**CHECKLIST FOR EDITING LETTERS**

Before you receive your first letter, please download a copy of the AMIGOS letterhead from [www.eastbayamigos.org.](http://www.eastbayamigos.org.) The correct letterhead includes the AMIGOS logo at the top of the page and a footer with information about the non-profit status of AMIGOS. Go to the East Bay AMIGOS website. Log in. On left hand side, select “Sales Central.” Scroll down to “Downloads” and look for “Amigos Letterhead.” Download this Word document and save it on your computer. It will save you time to have a copy on your computer.

You will be provided with example letters to give you a sense of the finished product.

Check each letter for the following:

* AMIGOS LETTERHEAD. Regardless of the details below, if the letter is not on the correct AMIGOS letterhead, it must be sent back to the participant with a copy of the letterhead document and directions to transfer their letter to the letterhead document.
* DATE: Just below the AMIGOS logo, the dateline should be February 2014.
* Although a generic greeting, such as “Dear friends and family,” is OK, please make sure there is space for a handwritten salutation.
* The first sentence of the letter must include the participant’s name and the school they attend. The paragraph should include a personal introduction and a description of AMIGOS’s mission. A link to amigoslink.org or eastbayamigos.org may also be present in the first one or two paragraphs.
* The second paragraph should describe what the participant expects to do during the summer. You may see text such as “Although I will not find out where I am going until the end of February, I am hoping to go to either A, B or C”. Please check for text indicating that the volunteer will be leading classes and helping to collaborate with their host community entirely in Spanish.
* The third paragraph should describe how donations may be used. This paragraph should include the following key underlined points:
  + “Your contributions will help pay for paint, cement, seeds, workshops, and training materials across AMIGOS projects. A contribution in any amount will be very welcome, but to give you some idea of how it would be used, here are some examples: $10 pays for paint for a mural or supplies toothbrushes for 30 people, *[****one or two of the following only****:* $25 provides materials to teach a classroom of children about hygiene and good nutrition, $45 can buy a water storage tank to provide safe drinking water, $100 constructs three latrines to improve community health and sanitation*]*, and $250 provides seeds for family gardens in 20+ communities.Although my family pays a fee that covers the full cost of my travel and training, your contributions may also enable AMIGOS to offer generous financial assistance to families requiring it.”
* The fourth paragraph informs the reader how to donate. Accordingly, this paragraph must state: (i) checks should be payable to “Amigos de las Americas”, and (ii) “**AMIGOS de las Americas is exempt from federal income tax as an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions made by donors are tax-deductible.”** This paragraph must also include the URL for the webpage that will be created with the participant’s letter for online donations. Please check the URL carefully, letter by letter, for accuracy. Any mistake will mean the potential donor will not be able to access the on-line letter to make a credit card donation. The format of the URL is contains the participant’s first initial and last name. It does not have to be hyperlinked. Mine (Ray Chavez) would be:
  + http://www.eastbayamigos.org/letters/rchavez
* The final paragraph should thank the readers for considering the request, and should also include a promise to follow up after the summer by sharing the participant’s experiences with them. The letter should not have a printed valediction.

***Items to watch for:***

The letter CANNOT state that the money will benefit only the particular participant. This would not only violate IRS regulations, preventing contributions from being tax-deductible, but it is also factually inaccurate. The East Bay chapter typically raises an average of more than $2,000 per volunteer. Contributions are pooled to ensure that no one goes until everyone goes. Thus, the participant must revise sentences that include things like “…donate to my summer experience…” or similar.

There are word choices that do not reflect the AMIGOS mission. We believe strongly that our participants have a unique cultural immersion and leadership development opportunity, not a charity mission. In addition, AMIGOS stresses the importance of community, with both a local and a global understanding. Phrases that describe the host country, community, or peoples as “needy,” “underdeveloped,” or “poor” are inconsistent with our philosophy. These terms also fail to recognize that these communities have valuable assets that the participants will use during their project. It is more accurate for participants to write that they will promote sustainable projects – or “supporting,” “collaborating,” or “working with” rather than “helping” people.  Also, they should avoid using the word “trip.” This is a project. In addition, they will be staying in a “community,” not a “village.

In addition to checking for these elements, check the letter for the following:

* 1. When the volunteer refers to “Amigos de las Américas” make sure the “e” in Américas is accented. Ask them to make this revision.
  2. Every reference to “Amigos” by itself should be capitalized: “AMIGOS.”

Make any grammatical corrections you think are needed, but be liberal. The letter does not have to be grammatically perfect. Do not change the tone of the letter written by the participant.

Do not approve letters that are too long. The letter should fit on one page. It could be as simple as using a smaller font, though not too small (11 point or greater). Make sure the participant uses an easy to read standard font.

Finally, spellcheck the letter.

Once you think the letter is in final form forward it to the Letter Writing Director via email for final proofing. At that time. please inform the participant by email that their letter is being finalized, and let them know I will email the approved letter back to them so they can print it out for mailing.