>.

Medical Considerations

Before you apply, please review Medical Information for Applicants to learn about the medical clearance process.

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