



Guide to Conducting a Community Service Project

Got a Project?

Check with local schools, parks and recreation centers, libraries, block captains or PMBC officers, community gardens, and neighborhood groups.

Get Volunteers

Check out area grade schools and colleges, Boy and Girl Scout troops, youth groups, sports teams, and businesses.



Tech Tip

SERVEPhiladelphia.com, Generocity.org, and VolunteerMatch.org allow you to post your service activities and recruit volunteers online.

If you are interested in hosting week-long service trips, consider joining BreakAway as a host organization.

Are your volunteers staying for a while? Reach out to local churches or community centers to see if they offer housing for service trips.

Find Supplies

Make a list of supplies you'll need and where you can get them.

Philadelphia's Community Partnership Program can loan you brooms, rakes, shovels, and trash bags for your project.

Need compost for a gardening project? You can get it for free from Fairmount Organic Recycling Center.

Check with friends, neighbors, and community partners to see if they have tools you can borrow. Some volunteer groups may have a budget for supplies. Local businesses may be willing to donate funding or supplies in exchange for recognition on the day of the event.

Arrange the Logistics

Schedule a date and time for your project. Leave time for planning.

Make a schedule. Be realistic with your start and end times, and don't forget to include time for breaks/lunch and cleanup at the end.

If volunteers will be outdoors, make sure there's a bathroom for them to use nearby.

If volunteers will be traveling by car, let them know where they will be able to park.


Need to arrange for trash pickup after a cleanup? Call the Community Partnership Program or the Streets Department.

Keep in touch with your volunteers throughout the planning process. Give them a sense of what the work will be like and what they need to bring.

If possible, find a friend or colleague who can help you on the day of the project with transporting equipment, supervising volunteers, and troubleshooting. This will make it easier and less stressful.

Just for Fun

Consider finding speakers or some way to play music at the site—both you and the volunteers will appreciate it.



If it's a large event, consider reaching out to a local media outlet to write about the project and take pictures. Make sure you have gone through the appropriate procedures regarding release forms.





Orient Your Volunteers

When they arrive to the host site or project site, greet the volunteers! Introduce them to yourself and those who will be working with them.

Make sure to tell them about your program/organization, your goal or the problem that you aim to solve, and the importance of the work they will be doing. Volunteers will be more engaged and dedicated to their work if they understand why they're doing it and what benefits it will have.

Show them around the site. Let them know where they can use the bathroom and get water, when they will have a break, and the expected duration of the project.

Show them how to use the tools they will be using and tell them about any safety procedures, including what to do in an emergency situation or if anyone gets hurt. If there are any other regulations – i.e. no smoking; don't leave the site without permission – let them know now.



Safety First!

Supervise Your Volunteers

Separate the work into several different projects and assign volunteers to specific projects at the beginning.

Move around the group and check to make sure everyone is comfortable with the work and is doing it correctly. Determine the appropriate level of supervision based on the age and skill level of the volunteers.

Take pictures.

Go through with breaks as scheduled or as needed.

Leave enough time for the volunteers to clean up their tools or equipment.

Debrief and Say Thank You

Take a few minutes at the end of the project to talk to the volunteers about how they're feeling about the work they did. Ask them what they think went well and what could use improvement next time. Thank them for their work and remind them how this project will impact the community.

Follow up with a written thank you note or an email, including pictures from the event. In your note, let them know the best way to contact you if they are interested in volunteering with you again.

Resources

Check out the sources below for volunteers, cleanup information, and more.



Philadelphia School

District: https://webapps.philasd.org/school_finder

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation: <http://www.phila.gov/parksandrecreation/findafacility>

Libraries: <http://libwww.freelibrary.org/branches/brnlist.cfm>

PMBC: <http://205.186.136.224/pmbc/clean-block-officers>

Local Colleges and Universities: <http://www.phila.gov/residents/college/index.html>

BreakAway: <http://www.alternativebreaks2014.org>

SERVE Philadelphia: <http://volunteer.phila.gov>

Generocity: <http://www.generocity.org>

Volunteer Match: <http://www.volunteermatch.org>

City of Philadelphia Community Partnership Program: <http://www.phila.gov/qualityoflife/communitypartnershipprogram>

Fairmount Organic Recycling Center: <http://www.phila.gov/PARKSANDRECREATION/ENVIRONMENT/Pages/RecyclingCenter.aspx>

CLIP's Cleanup Guide: <http://www.phila.gov/qualityoflife/communitypartnershipprogram/Pages/EffectiveCleanup.aspx>