



**10 STEPS TOWARD PERFORMING A SUCCESSFUL
COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT
A Guide for Leaders**

Community service learning is an important function of all 4-H groups. A community service project can take many forms. The form it takes in your group depends on your group. Whatever is decided, it should benefit the community as well as your 4-H members.

Following are some hints in making your community service project a successful and fun learning experience.

1. Determine what is needed in your community/county.
 - Ask members and families.
 - Ask other community groups.
 - Talk with community officials.
 - Find out what types of service projects have/have not been done in the recent past.
 - Ask your county 4-H staff.

2. Determine what types of activities your members have interest in and abilities to carry out.
 - Consider the size of your group and ages of members.
 - Consider the skills possessed by group members and their families.
 - Determine how much time your group would like to devote in community service activities.
 - Would members rather do one ongoing community service project that may last several months or more or several short-term activities?
 - You may wish to start small and build on successes.

3. List all of the activities that have been suggested.

4. Ask your group to discuss the possibilities and rank them in order of importance and interest based on what was considered in steps #1 and #2. Reach consensus or use a vote by majority rule to determine the activity your group will do. If this isn't practical (especially if your group is large), consider forming a committee to develop priorities. Then, the group can simply accept or vote on the committee's recommendations.

5. After your group has decided what community service project to focus on, develop a plan. Your members will learn organizational skills in developing such a plan. A plan doesn't have to be overly detailed and formal, but should include the following:
 - Identify exactly what will be done. Determine both the overall goal and the specific tasks involved. Remember the time frame for the project: dates/times for beginning, completion.
 - Obtain necessary permission in advance.

- Develop a budget for the project, if appropriate and obtain funding needed for the project. If funds are not available from your treasury, seek a community sponsor. Your county 4-H staff may know of sources of grants-in-aid for such projects, especially if you plan far enough in advance. A decision to use group funds should be voted on by the group membership.
- Obtain needed equipment or supplies.
- Determine how many people will be needed. What is the minimum number required to do the job correctly and what is the optimum number? Be sure you have at least the minimum before proceeding!
- Ask members to volunteer for specific duties and get a commitment from them. Consider teaming up less experienced members with more experienced workers to maximize the learning experience.
- Encourage members to report progress on their assigned duties.
- Make safety a priority.
- Alert mass media representatives and your county 4-H staff concerning your plans.
- Publicize the efforts of your group and the 4-H program.

6. Carry out the project as planned! In a community service learning experience, based upon the experiential learning cycle, the experience comes first.

7. As you work on this project, monitor the activities taking place and make adjustments as needed.

8. Record your group's efforts with photos, videotape, or written notes.

9. When the project has been completed, allow time for your group members to use the next steps in the experiential learning cycle; share, process, generalize and apply. They will want to discuss the successes and shortcomings of the project and generate ideas for improvement. This reinforces the learning experience! The following ideas may help you support this learning phase:

You can help youth **share** their experience by asking:



- What did you do?
- What did your group do when...?
- What did you see, hear, feel, taste?
- What was most difficult? Easiest? Most rewarding?

You can help youth **process** the experience by asking:

- What problems did you run into?
- What did you learn (life skill or subject matter) through this activity?
- Why is the life skill you learned important?
- How was the experience different from what you expected?

You can help youth **generalize** by asking:

- What similar experiences have you had (with this life skill or subject matter)?
- What similar challenge/problem/feeling have you faced? What did you do then?

You can help youth **apply** the lessons learned by asking:

- What can we do individually or as a group to have more impact in this area?
- What one thing can you do next week that will make a difference?
- What will you notice in the future that you didn't notice before?

10. Develop a summary report of your group's experience when the project has been completed. Share it with mass media representatives and your county 4-H staff. A scrapbook is also a nice way to present the project's success. Include a written description, photos, news clippings, etc. Such activities might be assigned to the group reporter, secretary, vice president, chair of the project, or other group member. Feel good about your group's contribution to the community and members' positive learning experience!

Other Reminders:

- Remember that planning, conducting, reflecting upon and evaluating a community service learning project (or any other 4-H activity) is a great opportunity for 4-H members to learn by **DOING**. Therefore, **DO** encourage members to get involved in all phases of the project, including planning. **DON'T** do it all for them.
- Remember that 4-H'ers learn from their mistakes as well as their successes.
- The role of a group leader and other adults working with the group is to guide members in the right direction and provide needed support and encouragement.
- **MAKE IT FUN!**



Ideas for Community Service Projects:

The following is a sampling of many possible ideas for community service projects, compiled from a variety of sources, that your group might consider doing.

- Assist local fund drives such as American Cancer Society, Heart Association, March of Dimes, American Diabetes Association, Special Olympics, 4-H Foundation, etc.
- Adopt a grandparent.
- Sponsor a child to attend summer camp.
- Donate dog/cat food to a local animal shelter.
- Donate books to a library, or magazines to group homes.
- Collect food/clothing for needy families.
- Furnish baby-sitting on Election Day.
- Entertain nursing home residents.
- Clean a park or roadside.
- Build/donate benches for a park.
- Prepare holiday food baskets for shut-ins.
- Paint or repair playground equipment.
- Plant trees/flowers in vacant lots.
- Donate bird seed to a park.
- Serve a highway "coffee break" on holiday weekends.
- Buy and donate 4-H placemats to a restaurant.
- Sponsor a needy child.
- Provide pet therapy for patients at hospitals or residents at nursing homes.

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