PLANNING THE PROJECT

SAMPLE DAY OF EVENT TIMELINE

There are numerous ways in which to set up your event. We have provided a sample timeline below. This may be adjusted depending on your location and length of activity.

8:00 a.m.  Registration and informal breakfast*
8:25 a.m.  Welcome
8:30 a.m.  Educational orientation led by non-profit agency
9:00 a.m.  Project begins
11:30 a.m.  Discussion and reflection among participants over snacks
12:00 p.m.  Event concludes (Make sure to get a group photo!)

*You may want to organize a lunch following the activity instead of a breakfast prior to the activity.

HOW DO I ORGANIZE A PROJECT?

Explore the issues facing your community and consider issues relevant to alumni peers

- If you are already a volunteer at an agency, ask what needs the alumni volunteers could address.
- Talk to friends and neighbors about community needs and local volunteer organizations.
- Consult with local umbrella organizations such as the United Way.
- Reach out to fellow alumni who work in the non-profit sector – the Alumni Association can provide you with some alumni to contact.
- Reach out to fellow alumni who sit on agency boards – the Alumni Association can provide you with some alumni to contact.
AGENCY AND PROJECT SELECTION REQUIREMENTS AND TIPS

Criteria for selection of service project

- Locally-focused organization, committed to sustainable change in the community
- Project should be mutually beneficial – meets an agency need and will be of interest to alumni
- Agency has the capacity to support the proposed project (staffing, planning time, materials, etc.)
- Educational component including overview of the organization, discussion of their mission in the context of the larger community, etc. must be possible
- May be direct (working with people) or indirect (working with supplies, facilities, etc.) service
- Consider logistics such as ease of public transportation and parking at the site
- Consider minimum, ideal, and maximum number of volunteers the project/agency can support
- Work with agency to create a project that takes 2-3 hours to complete
- Keep in mind that there is great interest in family friendly sites, so ask about age restrictions and other limitations (consider projects that are kid-friendly as well as those that are less physical for alumni who are older or who have physical limitations)
- Consider whether the service project will be indoors or outdoors, and any implications for participants, back-up plans for poor weather, etc.

Best practices for service project/agency selection

- Be sure to mention to the agency that your group is taking part in a nationwide month of service entitled WashU Engage - alumni of Washington University will be participating in service projects across the country in the month of April 2017.
- If the agency’s potential projects don’t align with site leader goals, scheduling constraints, etc., we encourage you to respectfully move on to a different agency.
- There should never be a fee of any kind to participate in a service project.
- Participants should not be required to bring meals, snacks or supplies for other volunteers or members of the organization.
- Fundraising of any kind is prohibited during service projects.
- Make sure to know what the agency’s expectations are around liability waivers or required items needed to volunteer with them.
WHAT QUESTIONS DO I NEED ANSWERED BY MY COMMUNITY PARTNER?

As you build plans with your community partner, be sure to address the following questions. We encourage you to preview our planning [this worksheet] and complete it once you have gathered all of the information. This will assist us in publicizing your event and in helping you identify any lingering questions.

- What is the scope of the work that we should communicate to potential participants?
- What are the: 1) ideal number and 2) minimum number of participants needed and 3) maximum number that can be accommodated for this project?
- Is there an age requirement for volunteers?
- Will it be possible to have someone from the organization lead the educational component for the volunteer group (introduction to the organization’s mission, work, and context of the issue in the community context)? This component is critical to helping volunteers contextualize the work they are doing.
- Is there public transportation access? If participants drive to the service project, where should they park?
- Is there an appropriate area where the group can meet to sign-in for the day, get nametags and instructions?
- Is there an appropriate area where the group can meet for the discussion/reflection portion at the end of the project? (Consider whether this site will have a continental breakfast prior to starting work or a lunch following the work. Is there a location to have the meal? If not, is there one nearby, such as a park? The educational component could possibly take place over a continental breakfast - if the agency doesn’t mind. The discussion/reflection portion at the end could take place over a lunch)
- Are there any supplies that participants should bring on the day of the project? (e.g. work gloves)
- How should participants dress for the project?
- If the project is outdoors, what is the weather plan? (Often the work goes forward unless it is pouring rain, but in this case the no-show rate will be fairly high. Try to arrange an indoor alternative activity such as stuffing envelopes for a mailing as a backup or plan the rain date in advance.)
- What are the physical requirements for this project? (must be able to lift 20 lbs., bend over, etc.)
PREPARING FOR MARKETING THE PROJECT

The Alumni Association will take the information you submitted and craft a description which we will use to publicize your event. The description will include a brief description of the agency and the scope of the project. Here is an example from 2016:

Project Open Hand is a nonprofit organization that engages the community by providing meals with love to critically ill neighbors and seniors. Every day, Project Open Hand prepares 2,500 nutritious meals and provide 200 bags of healthy groceries to help sustain our clients as they battle serious illnesses, isolation, or the health challenges of old age.

Our group will be helping Project Open Hand prepare meals for their clients. This will include slicing and dicing fresh produce in our kitchen, helping sort and pack food in the warehouse, and other tasks to get the meals and groceries ready to be picked up or delivered.

Agency Name: Project Open Hand
Date: April 9, 2016
Time: 11:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Project Location: Project Open Hand
730 Polk St.
San Francisco, CA 94109

Site Leader:
Site Leader Email:
Number of Participants: 20
Indoor or Outdoor project: Indoor
Attire: sleeves, long pants, close-toed shoes
Requirements (physical and age limitations): Volunteers must be 15 years or older.
PLANNING THE REFLECTIVE DISCUSSION

Reflection is an essential part of effective service, because it provides context for the service and encourages participants to think more deeply about the issue(s) addressed by the agency and the people/neighborhoods they serve to help them make sense of their experience. Reflection can take many forms and can be called wrap-up, debrief, or discussion. In most cases, it will last 20-30 minutes during a meal or snack.

Throughout the course of the reflection, make sure to ask questions that answer

1. WHAT participants saw, what they learned about the agency, the population served, the community issue.
2. SO WHAT- reflect on why these issues matter, what significance or importance did the service have for the organization and surrounding community?
3. NOW WHAT- reflect on next steps after this experience. Are there ways the participants want to stay involved? (Ex: continue to volunteer, share information about the organization with others, donate money or time, serve on a board) How do the issues we addressed today tie into local or national policy, politics, or movements? What would you like to explore further? Closing – Because of my experience today, I will...

Five Tips for Facilitators:

Start with a check in that allows everyone to share
1. Establish group norms: Spend a couple of minutes asking participants what rules they want to follow during the conversation. Be ready to share some of your own, such as:
   • What is said here stays here, what is learned here leaves here
   • Listen to understand
   • Assume good intentions
2. Consider small group work or pairs to spur discussion: Get people talking by breaking them into small groups, having them answer a question together, and then report out.
3. Be comfortable with silence: Sometimes people need time to process; wait 5 seconds longer than you are comfortable with to give people time to respond.
4. Don’t place value statements on any participant’s insights: Saying “good thought” or merely nodding at some people and not others can make people feel like the comments are being valued differently and shut people down.
5. Keep track of time: Make sure you’re monitoring the time and that everyone gets a chance to participate if they choose.