

THREE STEPS TO PREPARE FOR A GROUP VOLUNTEER PROJECT

Increasingly, businesses, student groups, churches and others are looking for group volunteer projects. But for most nonprofits, especially small ones, it can be a challenge to be ready with a project when a group comes knocking. This worksheet can help you think through some basics about group projects, do a little prep work, and get your needs posted so you can get the most out of group volunteer projects.

STEP ONE: Is it worth it?

1. Is it worth it for your organization?

Getting ready for and managing a group project can be a lot of work and stretch already stretched staff even further, so it's fair to ask if a group project makes sense for your organization. Take a moment to consider the following:

- Does the project support your mission?
- Is the project truly needed, or are you creating something because a group is looking for a project?
- Does the project help you build a new or deeper relationship with a funder or partner, or with a business or organization that is a potential funder or partner in the future?
- Does the project help you cultivate new volunteers, advocates, or donors?
- Does the project expand community awareness of your organization, mission, or particular issue?

Any one of these may make the project worthwhile, but ideally you can check most of them off before proceeding.

2. Is it worth it for the volunteer group?

Keep in mind that, while they certainly want to help a good cause, groups also have their own goals for a project. Consider the following:

- Will they be working together? This may seem like a silly question, but groups are typically looking for an opportunity for socialization, team building, and deepening relationships. A project that breaks work down to individuals or even just pairs may not meet their objectives.
- Will they clearly see the difference they are making? All volunteers, but especially groups, want to know their project has an impact.
- Does your project have a variety of tasks? Many groups, especially larger ones, will be made up of people with a variety of skills, abilities, limitations, and interests. Having a variety of tasks will engage more volunteers and let everyone feel as if they have contributed.
- Is it an effective use of their time? Is the project big enough to keep a group busy for the entire time? Little is worse for a volunteer than feeling like they didn't contribute or spent most of their time waiting around.

STEP TWO: Are you ready?

1. Is there a project plan?

Having a basic project plan makes life easier for your organization and for the volunteers. Things to consider:

- How many volunteers can be effectively used on this project?
- What is a realistic estimate of the time required?
- Can this project be partially done if group has limited time?
- Do you have descriptions of specific tasks volunteers will be doing?
- Are any special skills required?
- Is this for adults only, or can children be involved?
- Will you have to secure special tools, equipment, or supplies in advance?
- Are background checks required?
- Will you provide food or refreshments?
- Who on your staff (or maybe a current volunteer) will direct the group?

2. Can you easily articulate the impact of the project?

Groups in particular are looking for projects that have clear impact on the community. Additionally, you may want to cultivate new volunteers, advocates, or donors, so sharing your passion for and the importance of your mission is critical, as is connecting the project to that mission. A few things to think about:

- Can you connect the project to your cause and be able to quickly explain how their efforts will impact that cause and/or those you serve?
- How will you communicate this?
- Will you provide something they can take away?

3. How flexible can the project be?

The more flexible you can be with a project and its time frame, the easier it will be to connect with a group. More to consider:

- Can the project be done at any time, or is there a specific date?
- Can the project be done in stages if a smaller group or one with limited time wants to help?
- Can your organization be ready on short notice?
- Is the project flexible enough to include a wide diversity of volunteers and volunteer skills?

4. Are you ready to recognize and thank your volunteers?

Maybe it's a plate of fresh-baked cookies, a personal thank-you, a group photo you send to their office, photos you post on social media and share with the volunteers, or perhaps thank you's from the people whose lives will be impacted by the project. Whatever it is, be sure to have a plan in place BEFORE your project begins so your volunteers feel appreciated.

STEP THREE: Complete the worksheet and post.

A volunteer resource from

VOLUNTEER SIOUXLAND

THE “HOLY COW! WHAT DO I DO WITH A GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS?” WORKSHEET

PROJECT NAME: _____

How does this project support your mission? _____

Describe the project / project goal(s): _____

List the specific volunteer tasks: _____

How many volunteers are needed / could be used? _____

Estimated amount of time needed to complete the project: _____

Any special skills needed? _____

What groups are appropriate for this project?

- ☐ Adults ☐ Youth ☐ Families

Are background checks required? ☐ Yes ☐ No

When can this project be done?

☐ Any time ☐ Specific Date / Time frame: _____

Does this project need to be completed at one time by one group, or can it be done in stages by more than one group? _____

How will this project impact your organization / those you serve?

How will you connect with / thank volunteers? _____

Will you provide food or refreshments? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are there any special supplies or materials needed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Who at your organization will serve as the group's primary contact?

Great job! You're ready for a terrific group project. Now post your need on VolunteerSiouxland so groups can connect with you.