Service Planning Guide

1. Identify an Issue
   Identify an issue: What community issue would your group like to address? Many people identify the type of service task they would like to complete instead of doing the appropriate research to identify a community issue. For example, food insecurity would be the community issue for a service project with a local food bank. The volunteer directory on this website is a great resource as well as Trident United Way’s Go Volunteer Guide.

2. Appoint a Site Coordinator
   Who is in charge of communicating with the potential organizations? One person from the group will need to be the primary group contact and deliverer of information. This person will receive all communications on behalf of the group regarding volunteering, and will be responsible for communicating with all group members.

3. Determine Number of Volunteers
   Determine numbers of volunteers: When you contact an agency, it is helpful to offer an estimate of how many volunteers will be coming. Be honest about how many people will follow through on their commitment, given class and work conflicts. If you have 15 people in your group, it is unlikely that all 15 will sign up and/or follow through with attendance at the volunteer event. Most agencies can handle 10-20 volunteers at a time; accommodating more than 20 may be more challenging.

4. Choose Dates & Times
   Choose possible dates & times: The agency will want to know when you want to volunteer. It helps to be as specific as you can and to offer a few options. Be realistic about the start time (how early will people really get going on a weekend morning?) and the duration (what else do people have to do that day?) of the project.

2. Contact an Agency
   Call an agency’s volunteer coordinator. Calling an agency is the most efficient way to set up a volunteer event. Ask them what activities they have available and for how many people. If you don’t hear back right away send an email.

   Be patient, many agencies are understaffed and may have missed you call. If you haven’t heard after a few days, contact the office again. You may have to contact multiple agencies before a service project is finalized.

   If an agency doesn’t have any available opportunities consider supporting them philanthropically. Ream more information about coordinating philanthropy efforts through our Fundraising and Philanthropy Guide.
Once you have identified potential volunteering activities, request a meeting to conduct a site visit to familiarize yourself with the service location and available resources. Be sure to confirm the following details with the community partner:

- Exact times and dates volunteers will need to arrive on site
- Location volunteers should report to upon arrival
- Availability of parking, bathrooms, a water source, etc.
- If tools and resources will be provided, and what the volunteers are expected to bring themselves
- Volunteer dress code
- Request an orientation to the organization upon arrival
- Request a contact number for the volunteer coordinator for the day of the event

3. Prepare for Service

Inform participants with the details of the volunteer project such as date, time, what to wear, and any waivers that need to be signed. As the site coordinator, be sure to pack extra water bottles, a first aid kit, directions to and from the site, and any other last minute items. The week of the event, connect with the community partner to confirm the service event and send an updated list of participants. If there are any changes to the project on your end, let the community partner know immediately. Ensure that all waivers are turned in to the club advisor or appropriate staff member 24 hours before the service event. Be sure to have a rain plan!

4. Participate in Service

Upon arrival at the service site, report to the volunteer coordinator with the total number in attendance and request a brief orientation to the organization and tasks ahead. Participate fully and be attentive to the needs of the community partner. Keep in mind you that are representing yourself, the organization or club you are a part of, and the College of Charleston. We strongly advise you to turn your cell phone off during service. Thank the community partner for allowing you to volunteer with them and to take the time to lead you through the service tasks.

5. Following Service

Coordinate a de-briefing/reflection session with your group. What did you accomplish today? What issue does this organization address in your community? How will this service experience impact your future behavior and decision making as a responsible citizen? Refer to Reflection Toolkit for more information. Send a thank you letter to the organization for accommodating your group. Keep in contact with the organization for future philanthropic and service opportunities. If you are representing an on-campus organization, keep track of all previous service events for future organization leaders to reference.