

Choosing an agency

Partnering with an agency is a choice that each individual will need to make as they make decisions about mission service. But with the choice of agencies that exist, (even in a small country like New Zealand!) the options can be overwhelming.

Whether you're looking at short or long term service, careful consideration should be given to the options to ensure a positive and mutually constructive partnership plus good support throughout the time of service overseas.

Some areas to think about and questions to ask may include:

1. Are the vision and the values of the organisation compatible with where I see God calling me to and my skills and abilities?
2. How is the agency organised and structured in New Zealand and overseas? Is this an internationally networked group or New Zealand operated?
3. What specific ministry focus areas do they have and in what areas of the world do they work? e.g. Wycliffe has a strong focus in Bible translation and linguistics; MAF's primary focus area is aviation and serving the people of hard to reach places. OMF has a specific focus on Asia, Interserve is focused on the Middle East and Asia.
4. Are there specific membership/acceptance criteria? What's the process of application? What orientation and training is required for service – short and long term
5. How does/would the agency work specifically with my home church?
6. What is their financial policy? How does this work in practice for serving overseas? What are the costs? How are funds raised for both the organisation to operate and for individual workers? What are the support levels required and what do these include? What assistance will they give in helping with support raising? What happens on the field if funds run short?
7. How do field teams operate? Are they autonomous?
8. What care and support systems are in place for before, during and after service, including any home assignment times? What policies and procedures are in place for emergencies on the field?

There are also a number of other practical things that can be done in exploring agency options:

1. Pray the decision through!
2. Thoroughly explore an agency website.
3. Ask to receive the regular magazine of the agency – this is often a quarterly publication with stories and testimonies of work going on.
4. Read any biographies of mission workers that have been associated with an agency - even those from the last two centuries (i.e. late 1800s) can be wonderful sources of inspiration and understanding about the origins of an organisation.
5. Attend an event with a speaker associated with a particular agency you're interested in. Attend mission conferences/events where you can engage with agency personnel.
6. Talk with retired mission workers or those on home assignment that have been/are associated with the agency and ask about their experience.
7. Consider a short term experience with the agency first as a precursor to longer term.