

Planning A Service Project for Your Group

Questions to Consider

Community service is a way for groups and individuals to have a positive impact in the community and make a difference in the lives of others. It means contributing your time, energy, and abilities to work for, on behalf of, and with, other people. It is a way to address issues that concern you by taking constructive action. Community service can also be fun and is an excellent way for group members to work together and learn more about each other. The following questions can help guide you and your group through your discussion.

What is your group's motivation for getting involved in community service? Is service part of the group's mission or one of the ways you can work together as a group. Talk about group activities that have been successful in the past. Brainstorm how those activities tie into a service project. For example, if your group is a choral ensemble and has put on a number of performances, consider visiting a local family emergency shelter and giving a concert.

How many members of your group are interested in getting involved? This will be important information when it comes to making a decision about what type of volunteer project is feasible. For example, if only five members of the group want to get involved, you may not want to plan a major fundraiser.

Do you want to do a one-time project with an agency or make a more long-term commitment? Clarify what type of commitment your group can make. For example, if your group decides they can only commit to a one-time event, don't plan an activity, like tutoring, that requires training and an on-going commitment. Agencies often have a mixture of needs that suit both on-going and one-time volunteers. Contact agencies directly to see what might be needed. Or call the Center for Community Service and we will make the call for you.

What issues are important to your group? Consider the purpose and mission of your group. If your organization has a particular philanthropy or explores a social issue, the Center for Community Service can help you find agencies that also work with that philanthropy or issue. If your organization is involved in recreation or sports, consider holding a free clinic in skills for local school children or sponsoring an outing. The options are only limited by your imagination and creativity.

What type of community service do you want to do? There are three main types of service: direct, non-direct (behind the scenes), and indirect (on behalf of). Direct service involves working one-on-one with individuals, such as tutoring children, teaching English as a second language, or leading a sing-a-long for nursing home residents.

Working behind the scenes (non-direct service) includes service such as painting a day care center or preparing food for people who are living with AIDS and are unable to cook for themselves. When working on behalf of an agency (indirect service) or issue you are concerned about, you may hold a fundraiser or participate in a letter writing campaign.

Think about the group's needs when considering the intensity level of the experience. For groups with minimal experience with community service, behind-the-scenes work at an agency or work on behalf of individuals or an issue may be the most comfortable way to begin.

Where should you go to get information about planning a community service project? The Center for Community Service, within the Office of Student Development, has multiple resources to help you plan an excellent service experience for your group. Visit the office (AMU 329) and talk with one of our Community Service Program Assistants.

Planning Timeline

What is a good planning timeline for a high quality service experience?

1. At least six weeks prior to your desired service date...

- Determine the issues, populations, and locations of interest to the group
- Determine time investment of the group (on-going, one time, # of hours)
- Consult the Center for Community Service, 8-1412
- Gather information about potential agencies and issues
- Make preliminary phone calls to agencies; discuss service activities and potential dates

2. At least four weeks prior to your desired service date...

- Solidify with the host agency the service location, date, time and activity
- Inform your group of the details (health, safety and transportation)
- Begin to think about preparation activities
- Solidify transportation

3. At least two weeks prior to your service date...

- Remind participants of the service activity
- Provide written information about the agency or issue

4. The week prior to your service date...

- Remind participants of your commitment to the agency or activity
- Discuss the agency and issue; draw connections to other experiences
- Facilitate a preparation activity

5. After your service...

- Reflect and evaluate with your group
- Thank host agency
- Throughout the remainder of the semester continue to draw connections and learning from the service experience

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