



HandsOn
NETWORK

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Volunteer Leader Guidebook

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Summary



ECONOMY



ENVIRONMENT



EDUCATION

Guide Overview

This guide was developed for volunteer leaders like you to learn how to create high-impact, well-managed projects that will help you sustain volunteers and have a positive impact in your community.

You may be asking yourself, what is a volunteer leader? Well, if you are reading this guide, chances are you are a volunteer leader. A volunteer leader is someone who sees a local community need and takes the initiative to find a solution.

The content in this guide is organized into action-oriented chapters that will help you work with the community to meet needs, effectively plan and manage projects, and develop a framework for projects. This guide does not prescribe how your project should be structured; it does, however, provide pointers and connects you to tools and resources you can adapt to meet your local community needs.

This guide contains seven chapters that outline steps of project development and management:

1. Focus on Your Community
2. Narrow Your Scope
3. Map Your Project
4. Secure Resources
5. Finalize Your Project Plan
6. Manage Your Project
7. Wrap Up Your Project

The first chapter focuses on working with the community to identify issues and needs. The second chapter outlines ways to focus your efforts to select a specific project to address the issue or need. The third chapter leads you through organizing the project, from identifying necessary resources to planning evaluation strategies. Chapter four deals with recruiting volunteers and acquiring other resources you need for the project. Chapter five examines the final plans for the project. Chapter six provides some tips for the actual day of the project, and finally, chapter seven provides guidance for how to wrap up your project.

Each chapter includes:

- **Chapter Overview** – Basic overview of the chapter discussing what will be covered in the section
- **Chapter Goals** – What you can accomplish by reviewing the section
- **Tools** – A list of worksheets, activities and templates available on the HandsOn Network.org Web site that can be used to help guide you through each step.



Step 1: Focus on Your Community

Overview

When you begin to plan a service project, it is important to involve the community from the very beginning. What are the social issues that the community is facing? What are the needs of local nonprofit organizations, schools, parks or other community areas? By working with community members, you can identify projects that will make a true impact. This chapter will help you discover ways to focus on the community to identify true needs.

Goals

- Work with community to identify community issues or needs
- Discover avenues for finding a project

Tools

- My Ideal Community Activity

You may already have a passion for a particular issue, such as education, the environment or the economy. However, a community needs assessment is still an important part of designing any service project. Assessing community needs can be as simple as taking a walk through your neighborhood or as complex as surveying the entire city. The important thing is to focus on the community when identifying what is needed. By working together with community members, you will build community awareness and help ensure community buy-in and support for your service efforts.

You can use a variety of methods to assess community needs. You should select one that fits the scope of the volunteer effort. For a one-day project, you may want to choose an assessment technique that is less time-consuming. If you are committing to a long-term project, you will want to conduct an in-depth assessment to ensure that you are effectively utilizing your resources.

Here are some ideas for conducting a community needs assessment:

Brainstorm

Gather volunteers, or other community members to brainstorm community issues or needs. As a group, examine the causes and effects of the issue and then brainstorm potential projects to address the needs identified.

Community Dreams

As you meet and mingle with people living in the community, ask them about the changes they would like to see happen. If they had unlimited resources, what would they like to change? How would they go about changing it?



Step 1: Focus on Your Community

Community Walk

Hold a forum to collect information from community members about issues or needs. Ask them to offer suggestions for potential projects.

Survey

Conduct a formal or informal survey of community members to identify issues or needs.

Surveys might include questions such as:

- What problems do you see in the community?
- What are the most pressing issues in the community right now?
- What types of service projects would be most beneficial for the community?
- List two things you want to change in the community.



Step 2: Narrow Your Scope

Overview

In your community needs assessment, you identified a community issue on which you want to focus. This chapter will help you narrow your scope so that you can develop a project that is effective and manageable.

Goals

- Research the community issue
- Identify project partner(s)
- Visit the potential service site(s)
- Decide on a project

Tools

- Service Project Site Visit Checklist



Researching the Issue

The first step in narrowing your focus is to learn more about the issue or issues you identified in the community needs assessment. You need to find some statistics about the issue in your community, the background and underlying causes and some ideas for projects to address the need. Research what groups—nonprofit organizations, religious groups, neighborhood associations or other civic-minded groups—are already working in this area. Are they meeting all of the needs? If so, you may want to focus your efforts on another issue. However, it is more likely that they would be an ideal partner for your project.

Partnering with a Community Service Organization

Once you know what groups in your community are working in a particular issue area, you can approach them about partnering for a project. You may already be working with this partner, in which case you should have a good understanding of how your organizations will work together and the resources that each partner can bring to the project.

Conducting a Site Visit

Take time to visit the potential project site to determine the greatest needs. Whether you are working at a shelter, a park or a community service organization (CSO), a site visit will help you identify potential projects.

Schedule a time to visit the project site with at least one representative from your partner organization. If possible, you should visit with key stakeholders and decision makers such as the volunteer coordinator and/or maintenance staff. This will ensure that critical decisions that can affect the project development process can be made quickly. Also, by involving key stakeholders in the project planning process as early as possible, it is more likely that the CSO representative will be able to garner support for the project as well as increase the likelihood of obtaining resources they would not have been able to obtain otherwise.



Step 2: Narrow Your Scope

If a project has well-rounded community support, you can more effectively apply resources toward its success.

During the visit, ask questions that help you understand what the organization's greatest needs are and the ways that ongoing or one-time volunteer support can have the greatest impact. While touring the site to review potential projects, keep in mind the following elements of a successful project:

- Does the project build upon and promote positive relationships within the community?
- Will the work completed make a difference to the organization, persons served or community?
- Will persons served/community members benefit directly or indirectly?
- Is it a project that the community genuinely wants?
- Will the project generate or save money for the organization?
- Is the project volunteer-friendly?
- Will volunteers be utilized effectively during the project?
- Are special skills required? If so, are there opportunities to be trained in new skills?
- Are volunteer leadership opportunities available?
- Will volunteers feel as though they have completed something worthwhile when they are finished with the project? Will they see some result from their efforts (smiling faces, a cleaner yard or park, freshly-painted walls, etc.)?

You might be hoping to organize a large event for a high number of volunteers but find yourself with a project that seemingly can't provide enough work for everyone. During the site visit, you can explore ways to expand the project. Walk around the project site and view all areas that might not initially seem to be feasible project task areas. You may find a room that needs painting or a great place for landscaping. You can also discuss the needs, wants and dreams of the organization's staff members. As you listen to their responses, you will begin to see possible project ideas that can be developed. You should write down any ideas that you have and discuss them with your team and project partners.

Be sure that you manage the expectations of the organization's contact person. Help him or her to see both the possibilities and limitations of working with volunteers on the project. Also, be clear about budget and time constraints for tools and materials. Do not "over promise" as you expand the project. If you have a question regarding the feasibility of any project task (i.e., scope of task, tools and materials needed, volunteer limitations, time constraints), clearly communicate to the representative that you will get back to him or her with a decision on the expansion. Promising more than you can deliver can hinder your ability to develop the best possible project. Be realistic in what you can deliver.

Use the service project site visit checklist to help guide your visit.



Step 2: Narrow Your Scope



Deciding on a Project

Once you have assessed the needs of the community, researched the issue, contacted the CSO partner(s) and visited the prospective service site, it is time to decide on the project. Volunteer projects can vary greatly, so it is important to define your scope. The scope will dictate how large or small the project will be, the number of volunteers expected, the intended impact, the duration and the general theme of the project.

When selecting a project, pay close attention to:

- Required time or days to complete the project
- Overall project scope: Can the project be scaled up or down as needed?
- Diversity: Can a broad spectrum of community members participate?
- Overall cost of producing the project
- Weather impact: What is the plan in case of inclement weather?
- Accessibility to building and facilities
- Amount and type of skilled labor needed

In addition, you should decide if you want to plan a one-time, special-event project; an ongoing series of projects; or a combination of these options. A one-day event could be a large project involving hundreds of people, or it could be small group of volunteers working together on a service project for a day. Ongoing projects engage volunteers on a consistent basis, providing the opportunity to go beyond a one-time experience and have a sustained experience and impact in the community.

Now that you have selected the project, is time to develop the plan for how you will implement and manage the service event. Chapter three will walk you through the project mapping process.



Step 3: Map Your Project

Overview

As you narrow the scope of your project and determine what you are going to do, you will need to formulate ideas for how you can achieve your goals. In order to have a successful service project, you have to plan well. You need to prepare for every detail, from the number of volunteers to the method of reflection you will facilitate. This chapter will help you map out your project so that you can work effectively, meet your goals and make an impact on the community.

Goals

- Create a task list
- Design a project map
- Plan for reflection and evaluation

Tools

- Project Planning Worksheet
- Project Supply List Worksheet
- Project Task List Worksheet



Creating a Task List

Part of the planning process is determining the tasks involved in completing the project. Consider what you want to accomplish and the tasks needed. Then, create a comprehensive list of the assignments and the number of volunteers needed for each task. If there are multiple goals, prioritize them according to each task's importance. This list will guide you as you recruit volunteers and plan the details of the day.

See the sample Project Task List Worksheet.

Project Mapping

An important part of the project development process is determining the resources you need to complete the project, including human, material, financial and educational.

Human Resources

You have already created a task list; now, determine the number of volunteers you need to complete these tasks. Establishing volunteer needs can be a challenge. Consider these variables:

- Volunteer skill levels
 - Is the work appropriate for beginners, or do you need more skilled volunteers?
- Volunteer age
 - What is the age limit for the project?
- Duration of project
 - What is the time commitment required?



Step 3: Map Your Project

- Availability of supplies
 - Will you have enough supplies so that every volunteer has the necessary tools to be occupied throughout the project?
- Physical space available to perform the work
 - How large is the service site? How many people can comfortably work there?

Material and Financial Resources

In addition to assessing your volunteer needs, you must also address your tangible resource needs. Determine what supplies, materials, goods and services you need in order to complete your project. With your project partner(s), strategize about the types and amounts of resources that are needed. Make your list as comprehensive as possible, including resources for every aspect of the project – from nametags and refreshments for volunteers to tools and restroom facilities.

You will be able to work with your project partners as well as your volunteers to secure many of the resources at no cost. In addition, think about businesses, community members and other organizations that may be ideal for securing elements needed for the project. What resources can they offer to help you carry out the project? Consider things such as supplies, meeting space for volunteer orientation, printing of marketing materials and consulting or professional services.

While in-kind contributions will help you complete the project, some items will require financial resources. As you list the supplies and materials needed for the project, note the ones that have a cost associated with them. How will you secure the resources needed to cover these costs?

See the sample Project Supply List Worksheet to help you write your list.

Educational Resources

You will need to consider how you will orient and train the volunteers working on the project. In order for your volunteers to be an effective part of the project, they need to understand the issue that the project addresses and the impact that it will make on the community. Volunteer orientation can be conducted prior to the project or included as part of the events on the actual day of service.

Orientation should include a brief overview of the CSO's mission and services and how volunteer support is contributing to that mission. To incorporate service learning into the project, discuss the community issue that is being addressed by the agency and the project. A brief history of the issue, statistics, current events related to the issue area (e.g., legislation activity), and other civic engagement opportunities linked to this issue (advocacy training, future service projects) are all extremely helpful in educating volunteers. Orientation should also include an outline of the project and what volunteers will be doing during the project so that everyone knows what to expect and what is expected of them.



Step 3: Map Your Project

The orientation and education portion of the project has many positive impacts on volunteers. It allows them to:

- See the impact they are having on the community
- Feel a greater part of a whole when they see all of the services the organization provides
- Gain a better understand the community's critical needs
- Gain a better understand how to affect change within the issue area being addressed

In addition to orientation, you may need to train volunteers for the work they will be doing. You may recruit volunteers who already have the necessary skills; however, many volunteers will need some instruction. If volunteers are prepared for the project, they will feel more comfortable with the work, the project will run more smoothly and your team is more likely to achieve its goals for the project.

Plan for what resources you need in order to orient and train the volunteers to the project. Consider these things:

- **Time**
 - When will you conduct the orientation and training? How much time will you need? Will you need to conduct more than one training session?
- **Location**
 - Will the orientation and training be held at the service site or another location? Do you need a large space, chairs, tables or electricity?
- **Facilitators**
 - Can volunteer leaders lead orientation and training, or will you need the support of another trainer with project-specific skills? Is on-site training required, and if so, who will lead it? In addition, you will need someone from the partner agency to speak to volunteers about the mission of the CSO, challenges they are facing, how the project will impact the organization and how volunteers can become involved on an ongoing basis.
- **Instructional materials**
 - Will you need printed materials, a PowerPoint presentation or access to an online training?

Planning for Reflection and Evaluation

Reflection and evaluation are important parts of a service project. Reflection is a process through which volunteers think about their personal experiences, and evaluation is intended to assess the project. You should take time *before* the project to plan how you will incorporate these steps into the overall service activity.



Step 3: Map Your Project

Reflection

Throughout the project, provide structured time for volunteers to think and talk about their service experience. This time of reflection can create a stronger sense of accomplishment, establish a deeper connection to the community, deepen volunteers' understanding of the social issue your project addresses and increase their commitment to service.

Reflection is designed to encourage volunteers to examine the project in terms of what they did, what they learned, how it affected them and how they will continue to support the social issue. Reflection can take many forms. Volunteers can have a group discussion, write about their experience, create a photo-journal of the project or respond to quotes about service. When planning your project, decide which form of reflection you will use. Tailor the reflection activity to the project; for example, if volunteers are assisting with arts and crafts classes at a daycare center, they can create a simple art project about their service experience.

Evaluation

You should always evaluate your project so that you can report success to volunteers, partners and the community. Evaluating will also help you learn what was successful and what things you should change for future projects. Overall, the evaluation process will provide you with valuable information to show the impact of the project on the community and to help you in planning, managing and implementing your next project.

As part of your project development, plan how you will evaluate the project, whom you will involve and how you will use the results. You can consider three types of evaluation:

- **Goal-based:** Did you meet the goals of the project?
- **Process-based:** Was the project planned, managed and implemented effectively?
- **Outcome-based:** Did you achieve the objectives of the project?

Please use the sample project evaluation and final report forms to help you in your evaluation efforts.

Now you have determined what you need for the project, from volunteers to supplies. In the next chapter you will explore ways to acquire the resources you need.



Step 4: Secure Resources

Overview

You have selected your project and identified the resources needed to complete it. How will you secure the items that you need? Recruiting volunteers is key to the success of the project. Without the appropriate volunteers filling the right roles, your project won't get very far! You also need to make sure that you have enough material and financial resources to accomplish your goals. In this chapter, you will learn ways to acquire these resources.

Goals

- Recruit volunteers
- Acquire funding, products and services
- Design volunteer orientation and training

Tools

- Volunteer Recruitment Message Worksheet
- Volunteer Information Worksheet
- Volunteer Assignment Worksheet



Recruiting Volunteers

To successfully complete your project, you will need volunteers. If you have too few participants, the project will likely go unfinished. If you have too many volunteers, some will have little to do and might feel that their time was not utilized well. You have already created a task matrix and determined the number of volunteers you need to fill specific positions. Now it's time to recruit them!

When recruiting volunteers, remember that the personal ask is always the most compelling form of recruitment! Consider using volunteers from a partner agency or approach other groups such as unions, sororities and fraternities, civic organizations, teacher's associations or independent living homes. You can also display recruitment information through the Internet, newspapers, local fairs, schools, community bulletin boards, restaurants and other interesting, high-traffic places.

Volunteers come in all shapes and sizes: male or female, child or adult, disabled or able-bodied, various races, religions, sexual orientations and income brackets. Not all volunteers look the same! Not all types of volunteering will appeal to all people, so make sure that you have diverse volunteer opportunities available. Similarly, be sure to target recruitment in ways that will appeal to different groups.

Use the Volunteer Recruitment Message Worksheet to help you craft your message.



Step 4: Secure Resources

Funding, Products and Services

You can obtain funding, products and services for your project in several ways. Grants, gifts and in-kind donations are a great way to get support from individuals, corporations and community organizations. Contact businesses in your neighborhood or companies that already have a connection to your clients or mission. Whom do you know?

Below you will find some basic ideas of how you can obtain various resources and support for your service project:

- **Businesses**
 - Corporate sponsorships to support staffing and operations
 - In-kind donations (like beverages, snacks, printing of course materials)
 - Meeting space
- **Colleges and Universities**
 - Community research
 - Course presenters
 - Interns to support project development, marketing and evaluation
 - Meeting space
- **Faith Groups**
 - Community research
 - Course presenters
 - In-kind donations
 - Meeting space
- **Foundations**
 - Grants to support staffing and operations
 - Technical assistance for project development, marketing and evaluation
 - Community research and presenters
- **Neighborhood Associations and Civic Groups**
 - Community outreach and recruitment
 - In-kind donations
- **Nonprofit Organizations**
 - Grants to support staffing and operations
 - Community research
 - Course presenters
 - Community outreach and recruitment
 - Meeting space



Step 4: Secure Resources

Develop a strategy for approaching a group or business about donating money, services or in-kind goods. Identify the correct people to contact, and make a targeted request that appeals to their needs or wants. Map out a case for support that expresses why the project is important, the impact it will create, your team's ability to complete the project, and how the group or business can be a part of the effort. Be specific about what you need from them, whether it is funds to purchase a certain item, three hours of consulting time on a particular topic or contacts to other like-minded organizations that might want to be involved. Prepare your strategy, and then ASK!

Make connections that count! Here are some tips:

- Begin with people you know (family, friends, neighbors, co-workers).
- Ask people you know to engage their friends to support your project.
- Partner with associations and institutions in your community. Businesses, nonprofit organizations, community centers, colleges and neighborhood associations can help you recruit participants, secure donations, obtain meeting space and assist with meeting other needs specific to your project.
- Talk personally with people to “sell” your project and get their support.
- Know what you need, and ask people how they can contribute.
- Create and post fliers in your community. Be sure to include e-mail and phone contact information.
- Publicize your project in local newspapers, Web sites and newsletters.
- Don't be afraid to “tap” people's emotions (happiness, anger, fear, passion) and incite them to get involved.
- Try creative outreach, such as posting fliers or hosting outreach stations at local corner stores, bus stops, fast food spots or other informal gathering places.

Orientation and Training

During the project-mapping phase, you planned your orientation and training and identified the resources you need. Look at the list of partners and potential partners and determine what resources they can offer for orientation and training. Consider asking for meeting space, printing of materials or experts to facilitate training. Don't forget to include representatives from the CSO to share about the agency and the impact the project will have on the community.

You have planned your project and identified and secured the resources you need to complete your project. As the day of the project approaches, it is time to finalize your plans. The next chapter will help you take care of the final details so that your project is a success.



Step 5: Finalize Your Project Plan

Overview

Have you ever planned a service project, arrived at the site and realized that you forgot something important? It may have seemed like a minor detail early in the planning process, and so you decided to take care of it later... but later never came. Instead of discovering what's missing on the day of the project, take time to carefully review your plans to make sure that everything is taken care of ahead of time. This chapter will provide you with an idea of the types of details you should keep in mind.

Goals

- Complete the project plan
- Communicate with volunteers
- Volunteer registration
- Plan for safety
- Create contingency plans
- On-site logistics
- Plan for fun
- Prepare for project day checklist

Tools

- Pre-Project Check List
- Sample Project Timeline
- Project Sign-in Sheet



Completing the Project Plan

In the weeks before the event, you will need to iron out any kinks and confirm that all aspects of the project are ready to go. The Pre-project Checklist tool will help you in this process.

Volunteer Communication and Registration

You have created a recruitment strategy and enlisted volunteers for your project. It is a good idea to pre-register volunteers. Pre-registration can be as simple as providing a contact name, number or e-mail address where volunteers can sign up. If volunteers pre-register, you will be able to contact them about project details and also discuss with them the skills, supplies or friends they might also want to bring to the project.

Prior to the event, check with volunteers and make sure that all special needs (medical or otherwise) have been addressed and met. Also, keep the commitments you make. People will not support you if you do not provide information requested, address issues they have or miss scheduled appointments.



Step 5: Finalize Your Project Plan

Continue to be in contact with your team. Keeping volunteers motivated and excited about your project is the best guarantee for its success! The more contact you provide, the more engaged your volunteers will be, and the more motivated they will be when they arrive. Also, respond to inquiries in a timely and thorough manner.

Make sure to confirm project details with all parties. Contact volunteers with a phone call or e-mail that:

- Introduces you (or another staff person, partner or volunteer) as the project leader
- Thanks them for volunteering
- Provides the date and time of the project, site address, directions, and parking information
- Describes what will occur at the project
- Explains what to wear or not wear to the project
- Encourages volunteers to bring supplies they may have
- Tells volunteers whom to contact if they have a change in plans

On the day of the project, designate an area for volunteers to “check in.” This will allow you to better manage volunteers that attend the project and effectively track their volunteer hours. Use the Project Sign-in Sheet as a guide.

Please use the sample volunteer information sheet and volunteer assignment sheets in resource section of the guide.

Safety

Ensuring the safety of life and property is critical. By reviewing the project for possible hazards and educating volunteers about safety, project staff will reduce the chance of someone getting hurt.

Review the safety/emergency plan with your project leaders. Know of all nearby emergency exits, first aid kits and automated external defibrillators (AED's). Assign a safety point person for the day of the event. Always have a first aid kit on hand and a phone to call first responders if necessary.

Contingency Planning

Always think through the worst-case scenarios. Play “devil’s advocate” as you analyze the possibilities of what could go wrong. Record your strategy to handle these problems. When you plan ahead for a problem, you can handle it with minimal disruption and cost. The key here is to not only think about what to do before you need to do it, but to also know whom you need to contact and have phone numbers readily available.



Step 5: Finalize Your Project Plan

Create contingency plans for weather (rain, extreme heat or cold, etc.) and other problems that can be anticipated. Another problem could be varying numbers of volunteers. What will you do if you have too many or too few volunteers for the project you planned? During step two when you visited the service site, you made a list of all the potential projects. Later, you created a task list and prioritized the jobs to be done. If you have fewer volunteers than you anticipated, use this list to determine which tasks are the most important and can be finished by a small group so that the volunteers have a sense of accomplishment at the end of the project. If you have more volunteers than you expected, look down the list for more tasks to be completed.

Plan for fun

It is volunteers' experiences that keep them coming back for more, and many times this is because they have had a good time. You want your volunteers to leave the project with a feeling that they worked hard, made a difference and had fun! Here are a few ideas on how to incorporate a "fun factor" into your projects:

Music – Get a local volunteer or staff member to play the role of "DJ for the Day" (a.k.a. DJ Serve) to pump music over a speaker system.

Warm-Up Exercises – Think about incorporating some fun stretches as part of the morning "run-of-show" announcements and before the small groups teams begin working. This is a great way to get people warm and smiling before they get to work.

Nametags or Group Names – If your projects are broken up into smaller tasks with task leaders, you can organize them by naming the groups something fun and having a unique sticker identifier on the name tags to break people up into the small groups. Then, when it is time to break into teams, you can have the task leader hold up a sign to gather the group. For example, the "Monkey" group would have a monkey sticker on their name tag and the task leader could hold up a sign and bananas to gather the team when the large group splits.

Hearing From the Agency Partner or Community Members – Many times volunteers leave projects noting that the most memorable part of their experience was hearing from the agency partner or a community member who was impacted by the project. Providing time and space for these community partners to thank volunteers and provide them with a deeper sense of the impact of their service is an essential element of a meaningful experience for volunteers.



Step 5: Finalize Your Project Plan



Volunteer Cheerleader - Have an energized volunteer play the role of project cheerleader for the day, kind of like Extreme Makeover: Home Edition's Ty Pennington. This person could walk around the project site and tell people how much time is left and where additional help is needed, but he or she could also shout out great volunteers and generate excitement. This person could carry a Polaroid camera to take picture of volunteers at work and give them away as keepsakes.

Reflection - We all know that this is a really important piece of the project it is often hard to do in a large group at the end of the project, so here are a few ideas. You could have a Reflection Board posted where people write their thoughts during the lunch break. A volunteer could read some of them out loud at the end of the day. Or, at the end of the project, simply have a volunteer go around with a microphone (Phil Donahue style) and gather volunteers' quick reflections about how they felt about the project and the impact they made. Additionally, at the end of the project, you could have task leaders give "shout outs" to great volunteers who served on their task teams.

Use the checklist and timeline to help finalize your planning details.



Step 6: Manage Your Project

Overview

Successful projects exhibit a good balance between logistics, time and people. As a project manager, you will need to balance these three elements effectively in order to implement a successful, productive service project. This chapter will discuss the various elements of a service project and how they can be managed effectively.

Goals

- Discuss how to manage time while on-site
- Learn techniques in managing people, their personalities and their skills
- Learn how to set the tone for a safe day

Tools

- Professional Skills Matrix
- Project Day Checklist
- Project Day Timeline
- Project Day Agenda
- Volunteer Incident Report Form



Managing Time

The first 30 minutes of every project may seem a little chaotic as people get acclimated to their tasks, become familiar with the site area and mingle with other volunteers. However, **YOU KNOW THE PLAN!** Try to remain calm and confident at all times.

Project leaders can play a key role in monitoring progress at the project. Ask them to adjust the work according to the progress being made. It is better to fully complete a portion of the project than to not complete any of the project(s). The volunteers will feel a sense of productivity when they see the fruits of their efforts, even if it is only part of the project that is complete.

If it helps, apply the “80/20 Rule” to time management. This rule, also known as Pareto’s Principle or Pareto’s Law, can be a very effective tool in helping you manage time and tasks effectively. The “80/20 Rule” means that in every project, a few things (approximately 20 percent) are vital and many (approximately 80 percent) are incidental.

Project managers know that 20 percent of the work (most likely, the first 10 percent and the last 10 percent) consumes a large majority of your time and resources. The value of the Pareto Principle for a manager is that it reminds you to focus on the 20 percent that matters most. When the fire drills of the day begin to zap your time, remind yourself of the 20 percent that needs your undivided attention. If something in the schedule has to slip – if something is not going to get done – make sure it is not a crucial aspect of the project.



Step 6: Manage Your Project

This “80/20 Rule” can help serve as a daily reminder to focus the majority of your time and energy on the percent of your work that is really important. Don’t just work hard; work smart!

Tip: Developing a project day agenda is a good idea to keep volunteers informed and keep all parties on track. Use the sample Project Day Agenda as a guide.

Managing People

Being a manager of people can be rewarding, yet challenging. You need to juggle different personalities, various skill levels and individual motivations all at the same time. The key is being able to accurately identify personality traits and know how to position the a range of personalities and skills within the varying teams of your project. Below is a general overview of four basic personality types that you might encounter.

The Leader – The “A” Type Personality – Individuals who exhibit the “A” personality are usually very independent, direct and to the point. They exude a take-charge personality and often will ask you to “get to the bottom line” or give them the “executive summary” to read. They do not like routine and often delegate mundane chores to someone else. They are very decisive and persistent in getting what they want and need.

The Socializer – The “B” Type Personality – Individuals who exhibit the “B” personality type love to have fun, travel and be a part of groups. These people are the center of attention often. They love excitement and being in the limelight and usually have high energy levels. The “B” personality is as supportive of others, as they are direct in their approach. This type tends to be very talkative and outgoing with people and is normally quite persuasive.

The Details, Details, Details – The “C” Type Personality – Individuals who exhibit the “C” personality type thrive on details and accuracy, and they take just about everything seriously. They are usually very neat, calculated and precise in just about everything they do.

The Ever Dependable – The “D” Type Personality – Individuals who exhibit the “D” personality type do not like change. Instead, they prefer to have a set of guidelines from which to follow, and they won’t mind doing the same thing repetitively. They are usually punctual and consistent.

Opposite personalities can complement one another if they try to understand the other’s perspective. However, every project manager, at some point, will encounter clashing personalities. If you encounter this type of situation, try to remove the volunteer(s) from the situation and redirect them to another task that could better fit their personality.



Step 6: Manage Your Project

In addition to juggling varying personalities, you will need to be able to balance the different skill levels of your volunteers. The Professional Skills Matrix tool is designed to provide structure in using those skills. It provides you examples of volunteer positions that align with volunteer skill level.

Safety

Ensuring the safety of life and property is critical. By reviewing your project for possible hazards and educating your volunteers about safety, you will decrease the risk of injury. Always have a first aid kit on hand and a phone to call 911 if necessary.

General Project Safety Information

The safety tips below may be useful while on site at an outdoors project. Please look through the list and advise your volunteers to take these precautions, if applicable.

- Wear sunscreen if outside.
- Drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty. Remain hydrated!
- Where appropriate, wear gloves, goggles and dust masks (these last two items must be worn when scraping, sanding or spray painting), safety vests, and sturdy closed-toed shoes.
- Watch out for sharp or dangerous objects such as broken glass or needles. Be cautious around bio-medical waste and do not touch it.
- When finished with tools, be sure to put them in an appropriate place and with sharp edges pointed down. Please do not leave tools lying around, as someone may injure themselves.
- Clean your equipment before you leave.
- If children are present, please watch them closely to be certain that they are not playing with dangerous or inappropriate items.
- If using a ladder, make sure that all of the rungs are intact. When on a ladder, have a spotter. Make sure you are going up the ladder on the right side, and do not stand on the top rung of the ladder.
- If using scaffolding, always have a spotter.
- Stay away from any electrical feeds.
- Do not intentionally inhale chemical fumes.
- Be on the lookout for poisonous insects, snakes or scorpions, and keep your distance from them.
- Turn rocks away from you, not toward you. (Critters like to hide under them!)
- Please do not wander away from the project, volunteer group, trail or work area.
- Please report all incidents immediately to the project or team leader.

Tip: It is a good idea to document all incidents that occur while on the project site. This will help to mitigate risk. Please see the sample Volunteer Incident Report Form as a guide. Also, use the Project Day Checklist and Project Day Timeline below to direct your day of project activities.



Step 7: Wrap Up Your Project

Overview

Now that you have undergone the majority of your project, it is time to think about concluding the project and wrapping up all loose ends. To make your project a success, you should finalize all logistical matters, as well as focus on clean-up, reflection, recognition and evaluation.

Goals

- Understand the necessary steps involved in post-project clean up
- Learn how to recognize volunteers for their efforts
- Discuss reflection and how to connect volunteers to the mission of the project
- Understand the purpose and importance of evaluation

Tools

- Sample Evaluation Survey
- Sample Final Report

At the end of the project, a number of logistical matters should be addressed:

Clean up – Ask everyone do their part! Have project leaders lead volunteers in pitching in to make the site look better than it did when they arrived. All materials should be used or donated to the CSO. All tools should be returned to their respective areas.

Recognition – Volunteer recognition is a must! You should make sure that volunteers feel appreciated, and you should invite them back to serve again.

Reflection – Reflection and community building provide volunteers an opportunity to reflect on the day's events. These activities help volunteers connect to the mission of the project.

Evaluation – Evaluation and feedback are necessary for improving your projects. The information gathered through these forms will help your future projects better suit the needs of your volunteers and your community.



Step 7: Wrap Up Your Project

Clean Up

Spend adequate time cleaning up after the project is finished. You always want to leave the site cleaner than it was when you arrived. Here are some steps to follow:

- Collect and dispose of or recycle any food-related trash, including wrappers, empty water bottles or cups.
- Empty any unused, un-reusable products into proper containers and throw them away.
- Collect all stray plastic and paper products on the ground.
- Gather up the garbage, bag it and dispose of it properly.
- Break down the registration table and break area, if applicable. Store the table, chairs and other furniture in their proper places.
- Store any extra forms you have; you may be able to use them at a later time.
- Collect the sign-in sheets, volunteer waiver forms and any other signed forms for your documentation.
- Make sure that no personal belongings are left on-site.
- Collect all of your safety items for re-use (if possible).
- Do a final walk-through of the site to make sure it is in the same or better condition in which you came.
- If you have engaged in a painting activity, make sure that all paint is removed from the floors and any other inappropriate places.

Recognition

At the end of the project, you must take time to recognize your volunteers. Your recognition or celebration can be the same day as the project (perhaps even at the project site) or later in a different location.

Showing appreciation for your volunteers is a great way to get them to come back! The simplest acknowledgment and appreciation practices are often the most effective. When showing volunteers that you care, make sure to:

- Deliver recognition in a personal and honest manner. Avoid providing recognition that is disingenuous or over-exaggerated.
- Tailor your recognition and reward to the unique needs of the people involved.
- Have a variety of recognition and reward options available. This enables an organization to acknowledge accomplishments in ways appropriate to the individual and the situation.
- Recognize volunteer contributions throughout the project – timing is crucial! Reward volunteers close to the time that the volunteering occurs. Time delays weaken the impact of the recognition project.
- Have a clear message. Be sure that volunteers understand why they receive awards and the criteria used to determine awards. Create a clear, well-communicated connection between accomplishments and the recognition received.
- The most important way to recognize volunteers is to treat them with respect and give them support and praise throughout the project.



Step 7: Wrap Up Your Project

In addition to celebrating your volunteers throughout the project, take a moment at the end of the project to lead your volunteers through a community building conversation. Spend about 10 minutes asking them to reflect on their experiences and thoughts about the project and how their work will affect the community they have served. Reflection and community building leads to more effective volunteerism; you are giving volunteers the opportunity to think and discuss their experiences and the relationship of service to larger social concerns.

Reflection on Service Learning

Reflection is strongly encouraged after every service experience; this process is often referred to as service learning or community building. While volunteers think about their experiences independently, a conversation among all participating volunteers creates a stronger sense of accomplishment and establishes a deeper connection to the community. A group conversation provides structured time for volunteers to think and talk about what occurred during the project. This group conversation can often deepen volunteers' understanding of the social issue your project addresses and increase their commitment to service.

Here are some sample reflection questions to help facilitate a reflective discussion about the service project:

- What issue(s) is being addressed? What did you notice happening around you during the project? What were the results/outcome of the project?
- So what? What did you think about during the project activity? What effect do you think this activity has had on those intended to benefit from it? How has it affected you?
- Now what? What are the larger issues that caused the need for you to participate in this service activity? How did your efforts help? What more needs to be done to improve these problems? How will you apply what you have learned here in the future?

Evaluation and Feedback

Evaluation and feedback are different than the reflection. Evaluation is about the actual project – the work, planning, coordination, delivery, implementation, logistics and management. Feedback is a gift – use it as an opportunity to reflect on the overall management and implementation of the project. If you never know what the volunteers and your community contacts think, you will never be able to adequately address future needs. Therefore, do not be hesitant to ask your project leaders, volunteers and CSO contacts for their feedback. Most people will be happy that you asked.

The Sample Evaluation Survey tool can help guide your evaluation process.



Step 7: Wrap Up Your Project



To get feedback, ask those involved to complete a feedback form at the end of the project before everyone leaves. You already have them there, the experience is fresh in their minds and you can get it from them quickly. Ask a volunteer (possibly the volunteer registrar) to pass out feedback forms. Do not ask volunteers to put their names on these forms; people are more comfortable giving anonymous feedback. Do not react or respond to the feedback while at the project site. If a volunteer gives you his or her name and contact information, you should call him or her to discuss it further shortly after the project.

If immediate feedback is not an option, you can mail or e-mail participants a feedback form within a week of the project. You can attach a feedback form to the thank you letter or follow-up correspondence. If you are mailing the form, include a stamped return envelope; this increases the likelihood of getting a returned form.



Summary

Careful planning and implementation are critical to the success of your service project. By working with the community instead of for the community, you will identify true needs and issues to address through service. Thorough research of the issue will lead you to community partners and a service project that can make a strong impact. After mapping out the details and the resources needed for the project, you will be able to work with individuals, groups and businesses to recruit volunteers and secure other needed resources. Then, examine the tiny details that make a real difference to the project, gather for the service event and work to change your community. Don't forget to reflect on your progress and celebrate success.

Tip: It is a good idea to put together a final report of the project to supply to all stakeholders (e.g., funders, donors, volunteers, CSO staff). See the Sample Final Report template for further guidance.



Additional Resources

Listed below are several online resources on volunteerism and volunteer development.

- Energize Inc. **www.energizeinc.com**
- HandsOn Network: **www.HandsOnNetwork.org**
- Idealist.org: Action Without Borders **www.idealist.org**
- Independent Sector: **www.independentsector.org**
- National & Global Youth Service Day: **<http://www.ysa.org/nysd/resource/planning.cfm>**
- National Service Resource Center: **www.nationalserviceresources.org**

Our Mission

We inspire, equip and mobilize people to take action that changes the world.

Our Vision

One day every person will discover their power to make a difference, creating healthy communities and vibrant democracies around the world.



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