



## How to Develop Service Projects

In Exploring, it's important to demonstrate a post's orientation to the community. The purpose of this how-to section on service is to give you some ideas on developing your service projects. In particular, it describes one method that will help you first identify needs for service, and then identify projects that address those needs.

### **Need-to-Solution Method**

Performing a service project will be of the most value when you respond in some way to a *need you see* within your community.

The following steps will help you identify both needs and solutions.

#### **1. Brainstorm a list of service needs.**

Always begin in the brainstorming mind-set (see the how-to section on brainstorming). In this step, simply list any needs for service that exist in your community. Think about experiences you've had, articles you've read, people you know, or things you've heard about.

Don't worry about judging your service needs, making decisions, or choosing the words to describe a need.

The following is a sample list of needs that demonstrate both a variety of ideas and the authentic way in which the brainstormers in this situation expressed their ideas.

#### *Sample list*

- Do something about getting people interested in reading—especially kids.
- What about people who can't read?
- Make riding in a bus safe.
- Find out what older people who still live in their homes in our neighborhood need help with.
- Get kids interested in doing something worthwhile during the summer.
- Is there anything we can do in emergency room situations? Like help people fill out forms or just sit with them?
- I think we need to do something about kids drinking and using drugs.

- I feel like nobody knows anyone in this neighborhood anymore. How about helping people get to know their neighbors?
- What about all the dogs and cats at the Humane Society that nobody knows about?
- I think we should do something for children who have been abused.
- Can we do anything about kids who are missing?
- I think people need to laugh more, and enjoy life. Everyone seems so uptight and serious all the time. Can we do anything to cheer people up?
- I'm worried about all the garbage we have, and I think people should know more about the importance of saving trees and protecting water, and getting rid of some of the pesticides we're eating.
- Is there anything we can do to help people who need a job?

## **2. Pare and prioritize your list.**

Once you've gathered a list of ideas, it's time to discuss the various ideas on that list. In this step, you sort through your ideas to weigh them. Your goal is to pare down your large list to the top three to five service needs. This will allow you to develop enough service projects to intersperse throughout your year's program of activities. In your discussion, ask questions like: Which of these needs has the most meaning to our post? Why? Do we see any common concerns that are a part of several needs? What needs do we really feel strongly about?

## **3. Brainstorm solution ideas.**

You now have a pared-down, prioritized list of service needs. Opposite those needs, develop a brainstorming list of possible solutions (ideas for service projects) for each of the three to five needs. Go through the same process to develop this list as you did when you developed your list of service needs.

## **4. Select your service projects.**

Discuss and weigh the various ideas on your list for service projects. Select the best service project idea for each need. In your discussion, ask questions like: What do we like best about each of these ideas? What do we like least? How could we use the career or special interest of our post in any of these service projects? Does this project idea really address the need we want to do something about? Will it make a difference in people's lives? Will our participants get excited about carrying out this project? How will the people we're trying to help feel about our service project?

## **5. Carry out the seven steps for planning an individual activity.**

A service project is an activity, and it should be planned like any other individual activity. Select an activity chair and activity committee for each service

project who will be responsible for carrying out the seven steps for planning an individual activity (see pages Y-38–Y-39) and for filling out an activity planner. In step 2 (*identify needed resources*), the post committee should be consulted to help identify and contact community agencies that might provide assistance with each service project.

A good service project can be very simple. It might never attract the attention of others. That doesn't mean it can't do as much good as projects that garner lots of attention. Attention is not the goal—service is. Sometimes, it's the little things we do consistently that make a real difference in someone's life. For example, think about an older person who has always loved to read but who can no longer go to the library. What if you went with this person or went by yourself to the library to pick up and return books each week?

The ultimate goal of service projects is to improve the community or to help someone live a healthier, safer, more dignified and enjoyable life.