

# TIPSHEETS

- Contacting Issue Experts
- Developing a Project Budget
- Applying for a Grant
- Speaking to the Media
- Presenting a Volunteer Orientation
- Engaging Public Officials
- Measuring Project Progress and Results
- Evaluating your Project

## Contacting Issue Experts

Issue experts can help you identify community needs and effective strategies and resources to address those needs; refine your project idea by providing feedback; and spread the word out about your project.

### Who to contact?

- o Passionate, engaging people – people who want to get others involved!
  - o Set up a Google Alert or do a Twitter search about your issue – who in your community is making news?
  - o Attend a community workshop or lecture. Check out the community events calendar in your local newspaper for a listing of these events.
- o Experts connected with these organizations working on your issue:
  - o Government agencies or departments
  - o Issue-based organizations
  - o Universities or colleges
  - o Organizations working on a local level in the community you identified

### How to contact?

- o Once you have identified someone to contact, do more research to learn about their work and their accomplishments. Check out their website or Twitter feed, or read articles they have written.
- o Send an introductory email asking for a short (5-10 minute) phone call. In your email, tell briefly about:
  - o Your inspiration and project-- why this issue is important to you and what you are doing about it
  - o Your “ask” – the advice or support you are seeking
  - o Your assets -- how the expert will benefit from advising or working with you
  - o Your availability – days and times when you are free to talk

### Sample Introductory Email

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I recently \_\_\_\_\_(state how you learned about the person, e.g. you attended a workshop or you read about them in the newspaper). I would like to speak with you because I am also very interested in this cause! \_\_\_\_\_  
...(insert one to three sentences explaining your inspiration and your project).

Would you be available for a brief phone call with me? I would like to talk with you about \_\_\_\_\_(describe the advice or support you are seeking). By helping me out, I am hoping that you \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (explain how the expert will benefit from supporting you.)

I am available \_\_\_\_\_ (insert days and times you are free to talk). Please let me know which date and time works best for you.

Thank you considering my request. I look forward to hearing from you!

Respectfully,

(Your name)

## Developing a Project Budget

### Brainstorm expenses

- Make a list of all project expenses -- everything you might need from beginning to end. Your expenses might include:
  - equipment (e.g., shovels for a garden project);
  - materials and supplies (e.g., plants and mulch for a garden project, or paper for promotional flyers);
  - water and snacks for volunteers;
  - project site or facilities rental fees; and
  - transportation to and from your project site.
- Double-check your list by walking through each project activity, including planning meetings, promotion and outreach, volunteer orientation, the service activity, and recognition and celebration events.
- Think sustainability! Budget for items that will increase your capacity to do your project again. Try to re-use materials and supplies to build infrastructure or physical spaces (e.g., garden beds that can be used as a site for future projects).
- Adjust your budget when new expenses are added or when budgeted items may not be needed.

### Determine number of items

- When figuring out the number of items you need, remember to take into account:
  - Number of project participants (volunteers and beneficiaries)
  - Project goals – What impact do you want to make? How many people will you impact?

### Determine cost of items

- Seek out and compare different price options to find the best deals.

### Consider other options

- Whenever possible, borrow equipment and materials from family members, neighbors, and members of the community (and remind lenders to mark their name on their items so that all materials can be returned to proper owners).
- Ask family members, businesses, and members of the community for monetary or in-kind donations (non-monetary contributions of products or service, such as bottles of water and granola bars from a local grocery store).

### Sample Project Budget

Category	What do you need for your project?	Number of Items	Cost per Item	Total Cost of Item	Possible Source of Funding or Donation
Equipment	Shovels	6	\$20	\$120	Mr. Smith, Mrs. Robinson, and Mr. Clark will each lend us 2 shovels
Materials					
Food					
Facilities					
Transportation					

### Record expenses

- Keep all receipts to show proof of project expenses. If others purchase items, ask them to give you receipts for each item.

## Applying for a Grant

Before you begin writing your grant application, research the following topics:

- Eligibility: Do you meet all grant applicant requirements, such as age and geographical location?
- Alignment with Mission: Do your project goals match the funder's mission? If you need to significantly change your planned project in order to align with the funder's mission, do not apply for this grant.
- Your Needs: Prepare a budget to determine how much money you need to do your project.
- Allowable Use of Grant Funds: Does your proposed use of funds (proposed expenses) meet the funder's requirements? Which of your project expenses can be funded through the grant?
- Reporting Requirements: Will you have the time and ability to meet all grant reporting and evaluation requirements?
- Deadline: When is the grant application due? Do you have enough time to write a winning proposal?

### Preparing your Proposal: Use of Funds

- Explain how you will use the grant funds, and make sure the proposed expenses align with your project plan. Every item that you mention in your budget should be mentioned in your application.

### Reviewing your Proposal: Does your application . . .

- Meet the funder's stated purpose and objectives?
- Present a clear and compelling purpose?
  - Describe the intended project. Include measurable goals, and how you plan to monitor progress and evaluate your impact.
- Describe a specific, compelling community need?
  - Clearly explain the need you will address, presenting relevant facts and data for the specific community.
  - Focus on specific needs rather than the broader issue. For example, rather than stating the issue, "Rates of homelessness are increasing in our county," identify the specific need you will address: "Rates of homelessness are increasing in our county, and three organizations, including one food bank and two local shelters, need more donations of canned food items to meet the increased demand."
- Demonstrate that the project is doable, and that you have the capacity to implement it?
  - Describe your solution (how you will use resources to address the community need), and explain why this solution is an appropriate, feasible, and effective way to address the selected need.
  - Mention skills or experience that will enable you to successfully implement the project.
  - Provide proof of community support for the project (e.g., partners, volunteers, contributions in place).
- Use proper spelling and grammar?
  - Have multiple people read and edit the proposal before submitting it. Well-written proposals are an indicator of your commitment to the project.
- Reflect your vision, planning, and research?
  - Include evidence that you have really thought about and learned about the issue in planning your project.

**If you answered, "Yes!" to each of these questions, then you are ready to submit your proposal.**

#### . . . if you do get the grant:

Congratulations! Remember to complete the funder's reporting and evaluation requirements!

#### . . . if you do not get the grant:

- Modify your expenses so that you can still do your project.
- Apply for other grants. If at first you do not succeed, keep trying!

YSA's monthly Grants Alert and weekly National Service Briefing (NSB) provide the latest news and information about funding opportunities and upcoming grant deadlines. Sign up at [www.YSA.org/nsb/signup](http://www.YSA.org/nsb/signup).

Is a journalist interested in speaking with you about your project? Fantastic! Journalists will want to know how their readers or viewers can get involved with and benefit from the project. Develop three main talking points based on the 5Ws and H of your project (who, what, where, when, why, and how) – three important messages you want to share with the media and your audience.

- ☐ Who is involved in your project? Who does this issue affect?
- ☐ What is the goal of your project?
- ☐ When and where will your project happen?
- ☐ Why is this project important to you? What motivated you to act? Why should members of the community support your project?
- ☐ How can members of the community get involved with or support your project?

### **Your Three Main Talking Points:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



### **Interview Tips:**

Speaking to the media can be a scary yet exciting experience. It is a great chance to demonstrate leadership and public speaking skills and amplify the impact of your project.

- Relax and look at the reporter rather than the camera.
- Be passionate! Your enthusiasm can get others interested in what you are doing.
- Give visual, vibrant descriptions of your project.
- Keep it positive. Focus on your solution to a community issue. If a member of the media asks you a negative question, respond by explaining why you are committed to your project.
- Practice interviews with your peers, and focus on getting across your talking points.
- If you are nervous, think about the big picture, and how the interview will help increase the impact of your project!

Remember to obtain release forms from anyone who is under 18 years of age so that you know who may speak to the media and have photos taken.

A sample release form is available at <http://tools.ysa.org/downloads/ysa-grant-photos.pdf>

## Engaging Public Officials

Public officials are elected or appointed to represent the interests of their constituents – that’s YOU! Public officials can increase awareness of your issue in your community by publicly supporting you and your project – and if your issue is also one of their own priorities, you could even impact the policy and budget decisions they are advocating for, especially if they know what you are doing!

Always start with research: go online to find out what each is especially interested in or passionate about – and try to relate your project to that issue. Then try to learn about their position on YOUR issue.

### Who should we contact?

- Focus on local officials (e.g., mayor, town councilors, or school superintendent) first.
- Inform officials at all levels (local, state, and national) who have jurisdiction over where you live about your project and the activities you have planned.
- Get to know their staff; they are always more accessible, are the ones who have been doing the issue research, and can help bring your project to the attention of the public official. Place a quick call to the official’s office, and ask for the contact information for the staffperson assigned to handle your issue.

### What can you ask them to do?

Public Officials can:	Invite them to:
Learn about YOUR project, what YOU are doing about the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit or tour your project site.</li> <li>• Volunteer with your project.</li> <li>• Meet with you to discuss ways you might work together to address the community need.</li> </ul>
Raise awareness about the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host a press conference or media event that will spotlight your project and how it coincides with their commitment to improving the community.</li> <li>• Accept an award from your group or organization for their efforts to address the issue.</li> <li>• Address volunteers during orientation or kick-off event, to explain how their office plans to impact the issue your project is addressing.</li> <li>• Host or participate in a roundtable or town hall forum to express their views on the issue and ways to address the issue.</li> </ul>
Recognize the power of youth service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand out certificates to project volunteers during closing celebration.</li> <li>• Host a recognition ceremony at City Hall or the State Capitol for project volunteers, and present awards or certificates.</li> <li>• Write an opinion piece or letter to the editor encouraging youth service or service-learning and highlighting your project.</li> <li>• Assess community needs that can be addressed through youth service or service-learning, and present a youth service plan to the city council, a session of state legislature, etc.</li> <li>• Announce the creation of a state or local Youth Advisory Council to address community needs.</li> </ul>

## How will you connect with the public official?

- Public officials' schedules fill up quickly! As early as you can, send the public official information about your project, and an invitation to meet with you, attend your event, host a forum, etc.
  - To increase the chance that your invitation will be noticed, email or hand-deliver your letter of invitation.
  - Also be sure to send a copy of your invitation directly to the official's staffperson that you have identified as most likely to deal with your issue.
- A few days after you send the invitation, follow up with a phone call to the office to make sure your message was received. This "personal touch" can move your event or cause to the top of the list and increase your chances of having their participation.
- Ask the office to RSVP by a specific date so you can include their support in your future press releases.
- If they are not able to attend your event, share other ways that they could support your efforts.
  - Ask if a staff member or a family member would like to participate.
- After your event, thank them for their participation with a personalized letter and/or an email, and be sure to include photos and clips from any media coverage your event received.
  - One of the best ways to thank a public official is by recognizing them publicly. Consider writing a letter to the editor of your local paper highlighting the official's involvement.

## What should the invitation include?

Be courteous and concise, keep the letter to one page, and include:

- Your name and address with city, state and zip code + 4 digits.
- A specific ask. Include this as a statement of purpose in the first paragraph:
  - "I am writing on behalf of the (name of your project, club, or organization) to invite you to (be the keynote speaker, volunteer with us, at) our Global Youth Service Day kick-off event."
  - Be as detailed as possible about how you would like them to participate.
- Recognition and appreciation of their previous participation or support, if applicable.
- All the details they need to make their decision to join you. Include date(s), time, location, expected number who will attend, type of audience (students, teachers, other leaders, sponsors, etc.), specific project details, and how the project benefits the community.
- The specific timeframe for which you are requesting their participation. Are you flexible and can you accommodate their schedule?
- Names of other officials or media who have agreed to attend, as applicable.
- Your contact name and phone number that they or their staff can use for any questions.

YSA contacts all U.S. Senators and Representatives to let them know about YSA grant winners in their states and districts, and to solicit their endorsement for Global Youth Service Day.



Just as most people volunteer for the first time because someone personally invites their participation, the most ardent champions of service have been created by a constituent's personal outreach, and through shared firsthand experience of quality service projects.

## Sample Invitation Letter to a Public Official

Date

Your Name  
4321 Main Street  
Anytown, ST 12345-0000

The Honorable Jane Smith  
1234 Main Street  
Anytown, ST 12345-0000

Dear Mayor Smith:

On April 27, 2013 from 9:00 am until 1:00 pm, approximately 200 Anytown youth and adult volunteers will participate in a series of much-needed watershed restoration activities at Clark Middle School. We would be honored if you would join us to (insert specific “ask” – how you would like the public official to engage with you).

This event – planned and coordinated by (insert name or description of your group, class, or program) celebrates Global Youth Service Day, and provides a wonderful opportunity to raise visibility in our community for this important need. We especially want to thank you for your prior and continued support for and participation in our organizational events over the past two years.

Joining you at this event, we have also extended an invitation to Representative Burnette, Newspaper Reporter Davis, and TV Anchor Diaz. Your participation would round out the panel, making it a “don’t want to miss it!” event.

Please let us know if you are able to attend. If you have further questions about the event or about our commitment to (insert name of your issue), please contact me by email at [yourname@email.com](mailto:yourname@email.com), or by phone at 800-555-5678.

Respectfully,

Your Name



## Presenting A Volunteer Orientation

Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of expected attendees: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Prompts:	Your Script:
<b>Welcome and Introductions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank everyone for attending.</li> <li>• Remind everyone to sign in.</li> <li>• Acknowledge all partners, sponsors, and special guests.</li> <li>• Introduce project leaders and organizers, and ask all volunteers to introduce themselves.</li> </ul>	
<b>Background Information on Project</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share your inspiration for the project – how it began.</li> <li>• Recognize any connections to a national day of service (if applicable).</li> </ul>	
<b>Logistics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the day's schedule. Include time for breaks, a closing reflection, and the project evaluation.</li> <li>• Point out locations of restrooms, food / water stations, and where volunteers can safely store belongings.</li> </ul>	
<b>Project Goals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain project goals and expectations, to provide volunteers with targets they can work towards and to help them take ownership of their work.</li> </ul>	
<b>Volunteer Tasks and Roles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign specific tasks and provide clear instructions on how to do them.</li> <li>• Carefully review all safety procedures: how to use equipment, who to contact if someone is injured, etc.</li> </ul>	
<b>Marketing and Promotion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage everyone to Tweet, take photos, and post updates on Facebook throughout the project, if possible.</li> </ul>	
<b>Wrap-up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let everyone know how they can stay involved with your project or cause.</li> <li>• Answer questions – and have a great event!</li> </ul>	

## Measuring Project Progress and Results

What information you can learn from your project, and what is the best way to collect it? The following chart gives you some suggestions about how information can be used to help you develop and measure your project goals and results.

- Outputs are *quantifiable measures* of your project activities (things you can count) or of the service(s) you provide.
- Outcomes are the *results or benefits* of the activities and services that you provided.

What data to collect		How to collect data
<b>Sample Outputs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>Awareness projects</u>: number of educational events you plan and host, number of people who attend your educational events;</li> <li>○ <u>Service projects</u>: pounds of food collected or harvested, pounds of recyclables collected, number of students tutored;</li> <li>○ <u>Advocacy projects</u>: number of petitions or pledges signed, number of letters written to public officials;</li> <li>○ <u>Philanthropy projects</u>: dollar amount raised, number of donors</li> </ul>	<b>Sample Outcomes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improved behavior (e.g., more people wearing seat belts)</li> <li>○ Enhanced knowledge (e.g., people more aware of ways to conserve water)</li> <li>○ Uses of funds raised (e.g., funds used to create disaster preparedness kits)</li> <li>○ Changes in physical structures or infrastructure (e.g., garden beds built)</li> <li>○ Changes in laws or policies</li> <li>○ Programs created or strengthened</li> <li>○ Partnerships formed or existing partnerships strengthened</li> <li>○ Positive changes in the way your community thinks about youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Observations</li> <li>○ Photos (before, during, and after shots)</li> <li>○ Interviews with project beneficiaries and community partners</li> <li>○ Pre- and post-surveys</li> <li>○ Evaluations</li> <li>○ Statistics and counting</li> </ul>

As you measure your progress, consider the following questions:

- Are you meeting your project goals? Are you goals too modest? Too ambitious?
- What might you still need to learn or do in order to meet your project goals?
- Do you need additional support?
- How can you share progress updates to have even greater impact?

## Evaluating your Project

After your project, ask everyone to complete a project evaluation, such as the following. Plan to share this with funders and others as examples of your project impact, and use this feedback to help you plan future projects.

<b>Communication with Project Organizers</b>		<b>The Project</b>
<p>Your understanding of project goals, your tasks, and expectations?</p>	<p>Safe, fun, welcoming, organized environment?</p>	
<p>What was most helpful?</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <b>Overall Rating:</b>  <b>1 (low) ⇌ 5 (high)</b> </div>	<p>Why did you choose to volunteer with this project?</p>
<p>How did your involvement with this project impact you personally?</p>		<p>What benefit did this project provide to the community?</p>

**Rate your answers to these prompts using the 1 to 5 scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree).**

I understand how my participation with this project benefited the community.

**1      2      3      4      5**

I am proud of my participation in this project.

**1      2      3      4      5**

I would like to stay involved with (insert group name or organization).

**1      2      3      4      5**

I feel inclined to promote this project to my friends, family, and community.

**1      2      3      4      5**

Other comments: