makingLIFEeasier

TOYOTA
FINANCIAL SERVICES

ORGANIZING A GROUP SERVICE PROJECT
Tips for Success

1. Determine Nonprofit's Needs.

To make a meaningful difference in the community by conducting a service project, you must effectively match the needs of the nonprofit with the interests and skills of volunteers within your group. Everyone will benefit if you create a rewarding and memorable experience that drives to specific outcomes. To do this, research the needs of your community. When working with an organization, find out about their unique challenges and opportunities for volunteers.

Ask the Nonprofit

- What volunteer needs do you have? How can you and your team help?
- Do you have upcoming activities requiring groups of volunteers?
- What skills are preferred/required of the volunteers?
- Could you support a group of volunteers at your site or do you prefer to be offsite?
- Describe the location/area of your organization. In your opinion, is it safe?

2. Consult Your Group.

To determine what types of activities are appropriate for your group, seek support from your management and find out what interests and motivates your group members. Share what you learned about the selected nonprofit's needs.

Questions to Ask Your Group Members

- What new or existing partnerships with local nonprofits could your group support?
- How many people will be in your group?
- Can your group attend at once or do activities need to be split into different times?
- Does anyone have any special needs?
- When is the best time/day to do the activity? How long should the activity be?
- What would your group like to achieve by volunteering? (e.g. build team, develop skills)
- What type of activity would your group like to do?
- Who will help out? Serve as the group leader? Act as liaison with the nonprofit? Involve members of your group in decisionmaking as participation wil help build business skills like communication, interpersonal and organizational/leadership skills.
- Has this been approved by management?
- Is there a budget available for this activity?

3.   Set Objectives and Roles.

Based on the needs of the nonprofit and input from your group, define and set objectives for the day from everyone's perspective. Group objectives can include:

- Have fun.
- Enhance team-building among your group.
- Enhance skills development.
- Extend your company's brand into the community.
- Build an effective partnership with a new or existing nonprofit organization.

Be sure to communicate your final objectives with everyone involved, including the nonprofit.

4.   Plan Your Service Project in Advance

To leave a lasting impression of a company's brand with all involved, partner with a nonprofit closely. Find out what they expect and what level of support they will provide well in advance. Tell them what your group will provide as well.

- Finalize what the service project will be (e.g., Adopt-a-Family Holiday Drive, toy or food drive, student field trips, career day or night, etc.).

- Conduct a site visit prior to sending your group to the nonprofit. Ensure it is safe, understand where to park, etc.

- Work with the nonprofit to define the activity. Ask what has worked well in the past, what group members should bring, and what to know in advance of the activity.

- Consider group member schedules, skills, and interests in planning.

- Help organize transportation – can people carpool?

- Consider dress code – is it appropriate to wear jeans or branded t-shirts?

- Arrange for food and beverages. (Don't expect the nonprofit to provide these.)

- On the day of the activity or prior to, organize a tour of the facility with the top leader of the nonprofit so group members can get an overview of the organization, the challenges faced by the community, and how important the role of the nonprofit is.

- Take photos during the event.

5.   Communicate & Prepare Group Members

A successful day will come down to clear expectations for the group about what the day will entail. In preparation, set aside time to brief group volunteers prior to the activity:

- Reinforce the objectives of the activity and define their role as a volunteer. Explain what they will be doing and what impact they will make.

- Note: It is important to emphasize that there are times that nonprofits have not been able to organize the activity to the extent that was originally planned. If this is the case, take it as a sign that they really need help and support. This is a great opportunity for volunteers to jump in where they are needed.

- Discuss what makes a good volunteer and a good representative of your company. Help them make key connections – explain your company's role in the community and its role in good corporate citizenship.

- Tell them what's in it for them.

- Provide details (e.g., how to record their time and when and where to show up, etc.).

6. Say Thank You

After the activity, let the volunteers know how valuable their efforts were and how much they are appreciated. Ideas for recognition of your group members include sharing photos, writing thank-you cards, or hosting a pizza party, etc.

7. Track & Communicate Results

Ask for feedback from all involved. Send a post-event survey. Talk to the nonprofit about the service provided by your group. Communicate the results to your group and your company's management. Include anecdotal feedback, photos, etc. Measures may include:

- Volunteers understood their role.

- Volunteers felt the activity was valuable/made a difference

- Volunteers learned/developed a skill that will be helpful in their job

8. Assess Improvement

Review ways to improve future service projects. (At Toyota, the Japanese word for "improvement" or "change for the better" is Kaizen, which refers to the company's philosophy or practices that focus on continuous improvement of business processes.) Share lessons learned and good ideas with others in the group and elsewhere at the company. Determine if group members would recommend the activity to others, how to improve on the experience, and if plans are made to repeat it in the future.