



Preparation Action Reflection Evaluation

Why Use PARE?

The PARE model is a simple way to plan community-responsive, effective and successful service projects for student groups. Using PARE to design and implement service projects will help the group learn from serving in the community. Preparing for and reflecting upon service helps breakdown stereotypes and place the service experience in a broader context. Evaluating action helps to improve the service the group is engaged in. While the PARE planning guide does not guarantee a successful service experience for both students and community members, it helps to maximize effectiveness and insures that all participants have the information and support they need to get the most from their service experience.

Preparation

It is crucial to prepare your group for each service experience to increase the likelihood that there will be positive outcomes for both community members and student participants. Issues that arise during the preparation can set the tone for a service project and should be connected to issues discussed in reflection. Preparation should include information on the following:

1. Logistical information about the day.
 - When and where will your group meet?
 - How will you get to the service site? If driving, provide clear directions.
 - Stress the importance of timeliness - the agency is expecting you at a certain time. (Always build in some extra time in case you get lost or travel takes longer than anticipated.)
2. Information about the content of the project.
 - Who will meet your group at the site?
 - What type of training will be provided?
 - What type of service you will be doing?
 - What will happen after the project?
 - Where will the reflection session be and how long will it last?
3. Information about broader issues relating to the project.
 - Providing information about the population with whom you will be working and relevant issues addressed by the service agency will aid in understanding.
 - Discuss how issues such as oppression, privilege and racism affect the population with whom you will be working.

4. Explore expectations and assumptions of the participants.
 - Find out what participants hope to gain from the project.
 - Discuss stereotypes, impressions, assumptions and concerns before beginning the project.

A TIMELINE FOR PLANNING A SERVICE EXPERIENCE:

1. **At least six weeks prior to your desired service date...**
 - Determine the issues, populations, and locations that are of interest to the group
 - Determine time investment of the group (on-going, one time, how many hours)
 - Consult Community Service Programs (web site or in-person)
 - Gather information about potential agencies and issues
 - Make preliminary phone calls to agencies; discuss service activities and potential dates
2. **At least four weeks prior to your desired service date...**
 - Solidify with the host agency the service location, date, time and activity
 - Inform your group of the details
 - Begin to think about preparation activities
 - Solidify transportation
3. **At least two weeks prior to your service date...**
 - Remind participants of the service activity
 - Provide written information about the agency or issue
4. **The week prior to your service date...**
 - Remind participants of your commitment to the agency or activity
 - Discuss the agency and issue; draw connections to other coursework
 - Facilitate a preparation activity
5. **After your service...**
 - Reflect and evaluate with your group
 - Thank host agency
 - Throughout the remainder of the semester continue to draw connections and learning from the service experience

IDEAS FOR PREPARATION EXERCISES

Guided Imagery: Participants get comfortable, close their eyes and listen to a narration. This exercise can help participants get in touch with their assumptions, expectations and fears about the project. Be creative and write a narrative that leads participants through the day.

Example: Today you are going to spend time with children who are critically ill. Picture yourself arriving at the hospital/home. How do you feel? You enter the lobby of the hospital/home. What is the first thing you see? What do you smell?

Sentence Stems: These help participants begin thinking about their expectations for the experience. Have participants complete the statements aloud or by writing.

Examples: Today I hope . . .
I am anxious about . . .
I expect the children to . . .

Articles/Photos: Provide articles or photos about the issue the project addresses or the population with you will be working. Use these to stimulate discussion and learning.

Encourage Creativity: Some people connect to their ideas and feelings best through creative and artistic expression. Use crayons and drawing paper and ask participants to draw their expectations for the project.

Role Play: Act out situations that may arise during the project. Discuss what was learned.

Quotes: Give each participant a quote relating to service, ask them to read it quietly to themselves and then keep it in their pocket during the service. Afterwards during reflection, ask participants to take out the quote, reflect on it quietly to themselves, and then share it with either the larger group or in pairs. This is a good way to tie in preparation with reflection.

Action

Action involves the service project itself. There are three primary ways your group can serve:

1. **Direct:** Providing service directly to individuals at the agency site or in the community. Examples include tutoring children, holding a party for residents of a nursing home, taking care of pets for people who are homebound and serving meals in a soup kitchen.
2. **Non-direct:** Serving at an agency doing behind-the-scenes assistance, not directly with individuals the agency serves. Examples include making presents for patients at Children's Hospital but not working with the children, sorting food in a food distribution center, painting the exterior of a homeless shelter and helping with a major mailing at a nonprofit organization.
3. **Indirect:** Serving on behalf of an issue, population or community of concern but removed from the actual site. Examples include raising money for the Make-a-Wish Foundation, doing a dance-a-thon and making care packages for residents of a nursing home.

An important factor to consider in deciding what action your group will take is the needs and voice of the community. One way to find out is to ask the agency you will be working with -- it sounds simple but many groups neglect to do this. You will maximize the effectiveness of your service if you are aware of the needs of the community. By recognizing community voice, you can begin to build bridges toward making change and solving problems. Never assume you know what a community's needs are!

CHOOSING A SERVICE SITE

Keep in mind that everyone has a different comfort zone. While one person may be comfortable working one-on-one with children from Langley Park, someone else may feel quite uncomfortable with a service project that deals with children. Try and gain a sense of how much experience your group has performing service. Quality preparation will help inform participants about the population and issue at hand.

Choosing the best agency or project for your group is a critical step in making your service a worthwhile and meaningful experience. Learning about the agency's goals, expectations, history, philosophy, staff and volunteers can help you select one that best matches your groups' interests, skills, and learning goals for the experience. Use this list of questions to help you gather information when you talk with the volunteer coordinator in each of the agencies in which you are interested.

Questions About the Agency:

- What are the goals of the organization?
- How long has the agency been operating?
- Whom does the agency serve?
- How many volunteers serve the organization?
- Have any Maryland students/student groups volunteered here before?
- What is the structure of the agency?
- How is it funded?
- How does the agency interact with the surrounding community?

Questions About Your Service:

- What type of work needs to be done that our group can help with?
- What expectations does the organization have of its volunteers?
- What type of service does the agency need? (direct work with clients, behind-the-scenes work)
- Are there specific skills or qualities the agency is looking for in its volunteers?
- What type of orientation and training will our group receive?
- Who will be our contact person on site?
- Must volunteers agree to a minimum commitment? Can we come only once?
- Are the times our group can come flexible or fixed?
- Is public transportation available to the site? Is there parking?
- Is there additional assistance required at certain times of the year, like holidays, when our group might be helpful?
- What skills or qualities can volunteers develop as a result of working with the agency?

These questions are suggestions. Each group will have specific needs; be sure to ask whether the agency is able to accommodate yours. Gather enough information to make an informed decision about where you would like to do your service project. Remember: you are going to help an agency or organization meet community-identified needs. ***Be sure to ask what needs to be done rather than simply informing an agency what your group wants to do!***

HOW THE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING CAN HELP

Visit the Office of Community Service-Learning in 1120 Stamp Student Union for assistance in finding a site for your service project and help in planning for success. We have the following resources and services to assist you:

- A computerized listing service that includes information on over 850 agencies in the Washington, D.C., metro area. We can search the database for the county you wish to serve in, what population you wish to serve and the type of service you wish to provide. (www.csl.umd.edu)
- Community service opportunities related to every academic major.
- A monthly calendar highlighting one-time service opportunities.
- *UMServes*, our listserv that provides you with weekly bulletins on upcoming service opportunities and a way to communicate with others who are interested in serving the community. Encourage your members to subscribe! To subscribe, send an e-mail to listserv@listserv.umd.edu that says: sub UMSERVES Your Name. Delete any signature from your message.
- Staff members available to assist you in selecting a rewarding community involvement experience.
- Informational handouts:
 - National service initiatives, such as AmeriCorps and the America Reads campaign
 - One-time, post-college, and group-oriented service opportunities

- Student groups involved in community service
- Community service sites that are accessible by the University of Maryland's Shuttle-UM service.
- Information on courses that are offering service-learning opportunities.

Reflection

Reflection invites those participating in service to:

- Think critically about their experience.
- Understand the complexity of the service experience and put it in a larger context.
- Challenge, although not necessarily change, their own attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, privileges, prejudices and stereotypes.
- Transform a single project into further involvement and/or broader issue awareness
- Ask "Why?"

Through reflection we can increase our sensitivity to community issues thus increasing our capacity to more effectively serve. Reflection is also a way to monitor service experiences, because through the discussion and interaction participants can feel both challenged and supported. It is especially beneficial to bridge the reflection back to the preparation.

The Social Change Model of Leadership Model can be useful in reflection activities. The model views all students as potential leaders and holds that service is an effective way to develop leadership skills in students. The model focuses on three main bodies that are affected by the service experience: the individual, the group and community/society. When utilizing the Social Change Model in reflection activities, reflective questions center around seven critical values:

- **Consciousness of self** is awareness of values, emotions, attitudes and beliefs that motivate one to take action and how that person understands others.
- **Congruency** means thinking, feeling and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity and honesty towards others.
- **Commitment** implies intensity and duration. Requires significant involvement and investment of one's self in the activity and its intended outcomes. It is the energy that drives the collective effort.
- **Collaboration** is the primary means of empowering others and self through trust. Collaboration can occur when one has trust in the diversity of multiple talents and perspectives of the group.
- **Common purpose** is to work with shared aims and values. It implies the ability to engage in collective analysis of the issues at hand and the tasks to be undertaken.
- **Controversy with civility** recognizes two realities of any group effort: that differences in viewpoint are inevitable and valuable, and that such differences must be aired openly but with civility.
- **Citizenship** describes the process whereby the self is responsibly connected to the environment and the community. It acknowledges the interdependence of all involved in the leadership or service effort.

The questions and activities to follow incorporate the seven critical values. Each value covers a unique aspect of the experience and can aid in understanding.

IDEAS FOR REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

Discussion: Take time after the project to have the participants discuss their feelings about the service. Ask open-ended questions to stimulate discussion, such as:

- What is the agency doing well? What would you like to see done differently?
- What did you learn about the issue the agency addresses or the population they serve?

- In what ways were your stereotypes or assumptions challenged?
- How has this service experience supported your values?
- Would you want to serve with this organization again?
- How responsive is this organization to community needs?

What, So What, Now What: Have everyone answer three questions (written and then shared, written only, or as a discussion): What? So What? and Now What?

- What did we do, see, hear, smell, touch, taste?
- So what does it all mean?
- Now where do I/we go from here?

Free Write: Give everyone a few minutes to free write their feelings about the project. Ask for volunteers to share what they have written in small groups.

Artistic Expression: Pass out crayons and paper. Have participants draw their feelings about the project or what they experienced. Emphasize that artistic skill is irrelevant. Invite participants to share their drawings.

Graffiti Boards: Use newsprint around the room as graffiti boards and ask participants to go around responding to thoughtful questions, quotes, or statistics.

Sentence Stems: Read some sentence stems aloud and have participants write and/or share their thoughts. Examples:

- Today I learned . . .
- What surprised me about today was . . .
- The most challenging thing about today was . . .
- The best thing about today/the best part of the day was . . .

Travel Time: Make use of travel time. Have reflection on the metro or in a car.

Notecards: Ask students to write questions that arose from their service experience on note cards. Place the note cards in the center of the circle in a pile. Ask each student to draw a card and respond to the question.

String Game: Have participants stand in a circle. Ask each person to talk about their experience and then throw the ball of string to another group member, holding on to his/her end of the string as s/he passes it. Both facilitators and participants can ask the person a question about his/her experience. When everyone has had a turn, process the exercise by looking at the pattern in the string that emerged. Emphasize the connections that were made and the role each person had in the finished design that emerged. You can use this as a metaphor for community and to illustrate the importance that each person's actions has on others.

Evaluation

Evaluation of each community service experience is important in determining to what extent the goals and learning objectives of the project were met. Through evaluation, you can strengthen your ability to design and implement service projects. Service projects should be evaluated from several perspectives:

- How successful was the project for the agency?
- How successful was the project for the people who use the agency's services?
- How successful was the project for each participant?
- How successful was the project for your group as a whole?
- What changes could be made to improve the overall success of the project?

Develop a brief set of questions and ask participants to respond in writing and then in small groups (time permitting). Example Questions:

- To what extent did the experience meet your expectations?
- What might have helped make your experience better?
- What community needs did your service fulfill?
- What community needs were not addressed?

To enhance the experience from the perspective of the community, project coordinators should ask the volunteer coordinator how successful s/he found the experience to be. Also, you may want to ask what people could do differently next time or how they could be better prepared for the involvement in the community in the future.

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Please Note: Inclusion in Community Service-Learning (CSL) resources is not to be interpreted as an endorsement for any agency or organization listed here. As with any off-campus opportunity, the University is not responsible for any personal injury or loss that might result from your participation. Participants are strongly encouraged to read and implement the **Good Questions to Ask** and **PARE** handouts available through CSL. Lastly, be aware of any special requirements or skills necessary to perform the service requested (i.e. construction, carpentry, landscaping) and do not feel compelled to execute tasks which are beyond your capabilities.

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