

# Understanding mission partner formation

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## A key call for today's world

The document *De Statu Societatis* (DSS - State of the Society of Jesus) [published after the 71st Congregation of Procurators](#), included a chapter entitled “Becoming collaborators in the mission of Christ”.



In it, Superior General Fr Arturo Sosa said, “We are beginning to understand how there are different possibilities for participation in the Society’s apostolate”. In addition, Fr Sosa [says in his recent message](#) as the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) turn five years that **“the processes of formation of partners in mission is a dimension that we want to develop; it is essential for the UAPs to bear the fruits they promise”**.

For good collaboration, we need good formation. We already have a system of formation for Jesuits. What about for our mission partners?

“We need processes that help our partners to reach that moment of decision and commitment, an election in the Ignatian sense whereby they commit themselves in heart and will to the mission of reconciliation and justice.”



## Collaboration

Today the Society numbers over 14,000 members and is present in an unprecedented number of countries worldwide. We want the love of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed and to do this effectively we want to collaborate with others. We are working with tens of thousands of people who are our partners in mission. We work together in schools and spirituality centres, universities and youth centres, with refugees and for the homeless. We share the depths of our spirituality with our collaborators and we also learn from them. Together we want to listen better to the Call of Jesus Christ and be more effective apostles.





## Mission Partner Formation: A Transformative Journey

The formation of mission partners in Jesuit institutions is best understood as a progressive journey rather than isolated training events. This process unfolds across multiple stages, each building upon the previous to deepen engagement and commitment.

The journey begins with basic orientation to Jesuit identity, values, and mission. This initial phase introduces partners to foundational Ignatian concepts, language and symbols. Such grounding allows partners to begin understanding the distinctive culture and charism of the Society of Jesus and its works.



The middle stages focus on fostering authentic belonging and deepening commitment. Here, formation moves beyond knowledge transfer to nurturing what GC35 calls a "shared sense of mission." Partners explore Ignatian spirituality more deeply, develop meaningful relationships within the community, and begin shifting from viewing their role as just a career to understanding it as a calling. The Society particularly emphasizes friendship as central to this phase, with collaboration flowing from genuine relationships rather than mere utility.

Advanced stages concentrate on developing co-responsibility and wisdom. Partners take on greater leadership roles while growing in their capacity for charismatic witness. As noted in the Society's documents, they become true "collaborators in mission," sharing responsibility for carrying forward the Jesuit charism and mission.

Effective formation processes are marked by several key characteristics:

- They blend in-person and online learning modalities
- They emphasize accompaniment and mentoring relationships
- They adapt to local contexts while maintaining universal elements
- They integrate spiritual formation with professional development
- They foster cross-sector solidarity and networking

The journey requires significant institutional commitment and investment. However, as the Society has found, thorough formation of mission partners ultimately strengthens institutional identity and expands apostolic impact. The process transforms both the partners and the institutions themselves, creating more collaborative and mission-focused communities aligned with the Jesuit vision of "friends in the Lord" working together in service of the *Missio Dei*.

## Assistants for Mission Partner Formation

To support this formative journey, the role of Assistants for Mission Partner Formation becomes crucial. These delegates, whether Jesuit or lay, serve as catalysts and coordinators of formation efforts across different apostolic sectors. They work to ensure coherent formation pathways while respecting the uniqueness of each ministry. Their role involves both strategic planning and practical implementation of formation programs, always maintaining sight of the ultimate goal: deepening mission partners' connection to and ownership of the Jesuit mission.

Similarly, those responsible for Identity and Mission in Jesuit works play a vital complementary role. They ensure that the day-to-day operations and long-term planning of institutions remain rooted in Ignatian values and spirituality. Working in tandem with Formation Delegates, they help create environments where formation can flourish and where partners can grow in their understanding and lived experience of the Jesuit mission. Their work is essential in translating formation experiences into concrete institutional practices that sustain and deepen mission commitment.

Key skills for your mission

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