THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE CHATTANOOGA
Center for Career and Leadership Development

UTC COMMUNITY SERVICE DEFINTION

Community service is the "hands-on" time spent engaging in action to meet the needs of others to improve, support, and enhance the UTC or surrounding communities as a whole, thus helping to foster social change.

"Fixing and helping create a distance between people, but we can't serve at a distance. We can only serve that to which we are profoundly connected."-Rachel Naomi Remen

COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

A non-exhaustive list of local and regional community service opportunities (in-person or virtual), agencies/sites, organizations, and events can be found under the "Events" Tab of the Leadership Programs webpage (navigate to Servant Leadership) on the Center for Career and Leadership Development website.

(https://www.utc.edu/enrollment-management-and-student-affairs/center-for-career-and-leadership-development/leadership/events/servant-leadership)

FIVE CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF SERVICE

Community Voice: This is essential if we as a society are to build bridges, make changes, and address issues. Any community service agency or interested volunteer should make sure that the voice and needs (not wants) of the community are included in the development of the projects/tasks/direction and the decision to serve.

Orientation and Training: Volunteers should receive information about the local community/neighborhood, the issue being addressed, the agency, and how to accomplish the task(s).

Meaningful Action: The service being should be necessary and valuable to the community/neighborhood itself. Meaningful action makes people feel like what they did made a measurable difference and that their time/talent was utilized well. Without this, people will not want to continue their service no matter how well you do with coordinating the other four elements.

Reflection: Meaningful reflection generally occurs during and immediately after the experience to discuss reactions, stories, feelings, facts, and connections to academic disciplines. Reflection about the issues may dispel any misinformation or an individual's alienation from service. Thoughtful progressive reflection should include reactions, observations, further questioning, placing the experience into a broader context, and identifying potential next steps.

Evaluation: This element measures the impact of a volunteer's learning experience and the effectiveness of the service in the community. Volunteers should assess their experience and agencies/organizations should measure the effectiveness of the volunteer's service. Evaluation gives direction for improvement, growth, and change.

REFLECTION – WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?

Reflection is a critical element of service because it connects volunteerism to a better understanding of oneself, others, and the larger social context. Reflection is a crucial part of community service because in many instances we do not learn from doing, but from thinking about what we did/do. Individuals/Groups should not expect reflection to look exactly the same each time because every hands-on service opportunity is different with different people. Effective reflection is also not necessarily about "touchy-feely" group discussions.

I GET IT. SO REFLECTION...

- Gives meaning to the service experience.
- Has positive impact on volunteers' attitudes regarding service and motivates volunteers to seek further involvement.
- Has a positive impact on the attitudes of the agency/organization where individuals volunteered.
- Improves retention by engaging all volunteers in the process.
- Increases group cohesiveness and sense of belonging.
- Enhances critical thinking skills.
- Enhances servant leadership skills.
- Encourages volunteers to consider the complexities of an issue instead of viewing things as "black and white" or "yes and no".
- Helps volunteers examine their values and decisions.
- May generate ideas to address societal challenges and inequities.
- Helps volunteers reflect on their successes and see how their service has impacted others.

TIPS FOR FACILITATING REFLECTION

Effective reflection requires the facilitator to demonstrate an open-minded attitude, to manage group dynamics, to incorporate diversity and inclusion, and to begin to provide closure.

BEST PRACTICES INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:
- Make time. Reflection isn't an "add-on" activity.
- Set simple ground rules.
- Promote a respectful environment in which participants can communicate openly, without fear of being criticized by others.
- Consider the environment.
- Have a couple of engagement "tricks" (e.g. highs and lows, turn to a partner, quiet reflection etc.).
- Remain alert to group dynamics. Understand and plan for individual differences.
- Listen. Don't just hear what is being said, but listen so deeply that you also hear what isn't being said.
- Be conversational and enthusiastic – your approach sets the tone.
- Encourage participation by all. Do note that while everyone has the right to speak, they may choose not to speak.
- Use open-ended and meaningful questions. Encourage deep thinking.
- Tolerate silence. Powerful learning might be happening.
- Guide the discussion, but recognize and foster the group's own ability to lead itself. Effective facilitators relinquish control to the group and promote open dialogue among group members.
- Seek balance between being flexible and staying on topic.
- Do not consider yourself an expert. Know the limits of your own abilities and knowledge.
- Remain neutral. Your role in the reflection process is to moderate and guide communication, not to interject personal opinions or push your own agenda.
- Paraphrase and summarize, e.g. "So what you're concerned about is…"
- Reflect questions back to the groups, e.g. "_____ is a controversial topic. What do you think are the main issues for and against it?"
- Dig deeper with follow-up questions or by asking for specific examples and details.
- Manage disagreements. Recognize tension building in the group and respond to it immediately.
- Model the values of multiculturalism while recognizing your own attitudes and assumptions and how they may limit your perspective.
- Acknowledge contributions.
- Initiate a sense of resolution towards the end of the process, e.g. request a closing statement from each participant, and recognize participants for their contributions.

AVOID THE FOLLOWING:
- Refuting participant ideas.
- Putting participants on the spot.
- Downplaying thoughts or feelings.
- Forcing people to speak.
- Using inappropriate humor.
- Making assumptions/generalizations about any group of people.
- Providing unsolicited advice.
- Ignoring the contributions of a participant.

CATEGORIZED SAMPLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

BEFORE BEGINNING SERVICE:
1. What are some personal perceptions you have about the agency/site you will be working with?
2. How is your community partner site addressing a need of the community/neighborhood?
3. Why are you needed as a volunteer?
4. What do you hope to gain from this experience?
5. What communities/identity groups are you a member of? How might this be related with your commitment to service?

DURING AND AFTER SERVICE:
1. What are your general reactions? What did you observe?
2. How is/was your experience different from what you expected ("good" or "bad")?
3. How have you been challenged during your "hands-on" service?
4. What feelings (if any) did you experience during your "hands-on" service?
5. What are three strengths you demonstrated during your hands-on service?
6. Is there anyway to prevent people from needing the services of this agency/site?
7. What specific resources do you think are missing from the agency/site?
8. What seems to be the root causes of the issue addressed?
9. What can be done to engage in prevention from your academic disciplines' perspective? What can you do?
10. How was your service contributed to your growth in any of these areas: civic responsibility, political consciousness, professional development, spiritual fulfillment, social understanding, or intellectual development?

11. How do you define community?

12. Who determines what's best for the community?

13. Have you ever felt hopelessness, despair, discouragement, or burnout related to community service? Why do you think you felt this way?

14. What sorts of things make you feel uncomfortable when you are in the community? Why?
15. What new questions do you have for yourself? The organization/site?
16. What did you learn during your hands-on service experience?
17. How does your "hands-on" service connect to your short-term goals? Post-graduation?
18. How would you motivate others to become involved in hands-on service?
19. Complete this sentence. Because of my service today, I am….

"CLIENT" FOCUSED QUESTIONS:
1. What similarities did you perceive between you and the people you are serving?
2. How are you perceived (your identities) by the people you are serving?
3. What do you think a typical day is like for the people you serve? What pressures do they confront?
4. How does their situation have an impact on their life socially, educationally, politically, recreationally?
5. What misinformation are you confronting about the people you serve? Have you reconceptualized this misinformation? What new information led you to do this?

COURSE FOCUSED QUESTIONS:
1. How does the service relate to class material?
2. Did the information shared or the service itself contradict any course content?
3. What aspects of your learning may have been due to your volunteer experience?

8 STEPS TO DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY SERVICE EVENT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

1. Your commitment to an agency/cause should be based off your organization's values, mission, purposes, previous experiences, and overall member interest.
2. Identify any barriers or challenges that may occur with member participation for any engagement.
3. Obtain and review as much information about the agency and people you are serving before-hand. This will further the likelihood that members will feel connected to the particular effort.
4. Role model a servant leadership attitude.
5. Incorporate education of issues to organizational meetings (when possible).
6. Communicate, communicate, communicate
7. Reflect on why the service was meaningful to members and the organization as a whole.
8. Obtain feedback right after the event.