Planning a Meaningful Service Project

A Step-By-Step Guide

GOALS
☐ Why do you want to involve your organization in this service project?
☐ What do you hope participants will gain from being involved?
☐ How many participants do you hope/need to be involved in the project?
☐ Include others in the brainstorming of goals/ideas for this service project.

SITE SELECTION
☐ Choose your site based on your interest in the issue, population or project.
☐ Pick a site based on the interests of the participants.
☐ Will the work be direct, indirect service or advocacy?
☐ Consider the needs of the site/community. To truly make a difference in the community, your actions must meet a real community need.
☐ What types of services does the site offer? What types of clients does the site serve? What confidentiality policies or restrictions does the site have?
☐ Where is the site located?
☐ Consult the list of service opportunities provided by the Community Service Office.

PREPARATION
☐ What kind of orientation (or training) will your group receive prior to the service activity?
☐ Make sure to train participants on how to appropriately interact with the clients they will be serving, the importance being flexible and open-minded, and maintaining confidentiality.
☐ Who will provide the orientation?
☐ Educate your group by inviting the contact person from your service site to come and talk about his/her work, the problems they see daily, background on their site, etc.

RECRUITMENT
☐ How will you get students to participate in the activity? In what ways can students benefit from this particular service activity?
☐ How will you recruit drivers or student leaders? In what ways would either one benefit from taking a leadership role?
☐ What should the timeline be for both of these recruitment efforts?

TIME
☐ Start your planning of the service project early!
☐ How much time will you commit to this activity?
☐ Develop a timeline of what you need to do and when you need to do it by.
☐ Are you interested in planning a one-time project or would you prefer to participate with this organization on an on-going basis?
☐ When (date and time) will the project take place?
☐ Have you considered the schedules of your participants?
☐ Check out the campus calendar to see what else is happening on the date(s) you plan to do your service project.
☐ Consider the time of year and how weather could impact your project.
☐ Have you factored in orientation and reflection time?

TRANSPORTATION
☐ Do you have directions to the site and do you have those written out for your drivers?
☐ How will you get students to and from the service site? Do you have certified drivers?
☐ How will you deal with "stranded" students?
SUPERVISION
☐ Who will be your contact person at the site? Who do you talk to when you get to the site? Will a site person supervise the activity?
☐ Will there be a "site leader" from your organization? Is this person knowledgeable about the site? How will this person be trained to lead?
☐ Who do you talk to when issues arise?

COMMUNICATION
☐ Keep in regular contact with the site and follow up with them as needed and in a timely manner. Remember site contacts have hectic schedules so respectful of their time and ability to return your messages.
☐ Confirm details with the site the day before the event.
☐ Keep the participants informed on what they will be doing, where they need to be, what they need to bring and who to contact if they have a concern or question.

SAFETY AND EMERGENCY CONCERNS
☐ Is the work within the students’ capabilities?
☐ Should you consider any safety precautions?
☐ Who needs to know where you will be an for how long?
☐ What will you do if there is an emergency?
☐ Will you have a cell phone or other way to make an emergency call?
☐ Does the site require that participants sign a waiver?

RESOURCES
☐ What will you need to do the work?
☐ Are supplies provided at the site, or are you responsible for bringing them?
☐ Might anyone be willing to donate supplies for the service activity?
☐ Do you need water, food and how will that be provided?
☐ Do you need to reserve a space on campus to do orientation/reflection?
☐ Set up a budget based on estimated costs of resources needed. Remember to track actual expenses and hang onto receipts.

REFLECTION
☐ Will the reflection be a group discussion, or take some other form?
☐ Where will it take place?
☐ Will it be formal or informal?
☐ How will you use open-ended questions to prompt reflection?
☐ Will it be useful to use a service reflection model?

POST-EVENT FOLLOW UP
☐ Have you thanked the site supervisor, the participants and those who donated supplies?
☐ Have you given all participants (if known) a summary of the event’s successes?
☐ Have you created publicity to inform the campus and community about what you’ve accomplished?

Adapted from Luther College’s Checklist for Planning the Best Service Project Ever- http://career.luther.edu/service_learning/planning_service_activities/checklist.html and Service Project Planning from the Ohio Union at the Ohio State University http://www.ohiounion.com/2Serv/service/plan.asp.