

Starter Kit for National Group Establishers

1. What is Servas:

Servas is an international, non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation promoting peace and cultural understanding;

Servas was founded in 1949, and is very largely run by volunteers;

Servas takes its name from an Esperanto word, meaning 'serve'.

All applicants to join Servas are interviewed to try to make sure they understand Servas' aims and identify with Servas' values.

Servas members have worldwide opportunities to meet other members through being a host, sharing everyday activities; and through being hosted. In this way they can better understand each other's countries and cultures. Opportunities to join in with Servas events and gatherings in various countries can be found at <https://servas.org/en/events-meetings>

2. Structure of Servas

- Servas Member groups are independent organisations committed to promoting peace, mainly through people to people encounters. Members elect the management team of their Group.
- Servas International (SI) is the federal organisation of Servas Member groups and has consultative status as an international non governmental organisation, with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at the United Nations.

3. Hosts

- Offer hospitality to other Servas members whatever their ethnicity, religion and nationality.
- Provide overnight accommodation - normally for two nights - and usually invite the traveller to share their evening meal. If unable to provide overnight accommodation they can be a Day Host, sharing time whilst showing travellers their city or area.
- Hosts details including their interests can be found on servas.org

4. Travellers

- An adult member needs to obtain an electronic Letter of Introduction (e-LOI) to be able to stay with Servas hosts. This Servas "passport" is valid for up to one year, so long as membership remains in force. Under 18s can be included on a parent's e-LOI, if they travel together. The e-LOI can only be issued after proof of payment.

- Each Member Group determines whether its annual membership fee is inclusive of a e-LOI, or whether a separate fee is payable to receive the e-LOI.

5. The Management Team

Each Servas group decides the make-up of its management team. There is normally at minimum a National Secretary, a Treasurer, and Coordinators for Peace, Membership, and Travelcoordinators.

How to establish a new national Servas group in 3 Steps

A mentor will be assigned to a newly forming national Servas group. A mentor is familiar with all aspects of Servas nationally and internationally and is there to guide and help.

If you are interested in helping to build peace both between countries and within your own country, in meeting people, and in learning about other cultures you can start a Servas group. Please note that Servas cannot be used for money-making or party political purposes.

Step 1. Join Servas! Apply via [Peace and understanding through travel and hosting | Servas Online](#) “How to join” button, and a member of the Servas International Development Committee will get in touch and arrange your informal interview and orientation.

Step 2. Talk about Servas with friends, family, and colleagues. Soon you will find others who identify with Servas principles and values and are willing to share their time by hosting others.

Step 3. Organise a meeting with people who have expressed interest in becoming members. It's good to have at least 10 active members to get going but you can start with a smaller number.

If you are re-establishing a group, see if you can contact former members and invite them to the meeting.

At the meeting elect the team who will start to run and develop Servas in your country.

Keep minutes (a written record of what was said and decided). Share these with all who attended, and with your mentor.

Ask your mentor about how to assist members with their profiles on [servas.org](#)

Email generalsecretary@servas.org to let SI Exco (Servas International Executive Board) know that a new national Servas group has been formed; if possible, send the minutes of the establishing meeting.

More information

As the group grows it is important that responsibilities are equally shared within the management team which may need to expand, for example to include a co-ordinator for promotion and development.

Hosts

- Invite the traveller to join in aspects of their daily life : they set aside time to share their knowledge about the local area and the country e.g. history, culture; and their interests, whether local, national, or international.
- Provide accommodation normally for two nights. The host's profile on servas.org shows if they are willing to host for one night only.
- The host is not expected to provide transport.
- A Day Host will find a convenient time to meet the traveller, may provide information or a guided tour, or a work-place visit or a meal, or may just find time for a chat together.

Travellers

Travellers shouldn't contact multiple recipients saying: "who can host me?" A personal message stands the best chance of being answered.

Remember that there is no obligation for a host to accommodate a traveller. Hosts in big cities and popular tourist places receive a lot of requests. Hosts are also likely to be involved in other organisations and activities and may not always be available.

Be considerate to your potential hosts in your approach and behaviour. Don't call late in the evening.

Day hosts often prefer to meet travellers away from their home.

Members are encouraged to be both a host/day host and a traveller.

Do spend some time looking through the information on www.servas.org especially the Host and Traveller Guides which can be found under Identity and Goals, Travelling for Peace and Hosting to Share.