

Fair Trade Learning: Definition and Origin

Originating from the [Community Based Global Learning Collaborative](#), [Fair Trade Learning](#) is a global educational partnership exchange that prioritizes reciprocity in relationships through cooperative, cross-cultural participation in learning, service, and civil society efforts. It foregrounds the goals of economic equity, equal partnership, mutual learning, cooperative and positive social change, transparency, and sustainability (Hartman, Morris Paris, & Blache-Cohen, 2013).”

Applications and Adaptations of Fair Trade Learning

The Gap Year Association (GYA) adapts the Fair Trade Learning (FTL) principles to gap year education in the [GYA Official Standards of Accreditation](#). The Forum on Education Abroad adopts FTL for their [Guidelines for Community Engaged Learning Experiences Abroad](#) for global higher education. Additionally, several colleges and universities as well as global education providers outside of the gap year education sphere use FTL as a set of guideposts in their global education partnerships.

In this document, you will find:

[The Gap Year Association’s Fair Trade Learning Committee](#)

[Guiding Questions for Program Providers](#)

The Gap Year Association’s Fair Trade Learning Committee

The Gap Year Association (GYA)’s Fair Trade Learning Committee is run in partnership between GYA and the Community Based Global Learning Collaborative (the Collaborative). Members include gap year program providers and consultants, study abroad and higher education professionals, and Collaborative members. For more information about this committee and its members, visit the [GYA FTL Committee webpage](#).

Mission: To create resources for organizations to use to improve their global/domestic partnerships by applying [Fair Trade Learning](#) principles.

Note from Committee Members: Fair Trade Learning goes beyond ‘including the locals’ or using the word ‘ethical’ to market a program. These principles uphold the notion that **individuals and communities, regardless of global origin, have the fundamental right to determine their own challenges and maintain agency over self-determined solutions to those challenges.**

FTL is intended as a tool to:

- Promote reciprocity and power-sharing in intercultural relationships
- Enhance economic equity
- Foster transparency
- Protect vulnerable populations
- Ensure that community voice is at the center of community-based learning* partnerships

Suggested Audiences for this Guide:

- Gap year and independent educational consultants
- High school counselors advising student on gap year options

Guiding Questions for Gap Year Consultants

The following questions intend to guide you as a Gap Year Consultant in using the Fair Trade Learning (FTL) principles to assist students and families in choosing the most ethical and equitable community-based learning (including learning-service) opportunities, both while taking an independent gap year and while traveling with a cohort. Each of the following principle titles comes from the Gap Year Association (GYA)'s adaptation of FTL in the GYA Standards of Accreditation, which the GYA Standards and Accreditation Committee ratified in July 2022. **View GYA's definitions for each of the principles in 2.X.X of the [GYA 2023 Standards of Accreditation](#) to further understand how the questions relate to each of the principles.**

It is the responsibility of the gap year consultant (GYC) to be aware of and follow the Fair Trade Principles in order to ensure that independent, group, and study abroad gap year students participate in ethical community engaged learning programs. If you are vetting a program provider, please see the Program Provider Guide to FTL for more in-depth considerations.

[Ideas for the Consultant Standards of Accreditation, FTL Standards](#)

1. Common Purposes for Engagement

[Working definition]: While advising independent gap year students (i.e. *gappers*), the Gap Year Consultant (GCY) seeks to understand the student's skill sets and reasons for engaging with the community-based partner organization (CPO), and the CPO's needs and reasons for hosting student volunteers. From there, the GCY refers students and families to opportunities that most appropriately fit both the student and the CPO.

While vetting gap year program providers, the GCY asks about the common purposes of partnership between the provider and its community-based partner organizations.

<p>Consider while vetting Program Providers See Programs Guide to FTL for a more comprehensive list of considerations. Also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the GYC ask program providers about the overall, mutually-agreed upon purpose for their global (and domestic) community-based partnerships? 	<p>Consider while advising Independent Gappers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the GYC encourage students to critically reflect on identity, privilege, and intentions to volunteer? • Does the GYC determine best fit between the student and the CBO's project(s) in terms of:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The needs and goals of community organization(s) and ○ The student's skills and willingness to learn <p>Example: An art student volunteered in Ecuador with an environmental conservation organization. He hadn't yet built relevant skills, but he learned over time working alongside the locals. The organization had capacity to train and an expressed need for volunteers to help plant trees and conduct grafting).</p>
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2. Host Community Program Leadership

[Working definition]: The gap year consultant (GYC) communicates with program providers about their efforts to amplify the voices, questions, insights, concerns, and leadership of individuals in the partner community who are most closely involved with the program. The GYC educates independent gap year students about the importance of this.

<p>Consider while vetting Program Providers See Programs Guide to FTL for a more comprehensive list of considerations. Also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does the GYC vet and consider program providers' inclusion of local leadership. Examples of locals leading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The community-based project (which can include learning service) ○ Student support and coordination ○ Providing art demonstrations, classes, projects, etc 	<p>Consider for Independent Gappers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does the GYC raise student awareness about the importance of local leadership? ● Does the GYC recommend that students consider the local leader's experience level working with students?
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3. Rights of the Most Vulnerable

[Working definition]: The gap year consultant (GCY) works to identify the most vulnerable populations in a community and to support these populations' rights and well-being. Examples may include, but are not limited to: **at-risk children, survivors of violence, elders, and migrants/refugees**. Gap year students should work within their skill sets and training levels when engaging with vulnerable populations.

The gap year consultant considers the health and safety of vulnerable populations in the context of global pandemics, local epidemics, and crisis situations. Click here for [GYA's COVID-19 Guidelines](#). GYC encourages students to avoid direct contact with at-risk populations on short-term programs, and prioritizes referrals to gap year programs that avoid such direct contact. This especially applies to orphanage volunteering as well as to medical and dental volunteering. **Students should not work on activities without training or relevant qualifications/skill sets especially if not qualified in their home country.** The [Association of American Medical Colleges](#) and the [American Dental Education Association](#) both have statements suggesting that pre-dental and pre-med students should refrain from engaging in unqualified activities abroad.

Consider while vetting Program Providers

See [Programs Guide to FTL](#) for a more comprehensive list of considerations. Also consider:

- Does the GYC communicate with the Provider about the dangers and harm around residential care/institutionalization/orphanages for children and their development
- Does the GYC strongly discourage volunteering in institutional care facilities?
- Does the GCY make sure that the program provider considers:
 - The health and safety of vulnerable populations in the context of global pandemics, local epidemics, and crisis situations?
 - In regards to COVID, is there a risk management protocol or guidelines for local families and communities hosting students that aligns with the host country guidelines and the guidelines of

Consider for Independent Gappers

- Is the GYC aware of the dangers and harm around residential care/institutionalization/orphanages for children and their development and the need to de-emphasize institutional care?
- Does the GYC educate students about the dangers and harm of volunteering in residential care (i.e. orphanages) and discourage this practice?
- Does the gap year consultant thoroughly consider the health and safety of vulnerable populations in the context of global pandemics, local epidemics, and crisis situations?
- Does the GYC understand how the recruitment of volunteers (and any fundraising requirements) promotes the problem of commodification of children and undermines global and social reforms?

<p>the provider's HQ country?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is the GYC knowledgeable about the following resources to help students and parents choose ethical volunteer programs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ www.loveyougive.org (volunteer checklist), ○ Better Care Network (www.bettercarenetwork.org), ○ www.rethinkorphanages.org ○ Is the GYC aware that the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Dental Education Association both have statements suggesting that pre-dental and pre-med students should refrain from engaging in unqualified activities abroad? See the resources below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Association of American Medical Colleges: Guidelines for Premedical and Medical Students Providing Patient Care During Clinical Experiences Abroad ■ American Dental Education Association: Guidelines for International Predental Experiences ■ Child and Family Health International: Research on Medical and Dental Volunteering ● Does the GYC encourage the gapper to consider the following, and does the GYC discourage short-term volunteering with children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ If working with children,
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	<p>short term/seasonal services can create attachment issues in children's future relationships. GYC can discourage volunteering in orphanages and/or residential facilities, providing research and resources for more information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the GYC understand how the recruitment of volunteers (and any fundraising requirements) can promote the problem of commodification of orphanage voluntourism (and of orphans)?
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4. Host Community Program Participation

<p>Consider while vetting Program Providers See Programs Guide to FTL for a more comprehensive list of considerations. Also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are community members, especially local, fellow youth, included in the project with gap year student volunteers working alongside, shoulder to shoulder, in an equal power dynamic? Is there an opportunity for cultural exchange and sharing? 	<p>Consider for Independent Gappers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the GYC advise the student on how to seek out ways to engage with locals their age? • Are there fellow youth involved in the learning-service projects?
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5. Community Partner Organization Theory of Change

<p>Consider while vetting Program Providers See Programs Guide to FTL for a more comprehensive list of considerations. Also</p>	<p>Consider for Independent Gappers</p>
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<p>consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are community-based learning/service learning projects hands-on/experiential and under the supervision of the community-based organization? • Will the students be learning about issues by engaging mindfully and appropriately (e.g. shadowing, observing, learning first)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the Gap Year Consultant guide independent gap year students/clients to assess if their own skills (or lack of) are matched with community-identified tasks/projects based on the community-based partner organization(s) self-determined needs and goals? • While working with independent gappers, does the GYC consider whether or not this project is sustainable long-term by locals with or without student volunteers before recommending a program or independent student experience?
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6. Ethics in Recruitment & Publication Materials

<p>Consider while vetting Program Providers See Programs Guide to FTL for a more comprehensive list of considerations. Also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the GYC able to discern unethical/self-promoting marketing materials in order to advise gap students accordingly? <p>Red flags in marketing phrases may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Come help/save/rescue o “Savior” marketing tools/photos and voluntourism in promotional materials. See Savior Barbie Instagram o Teach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For example, if there’s an opportunity to teach English in a rural 	<p>Consider for Independent Gappers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the GYC able to discern unethical/self-promoting marketing materials in order to advise gap students accordingly? See GYA's Photo Ethics Guide. <p>Red flags in marketing phrases from community-based organizations may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Come help/save/rescue o “Savior” marketing tools/photos and voluntourism in promotional materials. See Savior Barbie Instagram o Teach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For example, opportunities to
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community turn into multiple iterations of volunteers teaching the same students *Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes*. This adds no value to the children's education and the revolving door of volunteers coming and going.

- o Student willingness to learn new skills in order to participate in the project
E.g. A student with a background in art went to Ecuador to volunteer with an environmental conservation organization. He hadn't yet built skills in environmental conservation. Thus, the locals taught him about environmental conservation and he built skills over time alongside the locals. The focus was on learning.

- Does the GYC advise student how to take photos and appropriate/ethical use of social media?

teach English in a rural community turn into multiple iterations of volunteers teaching the same students *Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes*. This adds no value to the children's education and the revolving door of volunteers coming and going.

- Does the GYC advise students how to take photos and appropriate/ethical use of social media?
- Does the GYC educate students on the importance of people speaking for themselves about their lived experiences? Oftentimes, people with marginalized identities (globally and domestically, and then within communities) have their stories told for them, often simplistically or inaccurately.

7. Participant Orientation to Community Partner

<p>Consider while vetting Program Providers See Programs Guide to FTL for a more comprehensive list of considerations. Also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are students prepared to have understanding of their role and purpose while engaging with community stakeholders? • Will the student know the missions and/or general purposes of the community-based organizations with which they'll engage prior to any activities? 	<p>Consider for Independent Gappers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the GYC check to make sure that there is a clear understanding by the student of the CBO's mission and the CBO's self-determined project goals and outcomes? • Is the gap year student prepared/informed regarding the community's culture, ethnic origins, religion, norms, and history, politics, prior to arrival in country? • Have the students demonstrated an understanding and cultural awareness/sensitivity regarding specific vulnerable local populations with whom they might be working/interacting? • Are the gappers aware of their own preconceived bias and or prejudice? • Does the Gap Year Consultant (GYC) Prepare and set expectation for student learning service (vs service learning difference) • Tone-setting, ethics of learning service, complexities of community-based learning (e.g. a student won't save the world by painting a wall; they're present in the community to learn about community issues)?
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8. Environmental Impact

<p>Consider while vetting Program Providers See Programs Guide to FTL for a more comprehensive list of considerations. Also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the GCY inquire with programs 	<p>Consider for Independent Gappers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the GYC encourage students to
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<p>about their commitments to sustainability?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the GYC ask programs about any sustainability plans that they may have? 	<p>consider the environmental impact of their travels to-country and in-country?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does GYC review with the student ways to practice responsible traveling habits that reduce carbon footprint and impact? • Does the GYC recommend tips for a green and sustainable packing list?
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9. Economic Considerations and Local Sourcing

<p>Consider while vetting Program Providers See Programs Guide to FTL for considerations.</p>	<p>Consider for Independent Gappers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the GYC encourage students to buy local and seek locally-owned accommodations? • Does the GYC encourage students to shop with locally-owned businesses? • Does the GYC encourage students to plan excursions and activities with local businesses? E.g. If a student plans to travel to Rwanda, does the GYC encourage the student to plan activities with CBOs or local companies?
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10. Regular Evaluation of Programs and Partnership

<p>Consider while vetting Program Providers See Programs Guide to FTL for a more comprehensive list of considerations. Also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the GYC stay up to date on evaluations on Go Overseas, Go Abroad, Teen Life of a program, and feedback from other GYC. • GYC should conduct final interviews with gap year students for feedback. If issues or concerns are raised about the cbo, gap year program, or experiences, the GYC has an obligation to discuss improvements 	<p>Consider for Independent Gappers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which resources does the consultant use for vetting community-based learning opportunities for independent gappers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ site visits ■ feedback from seasoned colleagues and gap year consultants
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<p>with the program directly, and if no action is taken, determine whether or not to recommend that organization to students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the context of unresolved incidents with past students, does the GYC inform students of the issue with the program, and in the most severe cases, provide alternative program recommendations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ gap year alum ■ program providers (field leaders and HQ staff with connections) ■ peer-reviews from GoAbroad, Go Overseas, Year Out, etc.
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11. Financial Transparency

<p>Consider while vetting Program Providers See Programs Guide to FTL for a more comprehensive list of considerations. Also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In recommending a gap year program to a student, does the gap year consultant make sure the gap year student and their family understands the breakdown of all the costs and allocation of fees, and that this information is transparent? 	<p>Consider for Independent Gappers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In recommending a project to a student, does the gap year consultant make sure the gap year student and their family (both independent and with a cohort) understands the breakdown of all the costs and allocation of fees, and that this information is transparent?
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12. Ethical Engagement with Animals

Principle definition: *As a roadmap for best practices in animal engagement, consider the Five Freedoms for Animal Welfare from the American Humane Society, adapted by Nora Livingstone, Founder and CEO of [Animal Engagement International](#) to the context of volunteering with animals. See her blog, [Ethical Engagement with Animals on Gap Year Experiences](#) on the GYA website.*

- Have you reviewed the [Five Agreed Upon Freedoms](#) for Animals in Captivity, and glossary for animal engagement (sanctuary, refuge, rehabilitation center)?
- Do projects working with animals have long-term goals for its animals (both in care and future animals, including rehabilitation goals for wounded or captured/confiscated animals)
- Does the CBO working with animals have an ethical euthanasia policy?
- Do your projects that work with animals have an animal welfare policy? Was this policy developed by veterinarians and behaviorists?

- Is contact with wild animals limited only to necessary interaction?
- Do you ensure animal projects do not engage with, and actively work against the practices of [canned hunting](#) and [wild animals as entertainers](#)?
- Is there a thorough risk assessment in place for students and animals? This can include risk to staff.

Potentially problematic activities:

Important note: there is no agreed-upon definition for the term ‘animal sanctuary.’ Anyone can use the term with no expectations for best practices around the term. Thus, the onus for vetting community-based partner organizations’ practices in this context lies with the gap year program. For a list of organizations committed to ethical practices with animals, look into the [Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries](#) (GFSA) and the [Pan African Sanctuary Alliance](#) (PASA). GFAS and PASA both advocate for animal rights and ethical engagement with animals on larger scales by setting standards for best practices.

- Visiting animal sanctuaries that breed animals into captivity. Since there is no agreed up definition of an ethical sanctuary, explaining that this term is hazy is a good idea
- Students cleaning out wildlife cages, or risk/endangerment to animals (both the physical but mental safety of all animals).
- Animal sanctuaries or reserves that support, promote, or allow canned hunting (usually lions)
- Animal sanctuaries that allow or promote inappropriate handling of wild animals (eg cuddling a tiger cub; swimming with dolphins in a contained area)
- Tourist locations that drug wild animals for the sole purpose of tourist interaction (e.g. [Tiger Temple](#))
- Participating in feel-good data collection of no conservation value. Or programs that are not led by scientists and researchers.
- Visiting or partnering in unethical sanctuaries that house animals in unsafe/unsanitary conditions, and in conditions in which animal habitats are small or cruelly unnatural compared to animal’s natural habitat
- Sanctuaries that purchase animals from illegal markets and/or don’t employ staff with the professional knowledge of how to care for animals correctly
- Attractions or “sanctuaries” where animals perform tricks

Consider while vetting Program Providers

See Programs Guide to FTL for a more comprehensive list of considerations. Also consider:

Consider for Independent Gappers

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does the GYC check to see if the program has certification by the world animal protection pledge, B Corps, etc? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Many of these certs can be expensive so an accreditation from a professional association like the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians would also be something that programs can check ○ Does the program you're referring students to partner with a group who is part of a collective (Pan African Sanctuary Alliance for example) or has a certification (Zoo Check) as the first step? Be sure to then check out what the certification actually is. Anyone can lift the Humane Society International jpeg off a website and take it. It is best to ask about the certification, see what it entails and see if they are still in good standing with the certifying group. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If a student is traveling independently, does the GYC ensure that the animals in the participating program (sanctuaries or rehabilitation centers) are not being mistreated/harmed in any way i.e. riding or feeding animals? <p>See Nora Livingstone of Animal Engagement International's blog on this topic.</p> |
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A Special Thank You from the GYA Fair Trade Learning Committee

Thank you for reading and using this guide. The fact that your organization is using it indicates your commitment to increasing the reciprocity, equitability, and ethical responsibility in your global and domestic community-based organizational partnerships. We welcome feedback on this guide and suggestions for additional resources that GYA's FTL Committee might create; please submit feedback to FTL@gapyearassociation.org.

If your organization aligns with best practices in community-based learning (including service-learning) ethics, we encourage you to apply for [Gap Year Association Accreditation](#). GYA Accreditation offers the opportunity to show that your organization meets the highest standards in the field. Additionally, it opens the door for your organization to offer college credit to your students through GYA's partnership with Portland State University.

The Consultants Guide to Fair Trade Learning was especially informed and developed by GYA FTL Committee Members Marion Taylor, Caitlin Ferrarini, and Elizabeth Bezark, Dominique

Robinson, Josephine Foster, Heilwig Jones, Warren Oliver, Kyle Anderson, and Nora Livingstone.