



SOAR

SHEETS

Service-Learning

PLANNING THE IDEAL SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Service-Learning is a type of experiential education in which participants learn about a community need, complete an organized service activity to address that need, and reflect on the experience.

Service-Learning is beneficial for student organizations because it:

- Helps build strong relationships and friendships
- Encourages participants to gain a greater understanding of social issues
- Clarifies civic values
- Allows volunteers to do more than help; they also begin to understand

The **SERVE** model represents five necessary steps for successful service-learning. Use the SERVE model to guide you in creating a meaningful service experience.

Select Service
Refers to the initial step of identifying and focusing on a community need

Educate & Inform
Describes the process of learning about the need

Respond to Need
Refers to direct service, the volunteer experience

Value Significance & Reflect
Describes activities that encourage participants to make linkages between the service experience and their understanding of the issue

Evaluate & Celebrate
Refers to the final assessment of the experience, as well as some form of recognition or celebration for those who have given their time.

What does it mean to “Educate and Inform”?
In the second step, Educate and Inform, volunteers gain a greater understanding about the extent, causes and hopeful solutions to the community issue that they are addressing. Several resources are available for student organizations that wish to learn more about a social issue, including:

- **COMMUNITY AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES**
Most volunteer experiences involve collaboration with a community agency. The people who staff these agencies are frequently experts on the issue they are working to improve. Often, agency staff members are willing to educate volunteers about the issue and efforts to improve it in the Lincoln area.
- **ORGANIZATION MEMBERS**
Student organizations often have members who are knowledgeable about a particular issue. Asking informed members to present on the issue may greatly increase the value of the service experience for the entire organization.
- **UNIVERSITY FACULTY AND STAFF**
Many university employees are involved in the community, some contributing direct service and others studying social issues. Faculty and staff are often willing to present a seminar on a topic that they care about.
- **PRINT AND ELECTRONIC RESOURCES**
One of the most accessible ways to educate yourself about a social issue is to consult information resources such as newspapers, magazines, journal articles, and the internet.

How might we “Value Significance and Reflect”? The purpose of this step is for volunteers to assess how their own values, beliefs, and understanding of the issue relate to the service experience. This may be as simple as reaffirming your commitment to generosity and caring as important values in your life, or as difficult as wrestling with a disturbing community problem that you had been less aware of in the past. Several different strategies exist for effective reflection, including:

- **JOURNALING**

Continuous writing is one effective method for encouraging further thought on a subject. Ask thought-provoking questions such as, “Why did you do what you did today?” or “Who benefits from your actions today?” and instruct participants to write continuously about their thoughts for five minutes (for example).

- **GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Talking about the experience and its relationship to your own value systems is an excellent way to not only gain a greater understanding of the issue, but also of each other. This can help cement friendships and solidify group relationships. Similar to journaling, a discussion facilitator might consider asking thought-provoking questions such as, “Why do we find it necessary to perform service?” in order to begin discussion.

- **“WHAT?/So WHAT?/Now WHAT?”**

All methods of reflection should aim to encompass these three components. These questions foster critical thinking about the issues associated with the service experience.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

The Service-Learning area in Student Involvement has many resources that are available to help you plan the ideal service event. Our professional staff members are available to help you develop your ideas regarding service-learning. Our contacts with community agencies could be useful as you begin to take action.

- **COMMUNITY CHALLENGE**

This program sponsors one-time service projects that your group may wish to participate in, or our student coordinators can help you plan a service event of your own. For more information and for a list of challenges, visit http://si.unl.edu/involved/community_challenge/

- **CONSULTATIONS WITH SERVICE-LEARNING STAFF**

The Service-Learning staff is always available to help you get involved with volunteer opportunities. A personal consultation with a staff member can help you explore your options at UNL and in the Lincoln community. Stop by Student Involvement (200 NU) to visit with one of our Service-Learning experts.

For more information about Service-Learning at UNL, please visit http://si.unl.edu/service_learning/

For more information on organization and personal development skills in the SOAR series, stop by or call UNL Student Involvement, 200 Nebraska Union, 472-2454; or 300 Nebraska East Union, 472-1780. Staff members will be happy to assist you and answer your questions.

student involvement
<http://involved.unl.edu>

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