

General tips to create a successful volunteer experience

Learn about your target volunteer audience

- What are the top three areas of interest for your team – take a quick poll on what issues they'd like to volunteer?
- How much time would they like to devote to the experience?
- What day of the week and time of day will result in higher participation rates?
- How far is too far to drive, is virtual better?
- What if someone can't or doesn't want to participate in a team volunteer event?
- Do people want to labor, collect goods, interact with those served?
- What type of activities are they comfortable doing (clean ups, face to face with clients, outdoors, indoors etc)?

Connect with a Nonprofit to Coordinate the Volunteerism

- Reach out well in advance to plan with the organization's volunteer coordinator.
- Provide basic information: How many will participate, how long do you have to volunteer, what type of activity would be well received, where is the activity, who is providing the tools/supplies, where will employees park? What should they wear? Is there drinking water on site? Should there be a site visit prior? Will there be bathroom access? Can a program person from the organization attend the event and provide issue education at the beginning of the event? If not, ask if they have a deck that you can give to your employees prior so they understand the need for the work.
- Will you provide refreshments? Will the team have a social activity connected to the experience?
- How will you educate the volunteers on the issue? This is an important piece of volunteerism. Options may include; a presentation by the nonprofit; a deck; a one page fact sheet about the issue/clients served
- Think through how you will measure success i.e. outputs such as # meals served, books read, trees planted etc. And plan to record and report to the GF the outputs/outcomes.

Recruiting Volunteers

- Create a fun email and a flyer to encourage participation
- Use the Your Cause site to create volunteer registration and manage volunteers
- Be clear in your communications. Is everyone expected to participate or is it 100% voluntary, how long will the project last, how will employees get there, where to park, will there be food, do they need to bring anything
- Give employees lots of advance notice – 3-4 weeks
- Send reminders a week in advance and the day before with address, directions, what to wear and expect.
- Framing an experience goes a long way towards managing expectations so providing a link to the nonprofit being served and link to a brief education document about the issue or the nonprofit being helped contextualizes the opportunity.

Pre-Event Checklist

- Lead volunteers need to know what the activities are, how to do them, where the supplies are, how to use them, where the bathrooms are, how long the activity is, and info about any social activity
- Make sure you have a water source for drinking
- Assign someone to document the project with photos
- Create a welcoming environment
- Have a warm up activity ready – it could be a get to know activity and or an education session on the issue area the volunteer activity addresses
- Get to work! Have fun
- Complete work be sure to clean up any supplies, dispose of trash etc.

- Close out the session, bring volunteers together – share how they felt about the experience.

Post Event Checklist

- Send a thank you to the nonprofit
- Send a thank you to the employees linking to a project evaluation. Sample evaluations [here](#). Be sure to have at least one open ended question to capture valuable feedback. Also provide information on how volunteers can continue to engage on the issue, or how they can become a regular volunteer for that organization.
- Reflect on your project and make notes on how it went, what improvements could be made, whether supplies were adequate etc.
- Write up a quick blurb and share it with the Gannett foundation

Resources: [Gannett Foundation: Site's EOD Google Form for Volunteer Project Survey Form for Volunteers- Gannett Foundation Form](#)

How to Start a Volunteer Program

Please use this link to search volunteer opportunities near you.

Volunteer Project Partner Suggestions

One-Day or Episodic Team volunteerism

- [JA in a Day \(note programs are localized. Search here for your local program, then drill down to volunteering\)](#)
- [In Kind Drive](#)
 - Backpack Drives
 - Toiletry Drive
 - Food Drives [Feed America has a dbase of local food banks](#)
 - Toy Drives
 - Coat Drives
 - Baby Supplies Drives
- [Boys and Girls Club. Search for your local club](#)
- [Volunteer match](#) : [group volunteerism](#) (add a group filter to your search)
- POL local aggregate of volunteer opportunities. Note this dbase is not rich in all communities.
- Connect with your local volunteer center or United Way both which sometimes have their own databases of opportunities
- 9/11, MLK Day, National Volunteer Week all present opportunities for group volunteering locally. Search a few months in advance to lock in an opportunity

On-going volunteerism

- Mentorship - [National Mentorship Pairing Site](#) , [Mentor & Mentee Ideas](#)
- Skill Based Volunteerism (see Skills Based Volunteerism Toolkit for links)
- First Robotics <https://www.firstinspires.org/robotics/frc/start-a-team>