

Considerations when Cancelling or Rescheduling a Short-Term Mission Team

It has been said by many for weeks how this time influenced by COVID-19 has brought about many changes in ministry. Those changes also influence many of our mission efforts. Many churches have made significant changes in short term mission strategies and plans as we all await developments and consequences concerning this pandemic. Many of us have had no option but to cancel or reschedule our short-term teams and manage all of the logistics around those changes. And while we all know what it's like to cancel a short term trip from time to time, this is a unique situation clearing out wide swaths of our schedule for an unknown amount of time. We believe in a Sovereign God and trust all of this has a purpose. As leaders we seek ways to navigate this time and continuing leading churches to be engaged in missions.

Here are a few things this information may be helpful with:

- Communication suggestions
- Checklists to help you in making decisions and making changes
- Financial considerations

Communication

- Openness - Be as transparent as possible. Seek not to hold the cards of information close to yourself. Instead, unless it is a security issue, share what you know openly and quickly. Seek to communicate what you know, what you're hearing from partners, your concerns, alternate plans for the future, etc.
- Communicate - if you think you are way over-communicating then you might be getting close to where you should be. Consider weekly communication with the team about the current status, how things are looking for future plans, how your partners are doing, how they can stay engaged, and anything else that could help them.
- Encourage - Encourage your team and remind them who is in control and that none of this surprises him.
- Over-communicating is key. Would you rather someone say, "Why didn't you tell me?", or "Ok, I have enough information?"
- What's next - Let them know how you will be monitoring the situation, who you are listening to and how you are going to communicate moving forward. Should they be looking for emails, phone calls, updates from team leaders, social, website? Be clear and follow through on those. If it changes, let them know!
- Provide assurance - While you may have gone through this process many times, this might be a team member's first time a trip was cancelled. Try to put yourself in their shoes and address uncertainty.

To Cancel or Reschedule a Short Term Journey?

The decision to cancel or reschedule short term work for many of us was made with the cancellation of international flights and other quarantines. We are left to decide whether to simply cancel the journey all together or reschedule it for a later date. Here are some considerations for cancelling vs rescheduling.

To Cancel?	To Reschedule?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When it's time specific• When the team you're visiting isn't on the field any longer• When there are fixed variables• Project was time sensitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Because of government travel restrictions• Because it's the wise thing to do• When you have a flexible team, team leaders, field host, and logistics

Questions you might ask

Is it possible to reschedule?

Do you want to reschedule?

Would participants be able to reschedule?

Can we accomplish the same goal if we reschedule?

What are our absolutes for rescheduling (cost, time, field partner recommendations)?

Checklist for Cancelling or Rescheduling a Trip

Use this checklist to help you map out the logistics you have for cancelling or rescheduling a trip.

- Flights
- Hotel/Lodging
- Field Transportation
- Insurance
- Visa dates, passports, documents
- Building a Financial Plan
- Reallocating Funds
- Ministry planning
- Redetermining the team members
- Determine a general timeframe for communication... what information you will need to decide on a timeframe.

Continued contact with your international partner

I can tell you from many years of experience on the field, it is discouraging for field personnel when events like these take place. Many plans and much energy has been invested and anticipation was high for seeing what the Lord would do through the work you were going to do together. As we shift and adjust our plans, refocusing on another opportunity, it is **SUPER EASY** to drop out of contact with the overseas partner you were going to work with. **PLEASE** do not! Do whatever you can to maintain contact with the missionary you were planning to work with and encourage them by continuing to pray for/with them and consider future possibilities. Assure them of your continued interest, even though you may not be able to come in 2020.

Clarity regarding fundraising (Involve your Accounting Team and Financial Leaders)

If members of the team have received donations to help them with this journey, here are some questions and considerations:

- What should we do with the funds that were already provided?
- Are there any financial restrictions and/or considerations we should make when deciding to cancel or postpone a trip?
- Identify which funds or trips that already have expenses. Decide what do to in order to recover or eat that cost (e.g. travel costs, etc.)
- Tax implications and wording you can use when people ask for a refund.
- Clearly communicate what will happen with any funds that have been raised (based on your conversations with accounting and leadership).

Repurposing a short-term team to another ministry

Are there needs closer to home that may be possible at this time, where COVID 19 considerations are not as much a factor? You may need to consider transitioning teams and resources to meet needs in the US, where the questions about travel and logistics may be more possible in the coming months.

What was the original purpose and make-up of the team? The heart of what they were going to do in the place where you cannot travel at this time may be something they can do in the US or in your state.

Mississippi Missions Mobilization has a number of opportunities to share with churches for consideration. These opportunities have come from states or partners which Mobilization and MS churches have worked with.

For more information about 2020 mission opportunities in the US, go to this link for downloads:

[2020 US Opportunities](#)

Or write to me at mray@mbcb.org