Pathways FAQs

1. How was the Pathways initiative developed and vetted?

Pathways began as the Mobilization team, led at the time by Scott Dunford as vice president, began to raise questions among the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) about key areas for improvement in the missionary onboarding processes. After having collected input from mobilizers, in May of 2018 the SLT reviewed the proposal for a comprehensive mobilization and training process overhaul. At that point, leadership agreed that changes were needed to keep up with the shifting landscape of missions.

In June 2018, President Paul Davis convened members of Mobilization, SLT, Global Operations, Training and Resources, and ABWE Canada to present the current state and the need for change. Scott Dunford, John Taylor (Vice President of Training and Resources), and Harry G. (Executive Director for South Asia; last name withheld) were assigned to outline some recommendations and present their findings to the larger group.  
  
After several meetings of the three, the team laid out their proposal for change, and out of this collaboration was born the “Ministry Pathways Group,” a committee of six key department representatives, spearheaded by John Taylor. This committee was assembled with the goal of formalizing the financial structures, recruitment categories, training procedures, and approval procedures for all new missionaries and volunteers, all in an effort to lay the foundation for greater, intentional collaboration in mobilizing field workers for years to come.

The Pathways group met regularly for several months and solicited feedback from Regional Directors, Finance, HR, and other key personnel. The committee presented its finalized proposal back to the initial, larger group, including SLT and the president, in May 2019, to the warm reception of all the departments involved. Further, small modifications were made as feedback was received from various levels, and Pathways was officially unveiled in July 2019.

1. Can non-residents of the US or Canada be accepted as Associate Missionaries?

ABWE is a North American sending agency serving North American churches. Typically, non-residents can become associated with ABWE only as Live Global (formerly GAP) partners, and not as missionaries in any category. An exception would be those non-residents who (1) have a US or Canadian sending church, (2) have a significant tie to the US or Canada (e.g. were born in North America or are married to a legal resident), (3) can complete a security check, and (4) are proficient in English.

1. Do husbands and wives need to be in the same Pathway category?

There is no change to the spousal policy. Husbands and wives must both apply and be appointed to the same category, although they may how have different employment statuses (i.e. full-time, part-time or not paid) and different IDPs.

1. Can a Short-Termer stay on the field longer than one year?

The Short-Term category is for people who want to meet a particular, temporary need on the field or explore their fit for missions, and who will be serving in a support role. While Short-Termers typically commit to a term of less than one year, there may be cases where the need requires them to stay for a second year (e.g. teaching in a school). Short-Termers may stay on the field for up to two years, as long as they have approval from their Executive Director (in consultation with the Regional Director and the field team leadership) for stays beyond one year.

1. Are retiring missionaries allowed to receive a Part-Time salary?

The Pathways initiative makes this opportunity available to those who are officially retired, but would like to continue serving part-time. Retired missionaries wanting to receive a Part-Time salary must receive approval from their field team annually.

1. What are Individual Development Plans (IDP) and how will these be used in Pathways?

We believe it’s important to prepare our missionaries for the roles they will serve in by blending specific ministry needs with the individual’s educational background and experience to come up with training that serves both the missionary and the field of service. Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are like Individual Educational plans that we see in schools.

IDP’s will help us to better prepare missionaries by being personalized, flexible, specific for ministry role and lead to lifelong learning:

* 1. Personalized and specific for ministry role: we will take the new missionary from where they are in their preparation to where they need to be to accomplish the ministry roles and tasks they will have on the field.
  2. Flexible: the sequence (order of training) will be geared to each missionary and as well as where the training takes place. ‘Clepping’ for previous experience and education will be applied.
  3. Part of every missionary’s preparation will take place after they leave for the field. By doing training in the place and time of ministry, we hope missionaries will see the power and need for continued development throughout their career. We will also reward missionaries for completion of training.

IDP’s will build on and enhance what we have done in the past and help us to better meet individual and field needs.

1. How are the IDPs determined?

Entry-level requirements (application process and New Missionary Orientation) are standardized, and are developed in cooperation with Mobilization, Training & Resources, and the GO Team.

All requirements beyond entry-level are determined by the following procedure:

1. HR lists all possible requirements for each applicant based on the candidate’s category, ministry specialty and area of ministry.
2. Training & Resources refines the above list of requirements, based on the candidate’s individual profile (e.g. transcripts, references, application), and submits it to the ED as a recommendation.
3. The Executive Director (in consultation with the Regional Director) makes additions or deletions to the recommended list of requirements, and determines whether the requirements need to be completed before or after the pre-field missionary departs for the field, based on his knowledge of the candidate and his/her field.
4. How will new missionaries be encouraged to complete their IDP requirements after being cleared to leave for the field?

By doing training in the place and time of ministry, we hope missionaries will see the power and need for continued development throughout their career. To encourage lifelong learning, we will reward missionaries for completion of training.

Upon the completion of all IDP requirements, missionaries will receive an increase to their salary, and will also be eligible for years-of-service salary increases. (It is assumed that all missionaries who arrived on the field before the Pathways initiative was introduced are already eligible for these increases.) Those with outstanding assignments will not receive these increases.

1. Will missionaries already on the field be required to do any additional training?

We believe in lifelong learning, and these Pathways changes will take us one step further in developing a culture of lifelong learning. As missionaries move into new ministry or leadership roles, they may be asked to complete additional training.

1. Is there a standardized sequence in which Long-Term and Mid-Term requirements are to be completed?

The sequence of training is more flexible and provides more options for new missionaries, allowing them to get to the field sooner. The Executive Director will determine which requirements must be completed before being cleared to leave for the field, and which can be completed on the field or during furlough.

Invitations to EMC (50% support) and Field Preparation (85% support) are no longer dependent upon committed financial support, thus can be attended in any order. Only pre-assignments for these events must be completed before an invitation will be sent.

We have added a third New Missionary Orientation (NMO) to allow for greater flexibility. Mid-Termers can come to any of these NMO’s, but if they come in the Spring or Fall, they can stay after NMO for a few days to complete their additional Field Preparation requirements on one trip.

1. What does online training look like for Short-Termers?

Short-Termers will no longer be required to come to the International Headquarters for Field Preparation, and can complete their training online at any time. At the beginning of any month, they can join other Short-Term applicants for an interactive four-week online course. Each week will consist of approximately five hours of guided assignments, including reading, watching videos, and making forum posts.

1. What is the doctrinal interview?

At ABWE, we believe that doctrine matters, and it is our shared commitment to robustly biblical, conservative theology that unifies our nearly 500 sending churches. The purpose of the doctrinal interview (formerly known as the doctrinal oral exam) is to determine an applicant’s theological fit with ABWE, and his/her biblical qualifications to engage in cross-cultural ministry with the intention of multiplying leaders, churches, and missions movements. The doctrinal interview is required of all Long-Term missionary applicants (including Associates serving more than four years). If the situation necessitates it, Mid-Term missionary applicants may also be required to complete a doctrinal interview.

The applicant is taken through a series of questions addressing each of the major categories of systematic theology and is asked to articulate their core beliefs and a meaningful gospel presentation in a manner consistent with ABWE’s doctrinal statement. The interview most often occurs onsite at the applicant’s sending church with his or her pastor(s) present, and in style is conducted much like an ordination examination, though less formal. An ABWE representative such as a Vice President, Executive Director, or Director of Mobilization conducts the interview. If married, spouses are interviewed together and are expected to demonstrate reasonably comparable proficiency in biblical and theological preparedness for ministry. They may refer to the Bible, but they cannot consult outside notes. The doctrinal interview is a critical step in both establishing the candidate’s readiness to serve in ministry for an indefinite period and formalizing the long-term partnership between ABWE and the sending church.

1. Why do half of the Short-Termer administrative fees go to the field?

We recognize that hosting Short-Termers requires considerable effort and time on the part of the field team, but believe it is a worthwhile investment not only for the sake of the ministry, but also in the personal development of the Short-Termers.

Half of the administrative fees received from gifts to the Short-Termers’ accounts will be transferred to the host field team’s work account. These funds can be used by the field team to assist with costs related to hosting and orienting the Short-Termers.