



Standards of Excellence for Leaders

The Standards of Excellence were created to articulate and to clarify key elements that contribute to mutually successful, volunteer experiences.

Our Pep Talk With You!

We are ecstatic that you are taking on the responsibility of a volunteer group leader. We understand the thrills and challenges you will encounter, and hope that the rewards for you as a leader will be great. It is exciting to see the impact that a short-term team of volunteers can have when added to the long-term work of community leaders, churches, and social service agencies. Whether expressed or not, know that your group of volunteers will be shaped by their service experience. Your leadership will be touching many people's lives!

Leading a group of people in the area of service work is a dynamic process. Things will constantly change. People will approach service from many different perspectives and past experiences. Our best advice – be flexible! This document is designed to promote best practices while helping you think through the volunteer group experience from the perspective of being a team leader. And remember, you don't have to do it all alone. When appropriate, feel free to delegate. Without further ado, here we go....

What Do I Really Do?

KEY ROLES OF VOLUNTEER GROUP LEADERS

- You are the **link** between your small group and the charities/clients with whom you serve.
- You are invaluable in **setting a vision** and **setting the tone** for all volunteers.
- You **prepare, guide, and lead** your team through their volunteer experience.
- You develop **meaningful relationships** with charities for the group, which make volunteer work successful.
- You **learn** about how your team can help meet the charity's **broader needs**, thus moving your group's volunteer experience from good to excellent.

How Do We Move from an Idea to Actual Volunteering?

A S T E P - B Y - S T E P A P P R O A C H

step 1: **ASSESS**

There are many different people and internal and external factors that impact the volunteer culture of your group, church, or company. *(In this context, we are specifically discussing volunteer opportunities which reach out beyond your group's own volunteer constituency such as teaching Sunday School or volunteering to organize the company picnic.)*

As you consider volunteering, here are some aspects to consider:

- Do we have a history of working with any service organizations we want to build upon?
- Who influences where we serve (the Pastor, small group leader, group members)?
- What type of project can we handle (scale of easy to more involved service projects)?
- What type of service work are group members interested in?
- How often would group members like to volunteer?

step 2: CONNECT

Once you have a sense of what you would like to do, you now need to connect with charities. Our best advice—again, be flexible. Some charities have well-designed volunteer programs that are easy to plug into. But other charities may not have a volunteer coordinator on staff, meaning that hosting a team of volunteers is an extra responsibility they need to juggle. When contacting a charity, be open to their needs. Express your group’s volunteer interest, but also leave room to respond to the most pressing needs of the charity. Remember: Your goal as short-term volunteers is to **help further the long-term mission of the charity**.

Contacting charities can be challenging. Try to schedule service projects two to three months in advance, but recognize that it may take a great effort (and one to two weeks) for a charity to respond to you.

Before you email or call, decide on a couple of good days and times when your group is available to volunteer or if working with a larger audience, set a date with the charity first and then sign up your volunteers.

Consider working with a volunteer organization like *The Boston Project Ministries*, which effectively serves both volunteer groups and service organizations by setting up service projects and taking care of many of the details. The *Emmanuel Gospel Center* helps to connect volunteers and opportunities, and offers varying levels of support.

CHARITY COMMUNICATIONS

Methods: Email versus telephone

Introductory “talking points” for working together:

- Your commitment to learning about the charity and its needs
- This is an opportunity to introduce the charity and its needs (volunteer, financial, professional, and intangible support) to people new to the cause, clients, and community in a more meaningful, hopefully ongoing, way beyond impersonal fundraising mailings
- Your group will complete needed work and provide resources such as volunteer recruitment, management, tools, materials, and other resources

Introduce your group:

1. What kind of group are you? *Professional colleagues, student, church, and if a group of younger people, the number of adult chaperones that will volunteer along with them*
2. What are the goals/purpose of this activity as it pertains to your group and the charity?
3. How many people from their group do you expect to participate and what are their ages? *50+, 25, or 6 youths, teens, adults, and/or elders*
4. What are your resources? *Skills, tools, materials, transportation, refreshments*
5. Why do you want to volunteer?
6. What, if any, kinds of projects do you have in mind? *Weekday, weekend, physical, clerical, or fundraising work, throwing a party or organizing a cookout or outing for clients*
7. What is your timetable? *One to three months from date of first contact*

Learn:

- What does the charity really need?
- Does it have seasonal needs?
- How can volunteers make the most difference?
- Are there specific requirements for age, criminal record checks, waivers, safety, abilities, etc?

Communication Tips:

- Share the best times and best ways to reach you for normal business and emergencies.
- Describe your (and learn their) process for developing a volunteer project together, including how far you are willing to extend your group and yourself for an under-resourced charity that may have inadequate staffing and other resources to prepare totally for your volunteer group’s participation.
- Describe your role in this process.
- Seek assistance if you receive no response within 1-2 weeks.
- Make a site visit or trial run through.
- Plan for contingencies. *What if...*
 - A volunteer is too sick to participate? *Who does s/he contact by when?*
 - Your group must cancel or recruits less than the target number of participants, *by when must they report so and how must they handle it with the host charity and committed volunteers?*
 - More than the target number of people want to volunteer? *Will there be a creation of a backup list or scheduling of an additional volunteer shift?*

step 3: PLAN FOR THE SERVICE PROJECT

Thorough planning and preparation in advance is crucial for the successful engagement of volunteers to assist a charity in carrying out its mission. The volunteer group leader should understand several issues well before contacting a charity or recruiting volunteers.

Specific Tasks:	THE TASKS: WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?				VOLUNTEER GROUP RESOURCES: WHAT ARE WE ABLE TO SUPPLY FOR THE PROJECT?		
	Resources Needed	Skills/ Proficiencies Needed	# Vols Needed (Min/Max)	Duration (Hrs)	Who Provides Resources	Who Instructs and Supervises Volunteers	Extras to Make a Difference for Volunteers/ Clients
1.					Our Group / Host Org	Our Group / Host Org	
2.					Our Group / Host Org	Our Group / Host Org	
3.					Our Group / Host Org	Our Group / Host Org	
4.					Our Group / Host Org	Our Group / Host Org	
5.					Our Group / Host Org	Our Group / Host Org	
6.					Our Group / Host Org	Our Group / Host Org	

Special Volunteer Skills or Proficiencies to Identify/Develop/Retain in your Group:

Certifications: First Aid, CPR, ServSafe

Skills: Cooking, face painting, balloon animal making, arts & crafts, earned income tax credit law

INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER RESOURCES: WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS NEED?

Clothing & Footwear	
Advance Preparations	
Financial & Other Contributions	
Age Minimum/Maximum	
Authorize Criminal Record Check	
Particular Abilities	
Things to Leave at Home/Not Use	<i>Cell phones, iPods, Walkmen, Blackberries, Pagers, Unnecessary Valuables, Cigarettes?</i>

SCHEDULE FOR THE WORKDAY (OR LONGER PERIOD):

Time	Activity	Time	Activity
	Group Leader(s) Arrive at Host Organization		Order lunches and arrange for pick up or delivery
	Organization of tools, materials, and work area before volunteers arrive		Lunch/Break & Announcements
	Check in volunteers and distribute nametags (15-5 min before start)		Continue work
	Orient volunteers		Clean up and gather tools
	Introductions		Time to stop work
	Explain and assign specific tasks		Closing the day and Reflection
	Begin working		Ending time

Be as specific and detailed as possible in your planning:

- Compose a **list of tasks and instructions** if needed.
- Carefully communicate your expectations that group **members must sign up/commit individually** to volunteer for each project **by a specified deadline**.
- The importance of **starting/ending on-time** (recommended “window” for arrival time, starting within 15 minutes of advertised start time so not to penalize those who arrive on-time)
 1. Why this is important: Respect for volunteers and charity staff.
 2. Contingency plan if work will be incomplete.
- Communicate all important details to confirmed/signed up volunteers (things you would like to know in advance): when they should arrive; clear directions to the worksite; with whom they should check in; how long you expect them to work; when there will be lunch/other breaks, etc.
- Make clear who they will be working with or serving (e.g., the young, elderly, homeless, mentally or physically challenged, etc.) and what attitudes they should bring to the project.
- Check that the charity and you will have all necessary materials and supplies ready 3-7 days in advance.

step 4: COMMUNICATE

Your communications create a culture of service and market your volunteer opportunities as well as inform and prepare participants.

Make sure your communications address the 5 W's: Who, What, When, Where, and Why for group members.

Communicate with your group and start signing people up about one month in advance. Figure out the best way to let people know about the opportunity (verbal announcement, bulletin, website, email, flyer, etc.). Be savvy and thoughtful about your recruitment techniques since different audiences respond to different appeals. Your goal is to ensure an excellent service experience, so also recruit people one-on-one – don't wait for people to come to you.

Customary communication includes:

- Advertising opportunities/needs
- Personally asking individuals to help out
- Signing up committed volunteers
- Providing reminders, confirmations, and project details in advance of the service project
- Following up with volunteers after the service project is complete

step 5: PREPARE

Before you serve, you need to prepare your group for their service experience.

This is an excellent time to use the *Standards of Excellence for Volunteers*. This resource will help you and your group members examine your goals and motivations for serving along with considering helpful attitudes that make for an excellent service experience.

We want to stress that when possible, it is important to have at least one group meeting with team members prior to the day of the service experience. This meeting could include the following:

- Overview of the day (start & end times, what we will be doing, what people should and shouldn't bring with them) AND an impact statement (what will be the outcome of your service as a benefit to the charity).
- CityServe's *Standards of Excellence for Volunteers*
- PMD's *Things to Keep in Mind When Working with Guests/Women*
- Bible study on service
- Emergency instructions and contact numbers

step 6: SERVE

Below is a helpful checklist for you to use on the Service Day.

Who Will Handle This?	Activity
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Group Leader(s) Arrive at Host Organization
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Name & Phone# of Who Opens Host Organization:
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Organization of tools, materials, and work areas BEFORE volunteers arrive
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Check in volunteers and distribute nametags (15-5 min before start)
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Welcome & Thank volunteers
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Orient volunteers
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Lead Self-Introductions
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Charity mission and its history, the nature of ongoing projects, and short overview/tour of the worksite
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Scripture and prayer
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Describe schedule
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Describe overall goals for the project
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Explain and assign specific tasks with clear expectations
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Provide appropriate tools and materials for each task/site
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Demonstrate/train in tool use, safety, protocols, etc.
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Begin working
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Order lunches and arrange for pick up or delivery
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Break & Announcements
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Manage workflow
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Clean up and inventory tools and remaining materials
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Thank Volunteers
You / Another Volunteer / Host Org	Project Closure & Reflection

As the project concludes, make some time to look back and evaluate the volunteer experience, both with your volunteers and with the charity representative in order to plan/set up for the next time:

- Did you accomplish what you had hoped for, your goals? What worked well and what went poorly?
- How well was the job done? What still needs to be completed?
- Were there problems with engaging volunteers overall? Were there specific problems connected with this particular host charity or particular volunteers?
- What do you need to do differently the next time, to a) make sure you have adequate planning and resources; b) prepare and supervise the volunteers; c) obtain feedback from them?

step 7: CELEBRATE

Let this spirit of thankfulness pervade everything you do. You are building relationships, not simply completing tasks. A successful volunteer project balances people and tasks. There are many ways that this can be accomplished:

- Establishing a relationship with volunteers in advance of the project
- Mentioning as specifically as possible the impact of their contributions
- Getting to know their interests and motivations and personalizing the way you appreciate them
- Praying for and with the volunteers
- Nurturing skills and passions, and mentoring future leaders
- Involving them in the decision making process for future efforts
- Create a physical reminder of what was accomplished (bulletin board, webpage, etc.)
- Sending thank you / appreciation notes

Your goal is to create an ever-expanding network of people passionate about serving others and for them in turn to become advocates for service.

NOTES:

These standards were developed by a team of representative from The Boston Project Ministries (www.tbpm.org), People Making a Difference® (www.pmd.org), Pine Street Inn (www.pinestreetinn.org), Park Street Church's City Works Ministry (www.parkstreet.org/ministries/cityworks.shtml), and the Emmanuel Gospel Center (www.egc.org). For hard copies or electronic files (PDF and MS Word) of these standards to adapt them for your own organization's use, please contact Michele Mitsumori at CityServe@egc.org or 617-262-4567.

CITYSERVE, a ministry of the Emmanuel Gospel Center, is dedicated to serving the Kingdom of God by recruiting, training, and connecting volunteers and organizations in and around Boston. CityServe's core values: reciprocity, cooperation, Christ-centeredness, and a safe environment.

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