



Post Volunteer Project

REFLECTION

Help your volunteers identify the effects of their work for their community and for themselves by building in opportunities for personal reflection during and after their volunteer service!

Reflection is a crucial part of community service, which allows volunteers to look back on, think critically about, and learn from their service experience. Reflection may include acknowledging and/or sharing of reactions, feelings, observations, and ideas about anything regarding the activity. Reflection can happen through writing, speaking, listening, reading, drawing, acting, and any other way you can imagine.

Benefits of Reflection:

- Gives meaning to the experience (was goal accomplished, how did we do, how is community served by this, how is this part of a larger effort, etc.)
- Can help volunteers understand the limitations and opportunities of the community organization
- Creates a sense of accomplishment that is crucial
- Integration of service into the rest of one's life — developing a "spirit" of service and civic-mindedness
- Improved service — As volunteers examine the effects of their behavior, they discover ways to improve the quality and quantity of their service.
- Can create a sense of closure, especially important after a long service period, project, or emotional experience.
- Volunteers gain a broader perspective of other's experience
- Builds community among the volunteers
- Group problem solving creates shared understandings, open communication, and better teamwork
- Encourages volunteers to do higher level thinking, as they look for root causes of complex issues
- Acknowledges gained skills and builds confidence

About reflection activities:

Reflection can, but does not have to be a structured group activity. Be creative about including reflection opportunities throughout the service experience. Here are a few examples:

- Add a few reflection questions to the written evaluation form.
- Prepare a small card for each volunteer that includes information on how their service contributes to the mission of the organization and how they helped the community.
- Provide a reflection opportunity during a meal break. Place background material on the social issues of your organization addresses on the tables. Also provide a sample discussion question for volunteers to discuss while they eat.
- Create a few reflection questions to review with the group in a discussion format at the end of the project. (Sample questions:
- Tell volunteers that you would like them to help you think of an idea for a new bumper sticker slogan for your group's projects. Ask them to write their ideas on a big sheet of paper.

Here are some sample reflection questions to help facilitate a reflective discussion about the service project:

- **What?** What issue(s) is being addressed? What did you notice happening around you during the project? What were the results/outcome of the project?
- **So What?** What did you think about during the project activity? What affect do you think this activity has had on those intended to benefit from it? How as it affected you
- **Now What?** What are the larger issues that caused the need for you to participate in this service activity? How did your efforts help? What more needs to be done to improve these problems? How will you apply what you have learned here in the future?

For great information on this topic, visit: <http://nationalserviceresources.org/volunteer-member-staff-management/reflection>

"A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions."
- Oliver Wendall Holmes

"The meaning of things lies not in the things themselves, but in our attitude towards them."
- Antoine de Saint Exupery