



GUIDE FOR FIELD WORKERS OR LOGISTICS CO-ORDINATORS INTERESTED IN COLLABORATION

HOW TO SUBMIT A FIRST PROPOSAL

Biosphere Expeditions is a citizen science-based wildlife conservation & research organisation that runs expeditions for the growing number of people who would like to do something active towards wildlife conservation. Citizen scientists are usually from Western Europe, North America, Australia/NZ between 17 and 75 years old, highly motivated, with above average education. About 10% have some sort of biology background, but they are not usually trained in survey techniques. Expedition teams DO NOT need luxuries and basic field conditions are usually acceptable. They DO need projects where they can do useful work and are kept busy with tasks that are directly connected to wildlife conservation.

Biosphere Expeditions is always looking for reliable field workers (or logistics co-ordinators - all called "field workers" below) with access to or running projects involving flagship species in interesting and challenging environments that would benefit from citizen science involvement. Field workers need to be able to communicate to expedition participants the impact their work is making, how their work makes a difference, what the data collected are being used for and what the long- and short-term implications of the research are.

Support

Biosphere Expeditions is not a volunteering brokering agency. Instead it is intimately involved with all projects and without exception sends an expedition leader with its teams. The expedition leader stays with the expedition for its duration and is there to manage citizen scientists, for quality control, to support the field worker, and deal with problems as and when they arise so that the field worker may continue to work as freely and unencumbered as possible whilst at the same time benefiting from the extra manpower.

Duration, timing & group size

To fit in with usual holiday patterns, expedition groups last between 6 – 14 days. One expedition can consist of several such 6 – 14 day groups, usually organised back-to-back. Group size depends on the field worker's requirements, but groups larger than 12 citizen scientists are difficult to recruit and groups smaller than 7 are usually not economically viable. However, this is an indication only and Biosphere Expeditions is prepared to fit in with the field worker's projects and timings as much as possible.

Scientific work

Biosphere Expeditions has the following priority ratings: Safety (of the expedition team), science (the main aim of the expedition will be to conduct the research), satisfaction (whilst conducting the research Biosphere Expeditions will aim to provide an enjoyable, pleasurable and memorable experience for its volunteers).

Biosphere Expeditions can either continue ongoing research designed by the field worker or design a new project together with the field worker. Biosphere Expeditions has trained biologists available to assist the field worker in designing or adapting projects. Biosphere Expeditions requires a report on the data collected on each expedition within three months of the end of the expedition and will expect to collaborate on any research papers that may arise as a result of any collaboration.

Biosphere Expeditions is always looking for long-term involvement and will give preference to projects that are set up on this basis, with expedition teams helping the field worker at those times of the year when their assistance is most needed and useful for the field worker.

Financial and other assistance

The field worker will be expected to organise, in conjunction with Biosphere Expeditions, details of logistics, support, research, safety plans, etc. In return field workers are usually paid for their time spent on the expedition, their expenses, etc. Payments are decided on an expedition-by-expedition basis and field workers will be expected to provide full financial details as part of their collaboration proposal. In addition to financial assistance, Biosphere Expeditions can also provide equipment and other assistance in kind. Any such requests should be part of the field worker's collaboration proposal.

How to approach Biosphere Expeditions and how expeditions are organised

In the first instance, field workers should have a look at the Biosphere Expeditions website and in particular the summaries of existing expeditions at www.biosphere-expeditions.org/overview. An initial collaboration proposal should give Biosphere Expeditions a good idea of how the proposed project would fit into the Biosphere Expeditions format. Field workers should use a current expedition page as a template and fit their proposed project around it (following the headings such as "expedition aims", "background", "typical day" as given on the website). In addition, field workers should provide an indication of the duration of the expedition and when it is to take place, some basic cost calculations (see below), and any other equipment or assistance in kind required. Field workers should also submit information on themselves, their qualifications, the project, its past and future direction, relevant publications, and how collaboration with Biosphere Expeditions can add to their current research programme. There is no strict format or required length for this initial proposal, but generic proposals ignoring the above will not be considered.

Basic cost calculations

These should contain all the costs estimated to be associated with the expedition. These costs should be split into per expedition, per group and per person costs (see below for explanations and examples of these terms). Do not average out costs and quote a price per person, instead list real costs in the appropriate category. When you make your calculations, remember that all costs for all staff and one expedition leader from Biosphere Expeditions must be distributed between paying citizen scientists. Be as specific as you can about costs and provide options and examples wherever possible. Do not forget to state the currency clearly. Calculations in Euros are preferred.

Per expedition costs (costs irrespective of how many citizen scientists come on the expedition or how many groups the expedition runs over). Examples: Equipment costs (if you propose that equipment is bought for the expedition, list exactly what kind of equipment, how much this would cost in your country and compare this with European or USA prices).

Per group costs (costs that are largely independent of how many people attend each group). Examples: Salaries for local helpers and scientists. Fuel for cooking, vehicles, boats, etc. during expedition work. Transport costs from assembly point to base camp. Accommodation (if we hire out a whole building and pay a lump sum for this irrespective of how many people actually stay in the building). If there is some variation (for example transport costs for 8 people on the expedition may differ from transport costs for 12 people, because two, rather than one vehicle is needed), then make this clear.

Per person costs (costs that vary with how many persons attend the expedition). Examples: Food. Accommodation (if payment is for example per room).

Biosphere Expeditions will then assess the proposal and start discussions with you. If both sides agree that the proposal warrants further investigation, you will be asked to (1) write a full research proposal, (2) a detailed budget, (3) a risk assessment and full safety procedures and (4) convert the first proposal into an expedition dossier. This expedition dossier is the "bible" that every expedition team member receives when they join their teams. It contains full details on the research methods, aims and objectives, safety procedures, the local field worker, advice on how to prepare for the expedition, what to bring, what to expect and how to get to the team assembly point. This process of making a first proposal into a dossier will be interactive and involve both you and a member of staff from Biosphere Expeditions.

If documents are of sufficient quality and progress on all issues is satisfactory, then at some stage a member of staff from Biosphere Expeditions will visit you in the field to finalise the dossier, research proposal, assess conditions and safety procedures, check budget calculations, etc. During this reconnaissance visit, Biosphere Expeditions will pay for international travel of one or more of its staff into the country of research, but would expect you or your organisation to provide free national travel, board and lodging for Biosphere Expeditions staff for the time it takes to conduct the reconnaissance visit (usually no more than one week).

Once the dossier and all other documents are written and both parties formally agree to collaborate, the expedition will be promoted by Biosphere Expeditions through its usual channels in an effort to recruit an expedition team.

Timings

Please note that it typically takes a year or more to recruit a full expedition team before the first expedition can be run. Depending on how fast you can reply and provide documentation, the process from making first contact to the first expedition team arriving in the field typically takes between 18 and 36 months.

Contact & submission

Send your initial proposal to Dr. Matthias Hammer, m.hammer@biosphere-expeditions.org. Remember that simply submitting generic documents about your research programme is not sufficient and any such submissions will not be considered. Instead, please follow the guidelines above and submit a customised project proposal. By all means submit generic background information as well, but you must show us that you are seriously thinking about this by coming up with original documents and ideas.

A final word

The aim of the process described here is to organise well-run, safe, effective and efficient expeditions that produce results and help field workers engaged in wildlife conservation. It is NOT the aim to produce lots of paperwork and engage in a highly bureaucratic process of organising an expedition. Biosphere Expeditions is a highly flexible organisation with effective access to decision-makers and is always interested in new ideas and proposals. You do need to adhere to the proposal guidelines as described above before your project can be considered, but please do not let the above put you off from coming to us with your ideas, and feel free to ask questions before submitting a proposal. Often a phone conversation goes a long way towards clearing up issues for both sides and we are happy to agree a meeting on the phone with you and talk you through the process.

Resources

Biosphere Expeditions website

www.biosphere-expeditions.org

Overview of current and past projects

www.biosphere-expeditions.org/map

Achievements overview

www.biosphere-expeditions.org/achievements

Expedition reports and other scientific output

www.researchgate.net/lab/Biosphere-Expeditions-Matthias-Hammer

Our take on voluntourism and how to avoid charlatans and bogus projects

www.biosphere-expeditions.org/voluntourism