

What is Service-Learning?

"Service-learning is education in action." — Sen. John Glenn

How Is Service-Learning Different From Community Service?

- Service-learning is community service with extra emphasis placed on learning.
- While both community service and service learning fill a need in a community through volunteer efforts, service-learning purposely uses that need as an opportunity for youth to learn skills, knowledge and positive attitudes.
- Service learning sets educational goals or objectives, provides time for learning through reflection, and keeps track of the lessons learned.
- Service learning involves youth in all phases of the project not just in doing the work.

Characteristics of Service-Learning

- It is community service tied to specific general goals and specific objectives.
- Intentionally provides structured time for 4-H'ers to reflect on their service.
- Intended to develop character qualities such as empathy, personal values, beliefs, awareness, self-esteem, self-confidence, social-responsibility, and helps to foster a sense of caring for others.
- It is service that reinforces and strengthens learning, and learning that reinforces and strengthens service.
- Characterized by these 5 steps:
 - Picking the project
 - Planning the project
 - Doing the project
 - Reflecting on the project
 - Celebrating the project

Picking the Project

Have club members:

FIRST: Determine what is needed in your community/county.

- Consider:
 - what members know personally
 - what other community or officials are doing or saying
 - what types of projects have or have not been done recently

SECOND: Determine what types of activities your members have interest in and abilities to do.

- Consider:
 - size of your club and ages of members
 - skills possessed by club members and their families
 - how much time your club would like to devote
 - what the members want to learn

THIRD: Make a decision

- Decide by:
 - listing all of the activities that have been suggested and then
 - come to a consensus through a general agreement, or
 - “vote” by having members place stickers or marks beside the ideas on the list that they like, or
 - make a motion and take a formal vote. (Remember the entire club can be involved in the process or a committee can meet and then make a recommendation to the club.)

Planning the Project

Remember that **goals** are intentions that are general and **objectives** are more precise.

FIRST: Create **goals** by talking in general about what the 4-H members hope to learn by doing the project and how the project will make a difference in the community. Have them complete sentences like: “We will learn to ...” or “We will be able to ...” or “The community will be a better place because ...” Suggesting specific things that could be learned may be helpful such as telephone etiquette, using weights and measures, knowledge of local government, use of timelines, etc

SECOND: Create **objectives** by talking about how these goals can be achieved. Try to make objectives that are SMART: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime bound.

- **Specific** – Precisely tells what you are trying to do
- **Measurable** – How much you have to do to be considered successful?
- **Achievable** – Is it possible to do what you are attempting?
- **Realistic** - Do you have the resources that are needed? (people, money, machines, materials, time)
- **Time bound** – When do you plan to be finished?

THIRD: Talk about practical considerations such as

- Creating a “To Do List” of all necessary tasks
- A timeline to complete those tasks
- Equipment and other resources needed, including skills needed
- Plans for contacting people
- Permissions needed
- Transportation logistics
- News coverage

Examples of a Goal	Example of the corresponding Objectives
Conduct a food drive to support a local food bank.	To do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April, collect 200 food items and deliver them to the food bank
	To learn: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many in the community need help in getting enough to eat. • How many in the world die each day from inadequate food • How to use newspaper and radio to inform the public of a program • How local food banks are funded and how they function

Doing the Project

Your club has taken time to plan the work, now work the plan. Adults have the responsibility to oversee and facilitate the plans that the youth have made.

Reflecting on the Project

Reflection is way of reliving the experience so that learning occurs.
Reflection can also serve as a way of informal evaluation.

- **Questions about you:**
 - What are some words that describe your experiences?
 - What did you find most rewarding?
 - What did you find most difficult?
 - How are you a different person because of your experiences?
- **Questions about the process:**
 - What special moments do you recall? (humor, doubt, frustration, happiness, success, failure, others) Are these normal parts of working together?
 - What information did you learn? How will it help you?
 - What skills did you learn or practice? How will it help you?
 - Why is it important to serve the community?
 - Evaluation: In what ways was the experience different than you thought it would be?
 - Evaluation: What would you change about the way your group worked on this issue?
- **Questions about issues:**
 - What other things could be done to help with this issue?
 - What other issues came to mind as you worked on this issue?
- **Questions about the future:**
 - What do you think you will notice now that you may not have noticed before?
 - How did the project change your ideas about being involved in community issues?
 - In what other ways can you or your group be involved in this community issue in the future?

Celebrating the Project

Celebrating what we have accomplished, whether large or small, completes the learning experience and helps 4-H members see the value of the time they have spent in serving their communities. Celebration can be simple and quiet or dramatic and exciting.

No matter what form is used, celebrating says: "I feel good about what I have done. My friends are happy. Wow! What a great way to spend my time."

Celebrating can take many forms. Some possibilities are:

1. A special time of sharing. Have members tell what they liked or learned.
2. Put an article in the local paper or county newsletter.
3. Hugs and pats on the back. A group hug can be done by having everyone in a circle with their arms around one another's shoulders and then stepping toward the middle until everyone gets a gentle squeeze.
4. Party or refreshments
5. Have a ceremony to mark the completion of the project.

How to Find Good Service Projects

These are some ways that may be helpful in identifying a service learning project that will have wide support within the group:

- Brainstorming – in open discussion, generate a list of ideas. Don't evaluate ideas as they come up – all ideas are good. Have someone in the group write down the suggestions where all can see.
- A walk about
- Surveys
- Interviews
- Watching the newspaper

Check list for a Successful Project

- ✓ Planned by youth
- ✓ Meets real community needs
- ✓ Has a variety of tasks sufficient to involve everyone
- ✓ Promotes teamwork and builds friendships
- ✓ Provides opportunities to learn new skills and knowledge
- ✓ Has a planned time to reflect, recognize people, and celebrate

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References: http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/commservice/fact_sheet.html

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