Service Learning

We encourage you to think about your work through FRN as service learning. Service learning combines academic knowledge with volunteer service to address community needs effectively and meaningfully. The term “service” (as opposed to “helping” or “fixing”) acknowledges the balance of give and take between students and partner agencies; both parties should benefit from the relationship. The term “learning” suggests the connection of classroom to community knowledge. To move beyond volunteering and into service learning, follow these steps!

The Five Steps of Service Learning

**STEP 1: INVESTIGATION**

This can take the form of individual research (shared with team) and/or team brainstorming. When researching your community, use your personal resources and connections; ask questions and reach out to people that may know more than you do. If you don’t know the answers to some of the questions at the beginning, no fear—try to actively learn more about them as you spend time fighting hunger with your PA.

**SUGGESTED GOALS**

- Understand what your community needs and how your work addresses that
- Investigate your personal motivations and intentions for serving

**PERTINENT QUESTIONS**

- Where is your community? Think in terms of physical space and population.
- Who lives in your community? Think about various aspects of identity (e.g., race, gender, education, income, etc.).
- Where do people in your community get food (e.g: grocery stores, food banks, farmers markets, gardens, neighbors/family)? What obstacles, if any, stand in the way of food access on a daily basis (e.g: transportation, weather, store/work hours)?
- Where do people in your community get the resources to purchase food? Do community members receive federal benefits such as SNAP or WIC?
- What are people in your community concerned about when it comes to food? Think about nutrition, cost, accessibility, etc.
- How does your school and student body positively and negatively impact the local community?
- How is your school working with your community on sustainability, economics, and public health initiatives? Look into specific challenges such as job opportunities in the area, youth education, and access to fresh food.
STEP 2: PREPARATION
This is best formatted as a meeting before the service event.

SUGGESTED GOALS
• Discuss your team’s backgrounds and why you feel motivated to serve
• Determine the resources and skills you have to contribute

PERTINENT QUESTIONS
• Who will you seek to serve on this project?
• What are your best resources when serving others (e.g., humanpower, funding, transportation, etc.)?
• Are there organizations (or classes) you can partner with, within or outside of your campus?

STEP 3: ACTION
This should be kept in mind while serving.

SUGGESTED GOALS
• Be present
• Learn from those you serve

PERTINENT QUESTIONS
• Who are you serving? Talk to those present and learn about their backgrounds. Here are some tips and example questions for your conversations:
  • Try connecting over an activity that you are sharing. Bond over the work you are doing or the food you are eating!
  • Ask common conversational questions: “How is your day going?”, “Have you gotten a chance to enjoy the sunshine today?”, “What is your favorite food?” Be considerate of factors that might affect the person’s ability to engage in particular activities.
  • Give a compliment!
  • Learn more about the person, and share about yourself! Consider asking questions such as: “Did you grow up in this area?”, “Do you have a hobby?”, “Have you ever met anyone famous?”
  • If someone doesn’t seem like they want to talk, don’t push it! Silence is okay too.
  • How does this experience relate to your initial investigation?
**STEP 4: REFLECTION**

*This is best formatted as a team meeting after the service event. It is best done in a group! It’s important for everyone reflecting to feel comfortable sharing their experiences: reflection is not a time to judge others, but to consider yourself and how the service activity impacted you.*

**SUGGESTED GOALS**

- Connect your service activity to the larger issues in your community.

**PERTINENT QUESTIONS**

- What were your thoughts and experiences before, during, and after the event? Were any parts of the event particularly difficult for you?
- Did you have preconceived notions of who you would serve? How did they compare to reality?
- Did the event affect your motivations to continue serving? Did it impact your motivations for working on food-related issues?
- How did your work connect to the larger issues of hunger and waste in your community?

**STEP 5: DEMONSTRATION & EVALUATION**

*This is best formatted as a team meeting after one or several service events.*

**SUGGESTED GOALS**

- Take what you’ve learned from the service learning process and apply it to your chapter and school!
- Use your first-hand experience with those you serve to inform how your FRN chapter operates.
- Seek out ways to improve recoveries, volunteer recruitment, and the larger dialogue on hunger and waste at your school.

**PERTINENT QUESTIONS**

- Has everyone on your team been a part of this process? How are you bringing new people to the service-learning mentality?
- What is the best way to share your experiences with other FRN volunteers? With the rest of the campus? Is someone on your team willing to write a blog post for FRN National?
- How can you advocate for your school and fellow students to better fight hunger in your community?