



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

GLOBAL HEALTH
FELLOWS II

PURSUING OVERSEAS OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS IN GLOBAL HEALTH

BACKGROUND

The [Global Health Fellows Program \(GHFP\) II](#) is the [United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#) Global Health (GH) Bureau's premier Fellowship program that identifies diverse, technically excellent professionals at all levels to achieve the Agency's health priorities. GHFP-II supports USAID's thought-leadership in developing a diverse next generation of GH professionals who mirror the American people. Through multiple iterations of this program, GHFP-II has accumulated decades of experience in international development and supported hundreds of Fellows and Interns to enhance the Agency's ability to manage complex GH challenges. This expertise provides GHFP-II the ability to offer guidance on the competencies and experiences essential to GH career development.

This guide is a resource for future global health leaders to increase access to overseas opportunities needed for GH career success. Particular attention is paid to how those underrepresented in the field can obtain global experiences by addressing the main concerns (family, funding, and pre-departure preparation) often faced by minorities seeking overseas opportunities.

- First, the importance of international experience for a successful GH career is explained.
- Next, the barriers faced by those underrepresented in GH when attempting to pursue overseas exposure are examined.
- Finally, solutions and additional resources to tackle these challenges are offered.



Photo: GlobeMed

***“When it comes to global health,
there is no ‘them’ . . . only ‘us’”***

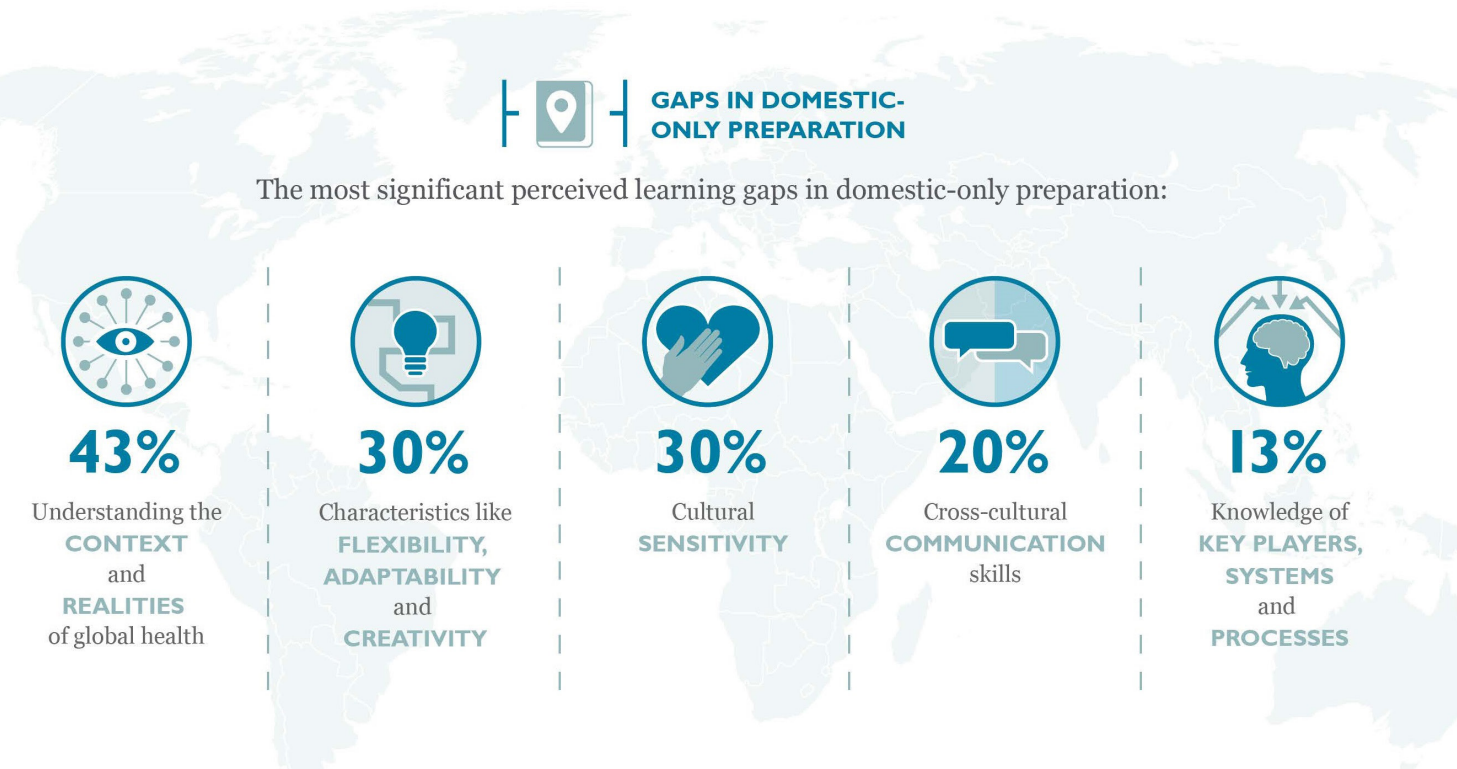
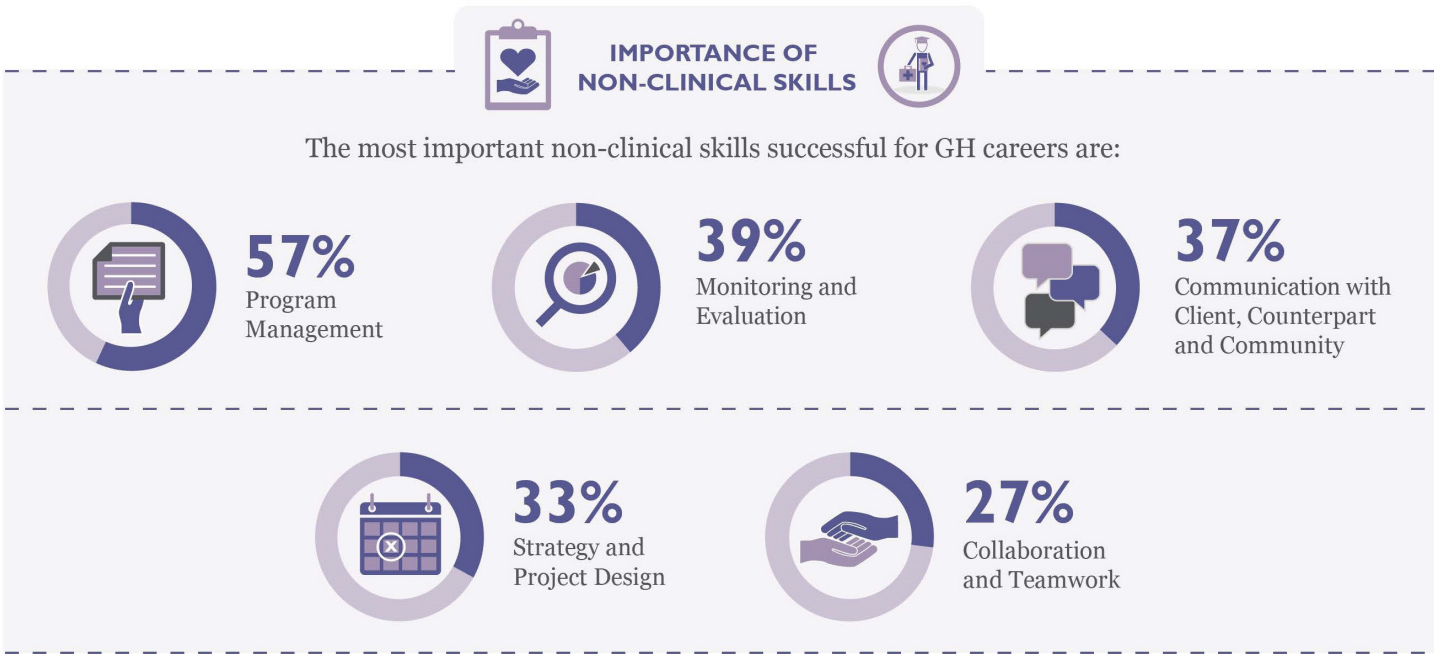
– Global Health Council



The Global Health Fellows Program II is implemented for USAID by the Public Health Institute and its partners Global Health Corps, GlobeMed, Management Systems International, and PYXERA Global.

KEY COMPETENCIES & THE IMPORTANCE OF OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE FOR GLOBAL HEALTH CAREERS

In a [2015 survey](#) of nearly 50 global health project directors, key competencies and experiences were identified for success in GH careers. In particular, those surveyed weighed in on the most valuable non-clinical skills for global health, as well as the gaps in preparation among those lacking overseas experience.



In addition to collecting this information on key skills, the survey asked about particular hiring practices of the participating GH directors, yielding the following results:¹



But the evidence for the value of international experience does not end there. Several other sources agree on the importance of overseas work for those interested in entering the field of global health:

- Greg Martin, MD/MPH/MBA, Editor-in-Chief of the academic journal *Globalization & Health* and creator of a [YouTube series](#) to support young GH professionals says “another question I get asked a lot is ‘Do I need to have work experience in a developing country context?’, and the answer to that really is yes... by and large you are never really going to get taken seriously by global health organizations unless you have some experience and time on the ground in a developing country context”.²
- [Explorehealthcareers.org](#) makes a specific note about overseas work under their “academic requirements” tab about careers in global health: “The field of global health is extremely competitive, and hiring preference often is given to candidates with field experience overseas. We encourage you to volunteer or find internships in a developing country, either before beginning a master’s in public health (MPH) program or as a field placement while in school.”³
- [Publichealth.org](#), a website committed to showing young public health professionals various career opportunities makes a similar conclusion on the importance of international experience early in a GH career. However, they add that all forms of experience (paid and volunteer) are valued and should be considered given the highly competitive nature of even entry-level GH field work.
- [Careersinpublichealth.net](#), also stresses the importance of international experiences as a key to “get your foot in the door in global public health”.⁴



In short, overseas experience of some kind (paid, volunteer, academic, etc.) is a prerequisite for a successful career in global health and helps GH professionals develop the key competencies required to adapt to the field’s changing demands. While skills gained from domestic work can be valuable and transferable to a global context, domestic involvement cannot replace the necessity of international work in the competitive field of GH.

¹ Global Health Fellows Program II. “Global Health Employer Survey Results.” May 2015. <<https://ghcompetencies.forumbee.com/t/h4xqd9/global-health-competencies>>.
² Greg Martin. Global Health with Greg Martin. “Finding a job in Global Health.” 5 June 2013. <<https://youtu.be/Q5eGIOJhhBA?t=11m7s>>.
³ ExploreHealthCareers.org. “Global Health.” <http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/Career/51/Global_Health#Tab=Requirements>.
⁴ Kate Swartz. Careersinpublichealth.net. “Top 7 Ways to Get Your Foot in the Door in Global Public Health.” <<http://www.careersinpublichealth.net/resources/top-7-ways-get-your-foot-door-global-public-health>>.

CHALLENGES FACED BY UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

In the United States today, minorities make up about 40% of the population.^{5,6} However, the Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce found minorities comprised less than 10% of health professionals in 2004,⁷ a number that *The Atlantic* now projects to be around 25%.⁸ Although this shows considerable progress, there is still a large gap in representation between the U.S. population and its health workers. Research has shown time and again that a diverse health workforce is the best way to meet a population's needs.⁹ In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau projects minorities to surpass 56% of the country's population by 2060,¹⁰ making the need for a health workforce that reflects the American people even greater.



USAID's Bureau for Global Health (USAID/GH) has found diversity is crucial because it creates a workforce that is adaptable, resilient, culturally competent, and better able to respond to the complex and changing needs in GH. As such USAID/GH, through its Global Health Fellows Program II, is committed to supporting diverse students to strengthen the future GH workforce.¹¹

To identify the current barriers faced by minorities entering global health, the Consortium of Universities for Global Health and the Public Health Institute, GHFP-II's parent organization, collaborated to form the Global Health Engagement Initiative (GHEI). Through surveys of individual GH students and professionals, as well as academic institutions and the general GH landscape, GHEI found the following to be the top obstacles for underrepresented students entering GH:

- Lack of financial support to travel
- Lack of international exposure
- Lack of access to jobs
- Lack of financial support in an academic program
- Lack of mentorship

The first two of these points are especially important for minority students, who often struggle to find funding for and exposure to overseas opportunities. Without international work experience and other resources typically available to those well-represented in GH, minority students then encounter the third issue in GHEI's list: difficulties finding employment.¹²

5 United States Census Bureau. "QuickFacts." 2015. <<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>>.

6 The U.S. Census Bureau defines minorities as the following racial categories: Black, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, Other, and Two or More races. Hispanic, or Latino, is also a minority but defined as an ethnicity not race.

7 The Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce. "Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Professions." 2004. <<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/media-relations/SullivanReport.pdf>>.

8 The Atlantic. "The Least Diverse Jobs in America." 29 June 2015. <<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/06/diversity-jobs-professions-america/396632/>>.

9 United States Department of Health and Human Services. "The Rationale for Diversity in the Health Professions: A Review of the Evidence." October 2006. <<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/reports/diversityreviewevidence.pdf>>.

10 United States Department of Commerce. "Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060." March 2015. <<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p25-1143.pdf>>.

11 Global Health Fellows Program II. "Diversity Initiative." <<https://www.ghfp.net/diversity>>.

12 Consortium of Universities for Global Health and Public Health Institute. "The Global Health Engagement Initiative." February 2015.

When looking directly at the composition of students participating in overseas opportunities, the diversity gap is again glaring. A recent report from the Institute of International Education (IIE) found that Black and Hispanic students make up only 5% and 8% of study abroad participants, respectively, although each group accounts for 15% of the overall U.S. college population.¹³ A USA Today article reporting on the IIE findings listed lack of funding, family support and exposure to study abroad as the key obstacles preventing minority students from study abroad participation.¹⁴ These same issues affect underrepresented students in overseas experiences of all types (paid, volunteer, and academic). Combining this knowledge with the importance of diversity in the future GH workforce, GHFP-II aims to address three core dilemmas for students pursuing global opportunities: **F**amily concerns, **F**ear of travel and the unknown, and **F**unding – or simply, the **3 F's**.

RESOURCES FOR NON-U.S. CITIZENS

Although GHFP-II Fellowship and Internship positions require U.S. citizenship or U.S. permanent residency, many other opportunities exist for non-U.S. citizens:

- Acumen
- Atlas Corps
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Global Health Corps

Resources for undocumented U.S. residents:

- My (Un)Documented Life
- United We Dream



FAMILY



FEAR



FUNDING



Photo: GlobeMed

¹³ Institute of International Education. "Open Doors 2015: Report on International Educational Exchange." 16 November 2015. <<http://www.iie.org/~media/Files/Corporate/Open-Doors/Open-Doors-Presentation-2015.pdf>>.

¹⁴ Elise Schmelzer. USA Today. "Why are all of the kids on my study abroad trip white?" 11 March 2015. <<http://college.usatoday.com/2015/03/11/why-are-all-of-the-kids-on-my-study-abroad-trip-white/>>.

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OVERCOMING THE THREE F'S: FAMILY, FEAR, FUNDING



FAMILY CONCERNS

Framing conversations with family and friends about the need for overseas work can be difficult, especially for those underrepresented in global health. A recent exploration of diversity among study abroad programs identified some of the reasons why families of minorities struggle to accept their children going overseas. The first issue among such families was a lack of familiarity with overseas programs and related fear for children traveling into the unknown. Especially for first-generation college students, even the prospect of attending university away from home can frighten their families. This issue can be mitigated with an understanding of the security, logistics and preparation for overseas work, addressed in the next section: “Fear of travel and the unknown”.

The second issue was a lack of understanding of the need for overseas experiences. Often, immigrant families of students have worked hard to come to the United States, integrate themselves into American culture and cope with distancing from their native homes. Trying to understand why their children would then want to leave this “land of opportunity” can be difficult. Although this particular reason for family confusion is not relevant to all budding GH professionals, anyone aiming to go overseas must master the process of framing conversations about the need for overseas work for a successful career in GH. To achieve this, take the following reflective steps:

1. Understand your own motivations for working overseas. Ask yourself:
 - Why am I interested in an overseas opportunity?
 - What do I hope to gain and what do I hope to contribute?
 - How will this experience help me achieve or clarify my long-term career goals?
2. Communicate your goals and career framework to family and friends.
 - Focus on the same facts presented at the start of this guide—the abundance of sources pointing to the need for early overseas experience for a successful GH career.
3. Accept feedback and concerns.
 - Family and friends can bring up legitimate concerns about your trip overseas. Take time to think about these and find ways to address them.



PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT

*“In 2015, I had the opportunity to collect and analyze data for the mobile health app Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action, or ‘MAMA’ for the Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute in Johannesburg, South Africa. It was my first time putting the public health theories I had learned in grad school into practice; and learning how to react when reality didn’t always follow theoretical protocol. **The importance of field experience cannot be overstated.** Whether practicing or simply observing in the field, global experience offers perspectives that lend to expectations more rooted in reality, thus, making for more effective partnerships and collaborations.”*

– Iman Barre, 2016 GHFP-II Intern



FEAR OF TRAVEL AND THE UNKNOWN

Another common concern for participants of overseas experiences (and their families and friends) is fear of travel and the unknown. This can be especially daunting for those who lack previous international exposure. To set your mind at ease and reassure friends and family, make sure to thoroughly address the risk, safety and pre-departure planning essentials below.

THE BASICS

- Learn about where you are going
 - It is important to understand the current and historical context in which your overseas experience will take place. This includes information on the country's language and culture, government and politics, economy, and social services like health and education.
 - The [British Broadcasting Corporation \(BBC\)](#) and the [U.S. Department of State](#) have great resources on general country information, but make sure to research the specific region in which you will be residing as well.
 - Regardless of your citizenship, be prepared to follow local laws and regulations.
- Learn about your specific overseas experience
 - Collect as much information as possible from your project's leaders and current and former participants. In particular, you should be able to answer the following questions:
 - Where will I be living and working?
 - What will I be doing?
 - What specific social customs or political issues should I be aware of?
 - Who will be supporting me?
 - When will my work begin and end?
 - How will I prepare for my journey and arrange any travel?
 - How will I be compensated?
- Passports and visas
 - The process for obtaining (or renewing) a U.S. passport is listed on the State Department's Travel website [here](#). Typically, your passport should be valid for at least 6 months beyond your anticipated return date and contain at least two blank pages.
 - Revisit the State Department's [country page](#) to check if your journey will require a visa (based on your citizenship, type of work, and length of visit in-country). Confirm this directly with the embassy of your destination.
- Flights and travel insurance
 - Sites like [SkyScanner](#), [Kayak](#) and [STA Travel](#) are frequently used by international travelers to find affordable flights.
 - Investing in [travel insurance](#) to reduce unexpected expenses from trip changes is wise.



Photo: GHFP-II

- Money and banking
 - Before leaving the country, make sure you have alerted your bank and credit card companies of your travel plans. Otherwise, your accounts may be blocked due to “suspicious activity”.
 - Make sure you know about any fees charged by your bank for international services and become familiar with your destination’s local currency, exchange rate, accessibility of ATMs and acceptance of cash versus cards.
- Communication
 - Plan how you will contact people locally and internationally when you reach your destination. Investigate purchasing an international calling card, Skype credit and/or data for use with WhatsApp, Viber or other messaging platforms. Having an in-country cell phone is also essential.
 - Collect emergency contact information from both international and local connections and share this with your network.

HEALTH & SECURITY

- Vaccinations and medications
 - Check with the State Department and local Embassy to see what immunizations may be required for your journey. Always carry an internationally-recognized immunization record with you when traveling.
 - Schedule a doctor’s visit and share that you will be traveling (you may need a health clearance from your doctor to obtain a visa). If you take any medications, make sure to check local laws to confirm that they are legal in your destination country. From there, take a sufficient supply for the duration of your trip, keep everything in their original containers, and always have a signed doctor’s prescription for each medicine you take with you.
- Health insurance
 - Ensure that you have health insurance with international coverage for the duration of your journey. Pay attention to what medical costs are covered and confirm that you have emergency evacuation coverage. If needed, invest in [supplemental insurance](#).
- Security
 - Register with your embassy for travel alerts and warnings. The U.S. version of this is the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#).
 - When possible, aim to keep a low profile. Always be aware of your surroundings.

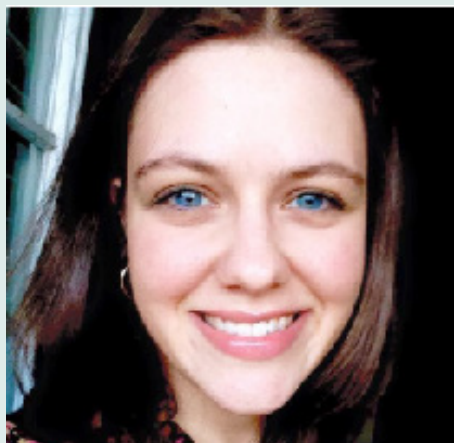
PACKING

- Plenty of websites offer packing checklists but ensure that you have the following:
 - Travel adapter and/or converter (check the outlets used in your destination)
 - Spare cash and copies of important documents (passport, emergency contact information, immunization record, medical prescriptions, insurance information) in each bag



Photo: GlobeMed

Similar checklists and tips can be found through the [State Department](#), [WikiHow](#) or a quick Google search.



PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT

*“In 2016, I worked for five months with the President’s Malaria Initiative at the USAID Mission in Luanda, Angola. The purpose of my placement was to provide administrative and technical support to USAID’s malaria program during a human resource gap at the Mission. Although I often found the time I spent there to be challenging, ultimately it was an amazing environment and context to learn in. **I was exposed to barriers often faced in the field, observed the complex relationship between governments (particularly in emergency contexts), and was able to practice my Portuguese language skills in a more professional capacity.**”*

– Jordan Burns, 2016 GHFP-II Fellow, 2015 GHFP-II Intern



FUNDING

As previously discussed, the main obstacle for underrepresented students entering global health as identified by GHEI is a “lack of financial support to travel”. Even among students well-represented in the field, they found that this was still the top concern for young GH professionals. Finding funding for overseas opportunities is no easy task, but can be accomplished with careful research and efforts well in advance of your trip.

CRAFTING A NARRATIVE

One of the most important parts of applying for funding is framing your needs, motivations, and added value to a global health organization. Funding sources, regardless of the donor type, will ask about your skills, long- and short-term goals, and financial need. As such, you should work carefully on crafting your story for GH funding opportunities while paying attention to these topics. **Give yourself time to do this**, as it is important to reflect on your previous experiences in this writing process. In particular, consider your “distance traveled” or any life challenges that may contribute to your GH competencies like resilience, flexibility, negotiation and cross-cultural communication skills. Learning to articulate your own experience (for cover letters, statements of purpose, etc.) is crucial to showing why donors should invest in you.

CREATING A BUDGET

Funding sources will not give money to people or projects without understanding the specific need for and uses of the funding. As such, be prepared to outline the exact expenses of your trip, keeping track of receipts or quotes of necessary expenditures along the way. Additionally, many sources of funding want applicants to outline cost-sharing. Make sure to carefully research your various funding opportunities to see what is required.

DEVELOPING A MONITORING & EVALUATION PLAN

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a crucial part of many funding applications as it shows the funder that the recipient will be held accountable for funds received through concrete deliverables. Work with your overseas partners to develop specific goals, checkpoints and other strategies for tracking and evaluating impact. Some funding sources provide a template for this plan, but [this](#) sample developed by *tools4dev* can be used when a structure is not provided by the donor.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Funding sources can vary greatly in the types of work they support and resources from which they stem. Below are some steps to identify funding opportunities to support global experiences:

1. Identify your own affiliations and personal network

- Academia
 - Universities and academic institutions often have scholarships for their own students or affiliates. Contact the institution's applicable office(s) to ensure that you are aware of all opportunities.
 - Important offices to consider: public or global health department, regional/cultural departments (ex. South Asian Studies); public service, career and scholarship centers.
- Civic and religious organizations
 - Reach out to any cultural, religious or civic organization with which you are affiliated, especially if it supports activities or causes related to your overseas work.
- Personal fundraising
 - Tap into your own network by contacting potential donors directly.
 - Create a platform through which people can donate (like [GoFundMe](#) or [Crowdrise](#)). Keep in mind that these services take a percentage of your donations, but help to gain momentum that you may otherwise lack if donors send money to you directly.
 - Consider written letters – older contacts in your network are more likely to respond to physical letters than to emails or links through social media. These may also be your bigger donors!
 - Additional guides to personal fundraising can be found through [Child Family Health International](#), [Global Brigades](#) and others.

2. Investigate independent funding sources, such as grants and scholarships

- Sources based on region of work
 - Funding sources can be divided by where the work takes place so check opportunities related to your destination.
 - The US Embassy in your destination country may offer grants to American citizens pursuing work abroad.
- Sources based on topic of work
 - Funding sources can also be classified based on the topic. Health-based divisions include environment and climate change, water and hygiene, policy and research, sexual and reproductive health, food security and nutrition, etc.
- Sources based on type of work
 - Opportunities are also split by type of overseas



Photo: GHFP-II

involvement (academic like [study abroad programs](#), research for individual or larger projects, and volunteer programs).

- Other useful lists of funding sources
 - [Grants.gov](#)
 - [Matador Network](#)
 - [Manna Project](#)
 - [InterExchange Foundation](#)

3. Choose overseas opportunities that include funding

- [Global Health Fellows Program II](#)
- [Global Health Corps](#)
- [Minority Health and Health Disparities International Research Training Program](#)
- Additional paid opportunities [here](#)



PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT

*“During the summer of 2014, I conducted fieldwork in rural, indigenous communities in Hidalgo, Mexico in order to assess their current public health priorities and barriers to accessing health care services. Not only did I learn how to design and implement a community health needs assessment, but I was also able to practice communicating in a foreign language and live among the community’s residents. Gaining this type of hands-on field experience early in my career taught me the importance of building relationships with the communities that we serve and how to be flexible and creative when working in resource-poor settings. **Going abroad also helps you develop cultural competence, a characteristic that will serve you well as you move through your global health career.**”*

– Meley Woldeghebriel, 2016 GHFP-II Intern

IN SUMMARY

Through this guide, the Global Health Fellows Program II leverages its unique expertise to explain the importance of overseas experience for a successful GH career. By providing focused methods to overcome barriers like family concerns, funding, and pre-departure preparation, this guide caters to the needs of those underrepresented in the field to support a next generation of GH professionals that reflect the diversity of the American people.

For more information on the Global Health Fellows Program II, visit www.ghfp.net.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Acumen Global Fellows Program	Global Health Strategies
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Idealist
Child Family Health International	Jobs for Development
Devex	Menar Fellowship Program
DevNet	Northwestern University Global Health
Fogarty International Center	Peace Corps
Fulbright Scholars Program	Princeton in Africa, Asia, and Latin America
GlobeMed	Sparkman Center for Global Health
Global Health Council	United Nations Development Programme
Global Health Corps	University of Chicago Center for Global Health



Photo: GHFP-II