

TOOLKITS

Generate Solutions to Local Needs

SERVICE IN YOUR COMMUNITY THE FACTS

This summer, commit yourself and a team of your friends, family, and neighbors to join United We Serve. This tool kit will give you the basics to recruit a team, organize your own service project, and make an impact in your community this summer.

GETTING STARTED

While no two projects will be the same, successful projects will share a few common practices. We encourage you to incorporate the following elements into your service project:

- Create a team with your friends and neighbors to share the effort;
- Set outcome-based goals and track your progress to those goals;
- Celebrate your successes together.

The Challenge: Many community-based organizations do not have enough capacity to manage a large number of volunteers, so they need you to organize yourself in coordination with them. This tool kit is designed to either help you organize a group and be a positive addition to a community-based organization, or, if such an organization does not exist, to be a well-organized independently-run group that fills a needed gap in the community.

A step by step guide to getting started and executing service activities follows. Please let us know how your project goes and what you learn by telling your story at Serve.gov.

STEP ONE: IDENTIFY LOCAL NEEDS

No one knows your community better than you and your neighbors do. This summer, take proactive steps to address the challenges you see daily and generate solutions that work in your neighborhood. Whether you and your team decide to partner with the local library to refurbish reading rooms or to organize summer meal distribution at a community center, you already have the resources you need to get started.

- Search Serve.gov and find out what's already happening in your community. If you see a service gap, consider creating your own project.
- Brainstorm with friends and local leaders about what your community most needs.
- Conduct a needs assessment by mapping resources, holding focus groups or distributing a survey.

- Visit the Corporation for National and Community Service for in depth guides to [identifying local needs](#).
- Visit the Corporation for National and Community Service website for suggested [service activities](#).

STEP TWO: BUILD A TEAM

Teams can help share the work, motivate members, and hold each other accountable. Teams build community. Ask your family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and faith group members to serve with you.

- Host a house meeting or pot luck to choose a project, set goals, recruit volunteers and plan next steps.
- [“Get a guide for hosting a house meeting”](#)
- Post your service activity on [Serve.gov](#) to recruit new volunteers.

STEP THREE: SET A GOAL

Set a service goal for June 22 – September 11 and hold yourself accountable. Commit as individuals and as a team to making a measurable impact. Set your goals high to stretch yourself. Then keep track of how you are doing and designate someone to be responsible for updating the group on how you are progressing toward your goals. You’ll be surprised at how much you can do when you commit, focus, and follow through.

- [“Get a goal-setting guide”](#)

STEP FOUR: SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY

The key to effective service is planning. Organize your materials, make confirmation calls and, if you have time, read supplemental materials before you volunteer.

- [“Get a tip sheet for your service activity”](#)
- Visit the Hands on Network website for [in depth guides](#) on running volunteer activities.

STEP FIVE: REPORT AND CELEBRATE SUCCESSES

Your team members, the community, and the President want to know about your successes and hear your stories. Share your accomplishments by reporting your results. We will highlight the best stories throughout the summer. Tell us about your successes and what you have learned, or just tell your story of service at [Serve.gov](#).

FOLLOW UP

SPREAD THE SERVICE

After every event, thank your volunteers and sign them up for the next event.

House Meetings

Purpose:

House meetings are a valuable tactic for recruiting volunteers and building a team. House meetings allow community members to share their concerns and join together to work for progress. Within the room, you already have all the tools you need to enact change on a local level. Every attendee can contribute time or resources or leadership abilities.

Your house meeting will help you identify your leadership team. The people that are committed enough to come to your house meeting should be considered potential leaders of the initiatives being implemented in their communities.

As a house meeting host, invite people from your social network to participate in a discussion about your community, pressing needs, and potential solutions. House meetings often engage people new to service and unclear about next steps. Serving with the support of a team will increase the ease and comfort of many new volunteers.

Building community through house meetings is a critical step toward the President's ultimate goal, which is to support everyday Americans in a grassroots effort to improve lives and strengthen communities.

A House Meeting

Goals

- Choose and plan a service project for the summer.
- Set measurable group and personal goals for your United We Serve project.
- Identify 5 attendees to be team leaders.
- Plan the next meeting of the leadership team and identify next steps for each leader.
- Obtain commitments from all attendees to volunteer on a regular basis from June 22 – September 11.

Host Duties

- Before
 - To have **20** people attend, you will need to invite **50**. Brainstorm a list of **50** people to invite. Include your friends, family, members of your faith group, colleagues, book club attendees, etc.
 - Make calls to the **50** people on your list to invite them to your house meeting. Remember that phone calls are much more effective than a mass email.
 - Post your house meeting on Serve.gov and invite local residents interested in volunteering to attend.
 - Browse Serve.gov to see what needs in your community aren't being met and which organizations you might be able to partner with. Take some preliminary steps to identify local partners already working in the community.
 - Prepare necessary materials.

- During
 - Be prepared to give a short explanation of why you became involved/what inspired you to serve.
 - Consider how you most want to serve your community. President Obama has identified four target areas for summer service: health, education, community renewal, and energy and environment. What does your community most need?

- After
 - Thank attendees and get their pledge to serve this summer.
 - Organize a follow-up volunteer leadership meeting with your new team to take next steps.

House Meeting Planner

Use this brainstorm sheet to think of those you want to invite, including those who have never volunteered before or may be new to Untied We Serve.

Name	Phone #	Invited (Y/N)	Committed (Y/N)	Confirmed (Y/N)	Notes
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Name: Please print the invitee’s full name.

Invite: Please mark **yes, no, maybe** or **left message (LM)**. This will help you track who you need to contact and who you should be calling for confirmation. The only real invitations are when you speak with someone directly.

Commit: Please mark **yes, no** or **maybe**.

Confirm: Please mark **yes, no** or **left message (LM)**. You’ll need to call every invitee who said yes or maybe, and every invitee who only got a left message. Please do not assume that **anybody** will come without a confirmation the day before your meeting. It can’t hurt to give people a quick reminder, and you need to know how many people will be at your meeting to make that meeting as effective and enjoyable as possible.

House Meeting Agenda

*****Before starting the meeting, have everyone sign in and appoint a timekeeper who will keep each section running on time.*****

- 0:00-0:10 **Host welcome and introduction**
- Host of the meeting introduces themselves and welcomes attendees.
 - Host shares why (s)he was inspired to organize the house meeting and the purpose of the meeting.
- 0:10-0:25 **Attendee introductions**
- Go around the room and ask each person to introduce themselves and share their reason for wanting to serve this summer.
- 0:25-0:45 **Choose a project**
- Host introduces three or four project ideas and opens up the room for discussion.
 - Discuss what projects will work best in your community.
 - Group votes on project choice.
- 0:45-0:55 **Set goals and identify leadership**
- Ask which attendees are interested in being volunteer leaders – they should stay after the meeting for 15 minutes and commit to a weekly planning meeting from June 22 - September 11.
 - Ask each attendee to consider personal summer goals and make a realistic but ambitious summer commitment.
- 0:55-1:00 **Conclusion**
- At the end of the meeting, the group should have:
 - At least one project to commit to for the summer.
 - A leadership team.
 - Pledges from each attendee to participate.
- 1:00-1:15 **Leadership team meeting**
- Meet with volunteer leaders to set weekly meeting and divide responsibilities.
 - Fill out attached worksheets.

Leadership Team Worksheet

The members of my team include:

Name	Phone Number	Email

Our weekly leadership meetings occur every _____ at _____.

Who are 5 other friends and family members who you will call to enlist in your group's project? Make these calls during the leadership team meeting, if possible:

Name	Phone Number	Email

Setting Goals and Tracking Progress

Breaking Down Your Goal

What is your group's project?

Who are your local partners?

What is your group's goal? (ie, how many lbs of donated food will you secure, how many hours will you spend reading to kids, how many homes will you audit?)

How many weeks do you have until the National Day of Service and Remembrance on September 11th?

What will you have to average per week between now and September 11th to reach your goal?

How many volunteers will you have to recruit on average per week to reach that goal? How many hours would you guess they have to work? If it's not clear at first, you should be ambitious and then adjust your recruitment goal as you go.

Tracking Progress to Goals

Our team will report progress to goals every _____ to _____.

_____ will share our progress to goals with all team members by email/phone calls every _____.

We will also share our story and accomplishments at serve.gov.

SETTING CONCRETE GOALS

Setting goals helps you be accountable to yourself and also increases accountability within a group. Clear goals at the beginning of a project will also help you determine how your project will work and what role group members can play. Once goals are set, you can track your progress, compare your results with other group members, and figure out what works best so everyone can meet (or exceed) their goals.

So, set a service goal for June 22 – September 11 and hold yourself accountable.

Make sure your goals are impact-based so you are measuring your accomplishments, not just the time you've committed. While it's important to calculate volunteer hours and volunteer participation, it's as important to know that you are making a difference. If you're working to reduce hunger, measure the exact number of meals you've secured. If you want to reduce summer reading loss, measure the number of hours spent reading with individual children. If you are working to reduce pollution in your community, measure the tons of carbon your project has saved.

- As an individual, I will _____ this summer.
- As a team, we will _____ this summer.

Part of setting good goals is thinking about how you will achieve them. As a group or an individual, think about process-based goals as well to map out how you will hit your goals above:

- As an individual, I will ask _____ friends, family members, and colleagues to join our service group to support _____.
- I will recruit _____ volunteers to join our service group to support _____.

TRACK PROGRESS TOWARD YOUR GOALS

- Set a weekly or biweekly deadline to report progress. For example, "Our team will report progress every Friday. The person responsible for reporting results for your team is _____."
- Make sure every group member is in the loop. Designate a group member to track and share the results. For example, "Our team will share our progress with all members by email/phone calls every week. The person responsible for sharing progress is _____."
- Keep track of your progress. Score sheets like the one below can be helpful.

Week	Metric #1	Metric #2	# hours spent volunteering	# volunteers active
June 22				
June 29				
July 6				
July 13				
July 20				
July 27				
August 3				
August 10				
August 17				
August 24				
August 31				
September 7				
Total				

TIPS: SUSTAINING A TEAM PROJECT

As you lead a service team, there are valuable lessons you can put into practice in order to sustain your team and continue momentum.

On your own and with your teammates, consider the aspects of a good team activity. Use these tactics to continue to build your community throughout the summer.

Questions to consider with your team:

- In your experience what makes motivating teams motivating?
- In your experience what makes un-motivating teams un-motivating?

Good Practices to employ with your team:

- Set clear expectations and achievable goals.
- Routinely tell stories about what these goals mean & why your team members in particular matter for reaching these goals.
- Strategize with team members (ask for suggestions, feedback on process).
- Give all team members meaningful decisions to make about how they will meet their goals.
- Motivate people into action. We're all naturally afraid when trying something new, but we learn much more from getting on the bike and falling off and trying again than we'll ever learn from talking about riding the bike.
- Allow your team to make mistakes. Evaluate often so you can learn from your failures as well as successes.
- Probe: When presented with problems and questions, ask for suggestions and solutions (rather than dwelling on problems or giving the solution yourself).
- Be open and honest. Share stories about your past failures as well as accomplishments. People are more receptive when they can learn through your failures as well as your success stories.
- Stay positive, acknowledge challenges, focus on solutions.

Basic Agenda for a Good Team Activity

Welcome & Relationship Building (10 min)

Why: Keeps us connected with our own stories & why we're involved, helps us find common ground with others.

Review Strategy & Our Team Story (5 min)

Why: Reminds us why we matter, what our role is, how we can make a difference, how what we do today fits into our team goal.

Training for Your Service Activity (20 min)

Why: Provides new team members or volunteers with action skills, refreshes skills for others, provides opportunity to role play in safe environment.

Action as a Team (TBD)

Why: Whether you're reading to children as individuals or organizing a virtual food drive, remember that you're working as a team. Set a clear time to regroup and evaluate your work.

Tally Up (10 min)

Why: Gives us a sense we're making progress. Reminds us that we need each other and can do more as a team than as individuals. Sets aside time to add up our outcomes. We can see how far this puts us toward our goal for today and our overall goal.

Evaluate Action (10 min)

Why: Helps us learn from both success and failure and improve over time. Helps us digest key learnings so we don't forget them. Helps us evaluate both success and failure so we can do better next time.

Strategize for next week's service (10-15 min)

Why: Engages all participants in decision-making and creative strategizing about what activity we'll do or where we'll focus. Gives every team member ownership and creates a last sense of community.

Celebrate

Why: Who wants to be part of an organization that doesn't have any fun??!!

CELEBRATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Your work this summer matters and should be celebrated. Remember to go to [Serve.gov](https://www.serve.gov) and tell us your summer story of service.

Also, be sure to keep track of what worked for you this summer and what could be improved. You can learn from this service project when you organize your next service project!