



A.11 QUESTIONS FOR SELECTION OF THIRD PARTY PROVIDERS

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A Third Party Provider is an organisation which provides ready-made expeditions for groups (such as schools) or for individual members. Many are commercial companies, others are voluntary organisations and/or charities. In this paper it is assumed that the client group is a school, but the same considerations may be applied to other organisations and to individual members looking for a provider.

This is a recommended list of questions developed through the Expedition Providers Association (EPA) and a range of youth expedition providers and consultants. These questions are not definitive and act only as a starting point for investigation. Every trip and group has different needs and this list is intended to enable you to prioritise the specific criteria that are important to you.

The crux is to demonstrate due diligence in selecting a Provider. This list of questions is not definitive and it is recognized that some expeditions may be outside the range of questions set down here due to the specific needs of the group or the expedition itinerary. The aim is to demonstrate due diligence and in order to assess quality, one must look at both the Provider, the leader team, the programme and the client group as they are equally important in ensuring quality.

Philosophy

- Does the Provider's philosophy link to your expedition group's needs and objectives? For example: personal development, adventure, cultural, tailor-made.
- How does the Provider ensure these objectives are fulfilled? For example: cultural awareness training, personal development reviews and itinerary planning sessions.
- Is anyone excluded from your programmes?
- Does the Provider have an established expedition Code of Conduct?

Leadership and Leader team

(expedition leader, school staff, and assistant leader)

- What level of leadership experience do the leaders have?
- What is their experience of the particular environment and specific age group?
- Do you the client agree the leader team and meet them before the trip?
- When is the leader assigned to the group?
- Does the client have the opportunity to develop the leader team prior to the trip?
- How are the roles and responsibilities defined and allocated between the leader team (Expedition Leader and accompanying school staff), parents, students and Providers office?
- How does the Provider select and train the expedition leader team?
- Does the Provider contract out any of the trip (for example to rafting or guiding organisations), if so how is vetting undertaken?



Child Protection Policy

- Does the Provider have a Child Protection Policy in place?
- What checks are made of the leader team?

Finances

- How are funds paid towards the expedition protected?
- Is the Provider an ATOL holder and how are the air travel funds protected?
- What are the procedures if the area becomes politically / medically unsafe for travel?
- Does the Provider give support to team members to help raise funds for their expedition?
- Is the Provider clear where the funds are spent?

Legal

- Does the school have a contract with the Provider to enable quality to be ensured and responsibilities to be clearly stated and when is it signed?
- Is there a contract between the parents and the Provider?
- Are the Cancellation Terms clear to all parties (School, Parents and Provider)
- Does the Provider have Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurance in place?
- Does the Provider recommend or provide travel insurance?
- Does the Provider comply with Package Tour Regulations?
- Does the Provider run CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks on all its staff?
- Does the Provider hold an AALA (Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority) license for UK activities?

Safety

- Are the staff-to-student ratio's agreed with the School / Governors / LEA?
- Can the Provider supply outline Risk Assessments and mitigation measures?
- Is the Risk Assessment and Emergency Response Plan compiled by the Expedition Leader, the Provider's office or someone else?
- Does the Risk Assessment process engage all individuals involved: Provider, leaders, staff and pupils as well as with local guides (where necessary)?
- Does the Provider have a Health and Safety Policy?
- Are the moving vehicles used by the Provider during the journey licensed as a minimum requirement in line with the in-country laws? If there is no licensing system, or it is deemed to be inadequate, how are vehicles checked and maintained?
- Is there a clear Emergency Response Plan? E.g. Nearest appropriate hospital and what is the method of travel to get there?
- What kind of medical help is available to the team while in-country?
- Request details of: any previous accidents / incidents / near misses.
- What is the Provider's minimum First Aid requirement for leaders?
- Does the Provider have in-country agents in place in the destination to be visited?
- Do the expedition leaders have experience of the country that they are taking the team to?
- Does the Provider complete a recce to that country before-hand?
- What is the Provider's policy on water-bound activities?
- How often is equipment maintained and checked?



Communication

- How are parents educated about the risks and enabled to give informed consent?
- In the event of an incident which roles are undertaken by School, Parents, Provider, LEA and Governors?
- Do the leaders carry any kind of communication system while on expedition?
- Does the Provider have a 24-hour on-call back-up system running at the office while the team are on expedition?

Training

- Does the Provider run team training prior to departure (with or without their leader)?
- Does the Provider run any training for the expedition leader?
- If during training the team's expedition goals become clearly unachievable how will the Provider deal with this? Is there a Plan B?
- Do you give advice or training on community sensitivities?

Support

- What level of support is available both pre-expedition and during the expedition?
- Who is the named person in the UK office to deal with directly?
- Will this support offer the level of service you require?

Environment and Community

- Is it an appropriate physical / mental environment for the age and size of the group?
- Does the Provider have a responsible travel and environmental policy and adhere to it?
- How does the Provider ensure appropriate relations and benefits to local people?
- Does the Provider hold local permissions for the area and assess impacts?
- How is the project phase (if any) set up and managed and is there a post-project support plan?
- How will the group's visit contribute to the overall development of the community and the expedition group?

Creditability

- Request and contact 2 referees who could be contacted from other schools/youth groups who have travelled with the Provider within the last 18 months?
- Is the Provider a member of any forums or industry associations?