

Standard Case study

CRS – Strategic recruitment

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1. Executive summary

As the official international humanitarian agency of the US Catholic community, Catholic Relief Services provides humanitarian relief and development assistance in 99 countries throughout the world, and uses its International Development Fellows Programme (IDFP) as a successful recruiting tool.

IDFP gives people interested in a career in international relief and development an opportunity to increase their overseas experience and gain broad exposure to CRS programmes. Each year, around 500 applicants compete for approximately 30 one-year placements with country programmes overseas.

When recruiting for IDFP, CRS looks for candidates that have completed a master's degree in subjects such as international affairs, development or health, professional proficiency in French, Spanish, Portuguese or Arabic, work experience in a developing country or relevant US-based experience, strong cross cultural skills, and a commitment to its guiding principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Specific job responsibilities depend on the country programme's focus, be it agriculture, health, peace building HIV and AIDS or microfinance.

The IDFP goal is to place fellows where they can draw upon their previous education and work experience while broadening skills. Many fellowships lead to regular CRS positions. Since the programme's inception, CRS has been able to promote over 95% of the fellows into programme manager positions with country programmes overseas. Many fellows continue to work with CRS overseas for many years, becoming agency leaders.

The program itself took around 10 years to develop and requires a budget in the order of USD 75,000 to run each year, with each fellow 'costing' the organisation around USD 30,000. The IDFP is now firmly established as a valuable recruitment tool for CRS, and fellows typically come from a range of universities and academic institutions with whom CRS has developed strong links

2. Introduction

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is the official international humanitarian agency of the US Catholic community, providing humanitarian relief and development assistance in 99 countries throughout the world. As part of a drive to recruit more strategically, CRS developed an International Development Fellows Programme (IDFP), and this has become a very successful recruiting tool.

The IDFP gives people interested in a career in international relief and development an opportunity to increase their overseas experience and gain broad exposure to CRS programmes. Each year, around 500 applicants compete for approximately 30 one-year placements with country programmes overseas. Country Programs are asked to submit job descriptions and requests for the Fellows; and positions are usually available in all the regions where the organisation works.

The positions generally last one year, with fellows placed in positions according to their skills and the needs of the country receiving them.

3. About the IDFP

When recruiting for the IDFP, CRS vets applicants against demanding criteria, looking for candidates that have completed a master's degree in subjects such as international affairs, development or health, professional proficiency in French, Spanish, Portuguese or Arabic, work experience in a developing country or relevant US-based experience, strong cross cultural skills, and a commitment to its guiding principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Once recruited, specific job responsibilities depend on the country program's focus, be it agriculture, health, peace building HIV and AIDS or microfinance.

Catholic Relief Services provides the fellows with the following benefits:

- \$16,000 stipend to cover everyday expenses.
- Housing. Adequate safe housing is provided for each fellow and there is no requirement for this to be shared. The exact nature of accommodation depends on local and security considerations.
- Transportation to and from the country of assignment.
- Medical, life, SOS, travel/accident and personal/household effects insurance.
- Three weeks vacation.

Some fellows choose to be accompanied by a spouse or dependants, in which case CRS provides for the airfare, insurance, and immunizations. A cost of living allowance (COLA), if applicable, is calculated accordingly, but other costs are not covered.

4. Background

The IDFP was developed from scratch by the human resources department at CRS over a period of almost ten years. Now the program is established, running costs are in the order of USD 75,000 each year, which covers the costs of a full time project manager, a part time recruiter, a part time phone screener, a part time administration assistant, a part time web designer for online applications, and an experienced interview panel. The cost of each fellow to the organisation is around USD 30,000. There are no direct training requirements for the implementation of the IDFP, although CRS HQ and field staff are trained to conduct the appropriate orientations for new fellows.

5. Evaluation

The IDFP goal is to place fellows where they can draw upon their previous education and work experience while broadening skills. The program allows fellows to get to know CRS within the framework of a structured and evaluated program. As a result of the IDFP, CRS has a pool of project managers for international positions including emergency postings. Strong project managers who know the organization are ready to be deployed for many types of programs and positions.

A reflection of the program's success is the fact that since its inception, CRS has been able to promote more than 95% of the fellows into programme manager positions with country programmes overseas. Many fellows continue to work with CRS overseas, often staying for a number of years and becoming agency leaders.

In addition, the program has reinforced strong institutional ties between CRS and the top universities that it recruits from. Partner universities have become familiar with the philosophy, methodology and mission of CRS and along with strong 'brand recognition' within the institutions, the work of CRS is used as part of the academic curriculum in partner university programs.

6. Conclusion

The IDFP is now firmly established as a valuable recruitment tool for CRS. The current President of CRS sees great value in the fellowship program, and the CRS Vice President for overseas operations joined CRS as a fellow and works directly with the program. From the HR perspective, the program is valued highly because it creates a fresh group of program managers every year.