Effective Practices Guide
To Creating
Inclusive and Accessible
Days of Service

- Preface -

> *How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."*
>
> -- Anne Frank

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guaranteed persons living with disabilities equal protection under the law in access to employment opportunities, public accommodations, and places, transportation, and telecommunications. The ADA has provided enormous opportunity for persons with disabilities to participate in American society as students, employees, consumers, and many other ways.

Despite the progress made since the ADA was signed into law, people with disabilities are still limited in their access to full community life. According to the National Organization on Disability, 35% of Americans with disabilities say they are completely uninvolved in their communities, compared to 21% of those without disabilities.

Far too many people with disabilities feel isolated and out of touch with their communities. In many cases, it is not the person's disability itself that causes this isolation; it may be rooted, instead, in the physical barriers or negative attitudes of the community.

> *"Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."*
>
> *--Martin Luther King, Jr.*

The common platform of service is a powerful place for dialogue, community building, personal learning, and bridging societal divides. Service also addresses visible community needs felt by everyone--regardless of race, gender, ability, or background. In the same way, everyone in the community has a strength, skill, or knowledge to help address these needs. However, it is common for some members of the community to be left out of participating in service, and thus left out of the stronger community that comes from the gathering. It is a self-perpetuating cycle of exclusion.

The number one reason for participation cited by people who volunteer is that *someone asked them to serve*. It is just that simple. The disability community will answer the call to service with trust and understanding of the initiative. This guide offers some suggestions on planning your service event to be inclusive of people with disabilities. It often references other resources available for more extensive information on project planning, strategies for utilizing the media, and other general topics that might help you plan for your project or event. Here, you will find information on outreach to the disability community as a unique constituency, enlisting their help in planning and recruitment, some project ideas to make your event more accessible and inclusive of many interests, abilities, and skills, and some issues to be mindful of when engaging persons with disabilities in your event.

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- Introduction -

Planning an event that is inclusive is as simple as one…two…three! Ask yourself the following three questions and you will be ready to move forward to plan an event that will be meaningful and have impact beyond just the work that gets done on the day of the event. A well planned project has the capacity to give everyone who participates a greater sense of belonging and a broader understanding of their community.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
- No project is possible without extensive planning. Get off on the right foot by giving yourself plenty of time to plan and engage a plurality of perspectives, ideas, and abilities in the decision-making. Include all people, both able-bodied and those with disabilities in your planning stages and throughout the whole event.
- Put simply, do something that makes a difference! What are the needs of the community and what are the passions and skills of your leadership and volunteers?
- Don't forget to *reflect and talk* about the experience—not just the project itself, but the process that got you there. Did you meet some new people? Learn something? What's next?

WHO SHOULD WE ASK TO VOLUNTEER?
- Remember: you don't have to do this all on your own! Recruit from a variety of sources to get people with disabilities to offer their insight throughout the process and get their friends and colleagues involved!
- For the event itself, welcome everyone! Just make sure you know what special needs you'll need to accommodate.
- After the event, continue to use your planning group to get input from volunteers, feedback from partners, and keep the effort going.

WHERE SHOULD WE DO OUR SERVICE?
- Make sure that everyone *can* participate in the planning by assessing the accessibility of your meeting spaces.
- Take care to "barrier bust" the service sites. Make sure that it's easy to find, easy to get around, and determine whether it needs any adaptations or accommodations.
- Remember that the effort shouldn't end with the event! Always be thinking about what your group can continue to do and how to build on your success!

This guide will help you answer these THREE questions in a step-by-step process—what to do and consider before the event, during the event, and after the event. Making progress toward inclusion of all people will be enriching for everyone involved and is a goal your organization can easily internalize and enlist others to help you achieve. Good luck!

Ready

Set

Plan

(before the event…)

- **Organizational Readiness: Are You Prepared**? -

Before jumping into event planning, take some time to do an honest assessment of how prepared your organization is to engage people with disabilities. By taking the time early on to determine your organization's interest, commitment, assets, and foreseeable challenges, you can avoid delays and problems later on. You will be better prepared to create a meaningful event, and to anticipate potential pitfalls or resources that will strengthen your work and build commitment around these efforts.

The following survey can be used by an individual project coordinator, or as a tool to engage all levels of an organization, from administrative staff to board members, in creating a dialogue about where you are and where you would like to head in relation to this area of volunteer management. For an additional survey tool, see Appendix B.

Consider this...

Questions you should answer before involving people with disabilities in your organization.

1. Describe your organization's vision of people with disabilities.

2. What is your motivation for wanting to involve people with disabilities in your organization?

3. What expectations do you have for your organization and for people with disabilities?

4. What role do you see people with disabilities playing in your organization?

5. How do people with disabilities already fit into your organization?

6. What resources in your organization exist to ensure success for involving people with disabilities in meaningful service?

7. What organizations exist in your community that might be potential partners in supporting your efforts to engage people with disabilities?

8. In what ways do you hope to expand meaningful service for people with disabilities in your organization?

- The Planning Group -

For a project to be inclusive, the efforts to include must start with the planning. It is important to incorporate as diverse a set of abilities, experiences, and perspectives as possible in the leadership of the project to enrich the experience and learning of all involved. Diversity and inclusion from the outset will lead to a greater sense of ownership and commitment for those who participate on any level.

To formalize this participation, convene a planning group of committed individuals to allow for a consistent and organized method of including the talents and ideas of a diverse set of perspectives.

But where do you begin? Start by asking your friends, colleagues, neighbors, or other members of the community who have an interest in or could benefit from the service that will be accomplished. Don't get discouraged if the planning group doesn't come together as quickly as you would like. There is no deadline for membership!

Once this core group is gathered, assess your assets: What skills and commitments are people bringing to the table? What contacts does each person have? Who can bring other diverse perspectives and abilities to the group? If you're still stuck, check out the *Partnerships* section in this guide for some groups in your community that can help.

Finally, when you approach new potential organizers, be sure to bring them up to speed with what has happened so far. Any new members should understand the goals of the group and their responsibilities before moving forward.

So now what do we do? The planning group works for you, just as you work for it. This body is comprised of the "experts," so their leadership and ideas will guide planning and outreach. It is important to rely on the committee's skills and contacts to work for you in producing the desired outcomes, and to hold them accountable for the tasks set forth.

Some specific responsibilities of the planning group could include:
- Setting the vision and strategic direction for the project;
- Challenging the project to think and act creatively;
- Providing top-down support for the project, including feedback on progress;
- Resolving major issues affecting project scope or direction;
- Promoting the initiative to the disability community and public at-large;
- Advocating for the idea and your organization;
- Arranging meetings with other organizations that serve the disability community or membership organizations within the disability community;
- Recruiting participants for the event; and
- Training your group and other volunteers in disability etiquette and awareness.

Size: For our purposes, the more the merrier! For the initial outreach to the disability community, it is important to include as many representatives as are interested in helping. Make sure, however, that there are substantive tasks for all who are interested in participating.

Leadership: It is important to identify a chair of the planning group. You may also wish to designate other officers. This higher level of involvement will allow members to hold each other accountable and relieve you and your organization of some of the responsibility of management.

Knowledge: Committee members should be well-briefed on the scope and mission of your organization and your purpose for the event or project. This mission can change with their input, but in order to convey the goals and purpose to their colleagues and friends, it is important that you provide the necessary resources and information early on.

Perspective. Members should be willing to take a. "big picture" perspective The planning group is a forum for them to share their ideas and gain new perspectives. The spirit in which you convene this committee should convey this as a value.

Representation. Members should be chosen to represent the widest variety of constituencies to the extent practical.

> *"Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the things you can think up if only you try!"*
>
> --Dr. Suess

Some planning group tips:

1. Work should be distributed as equitably as possible. Try to make sure that no one person is volunteering to do everything. Encourage people to take leadership in areas they can apply their skills and interests.

2. In some cases, and/or at certain times, it may be helpful to have a sub-committee or task force work within the planning group. Sub-committees can focus on recruitment, media outreach, project accessibility, budget oversight, etc.

3. Set up a timeline of critical decisions to be made. Include as many people as possible in creating this timeline. If sub-committees are working on different aspects of project planning, pay particular attention to critical deadlines that affect multiple committees (for example, the publicity committee may need to know all funders by a certain day in order to print brochures).

4. Create a method of contact among committee members outside the meeting environment. Provide everyone with a list of participants' phone numbers and email addresses.

5. Maximize the utility of the planning group beyond the planning meetings! Assign tasks or responsibilities like creating posters or flyers, contacting media outlets, making recruitment presentations, and searching for in-kind support.

6. Sometimes, having a central theme for each meeting allows for more in-depth discussion on the topic. Allow committee members to prepare in advance for the discussion topic to

enrich the outcome. Provide committee members with an agenda at least two weeks prior to the meeting, or establish the central topic at the closing of the previous meeting. Here are some sample agenda topics for your planning group. More detail on each of these topics can be found in the corresponding sections of this guide.

a. Example: Recruitment - committee members come equipped with at least four organizations that they know can recruit participants. At the meeting, everyone shares these ideas and works together to set goal totals, a timeline, a "recruitment message," and strategy (including poster ideas, media outlets, etc.).

b. Example: Budgeting - as a whole committee or as a task force, plan what sort of funds you will need to put on the event, and brainstorm how you can meet your goals.

c. Example: Media and Public Relations - identify who in the group will be responsible for approaching the media before the event.

d. Example: Projects - committee members identify project ideas for the event. As they move about the community for the two weeks prior to the meeting, committee members try to identify the needs that exist in their community and innovative projects that everyone could do.

e. Example: Barrier Busting - committee members spend a day together with other volunteers to survey the project sites that have been chosen and identify any possible barriers that may exist for the event day. See appendix F.

f. Example: Preparation for the event - a final meeting to "walk through" the event is important to make sure everyone is on the same page.

g. Example: Reflection and dialogue - committee members brainstorm questions for surveys or focus groups to get feedback from partners or participants. See the "Evaluating the Process" section for more ideas.

- Making your Meetings Accessible -

After all the hard work you put into outreach, it is important to plan for your first meeting. Check your space to ensure that your new partners will be able to attend and participate. The same holds true for other meetings organized later for larger groups or the general public. The following are some tips to keep in mind:

Location of Meeting

1. **Is there a barrier-free pathway to the meeting space?** A barrier-free pathway means that a person with a mobility impairment can make it from the street into the meeting room without encountering stairs, any sudden change in floor height over 1 inch, slippery or unstable ground, doorways less than 32" wide, or any objects obstructing walkways. Any elevators in this pathway should be large enough to comfortably fit a wheelchair.

2. **Is there an accessible restroom nearby?** An accessible restroom is one that has a stall with a doorway at least 32" wide, grab bars installed by the toilet, and enough space for a wheelchair to maneuver (at least 36" x 69"). Also, at least one sink should have adequate space open beneath it so that a person using a wheelchair can sit with their legs underneath the basin as they wash their hands.

3. **Is there adequate parking nearby?** Are handicapped parking places available and clearly marked? Are these places close to the building entrance?

4. **Is it easy to reach the meeting space from public transportation?** Many people with disabilities rely on public transportation to get around. When possible, meeting rooms should be a short and simple distance from major transportation routes. A complicated pathway makes it difficult for anyone to find their way, especially people with visual or cognitive disabilities.

5. **Have someone stand by the main entrance to direct people to the meeting room and help those needing assistance.** This is a courtesy that everyone will appreciate.

In the Meeting Room

1. **Are printed materials available in large print?** At all meetings, a few copies of written materials should be available in at least 16-point font. This helps anyone with difficulty reading small print. Also, all key material that is written should be announced during the meeting. For important or lengthy printed materials, create audio taped versions or have copies on disk in a generic word processing format for people who are visually impaired.

2. **Is the meeting site free of background noise?** This can greatly help people who are hard of hearing and people using hearing aids.

3. **Is there a good quality sound system?** Make sure to check any audio equipment for loudness and clarity.

4. **Is the speaker well positioned?** Have the speaker located in a position in which everyone in the room can easily see him or her. Do not have him or her located in front of windows (this can be particularly problematic for people with Attention Deficit Disorder and related conditions). If people who use wheelchairs are speaking, avoid using podiums. Have all speakers sit at a table instead.

5. **Are assistive listening devices available?** Rooms with assistive listening devices will make a big difference for those with hearing loss.

6. **For any public meetings, put "Sign-language interpreters available upon request" in advertisements.** Upon request, provide one. Ask deaf participants and interpreters what positions within the room would be best to facilitate communication. For more information on sign language interpreters, go to the Association of Science-Technology Centers' web site at www.astc.org or call the National Association of the Deaf at 301-587-1788 or visit their website at www.nad.org

Other Points

1. **When advertising community meetings, give contact information that anyone can use to request accommodations.** If your meeting is going to be in an accessible location, note that in the ad, or insert a disability symbol somewhere near the text.

2. **Although it is not measurable, a welcoming attitude is an equally important component of preparing an accessible meeting.** Remain open to requests for accommodations and remember that people with disabilities - like all people - should be treated with dignity and respect. Avoid treating people with disabilities as though they are childlike, tragic, sick, or pitiable. Be kind, but never patronizing. People with disabilities are, first of all, people with abilities and have much to offer. Expect them to contribute like anyone else. For more information on disability etiquette contact National Organization On Disabilities at 202-293-5960 or go to the Disability Etiquette Tips page in their web site at www.nod.org.

3. Make sure to have breaks often or as necessary during meetings to prevent those with particular disabilities from being overwhelmed (ie. cognitive, learning, head injury, etc.)

4. **Planning for accommodations in advance is important.** A few weeks' notice can make it easier to arrange to have interpreters at the meeting. Also, for example, sending written materials out in advance of the meeting or having it translated into Braille prior, allows participants with a visual impairment to be prepared and fully participate at the meeting. By thinking through and planning for accessibility ahead of time it allows people with disabilities to participate more effectively in the meeting itself.

- Partnerships -

As you plan activities through a new planning group or your own staff, it is critical to develop strong partnerships to support the work. These partnerships will further your organizational capacity to sustain the work you want to accomplish, and integrate areas of expertise outside of your organizational experience.

When thinking about what partnerships to pursue, review your organizational readiness survey (see the Organizational Readiness section) to identify the strengths and weaknesses you anticipate. Identify community partners with which you can collaborate to accomplish project goals that would be more difficult or impossible to accomplish on your own.

Many of these groups have local or state chapters in your area that can help support your effort to include persons with disabilities in service events. The following organizations all specialize in integrating persons with disabilities in everyday life and can help make your outreach efforts successful. In many cases, the web links listed below are for directories of local affiliates.

This list is not all-inclusive. Many communities have a wide variety of independent organizations that serve the disability community. Contact your Chamber of Commerce or mayor's office for more ideas.

Americans with Disabilities Act State Coordinators – Each state has an ADA Coordinator who advises community organizations and businesses on the ADA. This resource can be helpful in connecting to other organizations that are working toward accessibility to community life.

> **http://www.barbri.com/ada/coordinators.htm**

ARC of the United States - The Arc of the United States works to include all children and adults with cognitive, intellectual, and developmental disabilities in every community. Free downloadable publications are available at their website, as well as a directory to find a local chapter.

> **http://www.thearc.org**

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) These University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEs) are located at major universities and teaching hospitals in all U.S. states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and territories. UCEs target and engage in activities to support the independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion into the community of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

> **http://www.audc.org** (UCE Directory)

Best Buddies – This organization is dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with mental retardation by providing opportunities for one-to-one friendships and integrated employment. Local chapters are a great resource for experts and volunteers.

> **http://www.bestbuddies.org** - see the "Chapter Listing" link.

The Bubel/Aiken Foundation – The mission of The Bubel/Aiken Foundation is to provide services and financial assistance to facilitate fully the integration of children with disabilities into the life environment of those without. Founded by Clay Aiken – a young man committed to working with youth living with disabilities – and Diane Bubel – mother of an autistic child - the Foundation creates awareness about the diversity of individuals with disabilities and the possibilities inclusion can bring. Through collaborations with the disability, education, entertainment, and media communities, the Foundation recognizes those whose commitment to breaking the stereotypes attendant to the developmentally disabled has broken barriers.

http://www.thebubelaikenfoundation.org

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) – These non-residential centers help people with disabilities achieve their life goals. The staff assists people in making connections within the community, and with access to employment, transportation, recreation, and other community activities, such as volunteering!

http://www.virtualcil.net/cils/

Compeer, Inc. – An international, non-profit organization based in Rochester, New York. Since 1973, Compeer, Inc. has been recruiting and training community volunteers to serve as advocates, mentors, and friends to children and adults being treated for mental health and emotional problems. Compeer began with only 12 friendships in Rochester and has grown to 120 programs in 33 states, Canada, and Australia. For more information about Compeer, Inc. and to locate a local affiliate near you, visit their website.

http://www.compeer.org

Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers – Provide trainings and materials on ADA-related information. The regional centers have affiliates in many cities that can also provide training and resource support.

http://www.adata.org/dbtac.html

Easter Seals – Easter Seals seeks to create solutions that change lives for people with disabilities. This includes helping people get back to work and lead a more independent life after a spinal cord injury; educating people about all that youth with spina bifida or Down syndrome can and can't do; and teaching youth the skills they need to swim, rollerblade, play soccer or go horseback riding.

http://www.easterseals.com/

Governor's Councils on Developmental Disabilities – Each state has one of these organizations funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services. They provide information about disabilities that occur before the age of 22, and encourage the establishment of programs that serve this population by providing limited funding.

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/add/states/ddcs.htm

National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems – This voluntary national membership association of protection and advocacy systems and client assistance programs

assumes leadership in promoting and strengthening the role and performance of its members in providing quality, legally-based advocacy services. NAPAS envisions a society where people with disabilities exercise self-determination and choice and have equality of opportunity and full participation.

http://www.napas.org

National Federation of the Blind (NFB) – The NFB helps blind persons achieve self-confidence and self-respect and acts as a vehicle for collective self-expression by the blind. With 50,000 members, the NFB has affiliates in all 50 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico, as well as more than 700 local chapters.

http://www.nfb.org

NFB Deaf Blind Division – Deaf-blind persons working nationally to improve services, training, and independence for the deaf-blind; offering personal contact with other deaf-blind individuals knowledgeable in advocacy, education, employment, technology, discrimination, and other issues surrounding deaf-blindness.

http://www.nfb-db.org

National Organization on Disability (NOD) - promotes the full and equal participation of America's 54 million men, women and children with disabilities in all aspects of life. NOD was founded in 1982 at the conclusion of the United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons. Funded entirely by private sector contributions, NOD is the only national disability network organization concerned with all disabilities, all age groups, and all disability issues.

http://www.nod.org

National Service Inclusion Project (NSIP) - NSIP builds connections between disability organizations and state commissions, offices, and service programs. They offer a variety of programs including a disability listserv, program training and technical assistance.

http://www.serviceandinclusion.org

Special Olympics - This international organization is dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition. Special Olympics offers children and adults with intellectual disabilities year-round training and competition in 26 Olympic-type summer and winter sports

http://www.specialolympics.com

State Commissions of Volunteerism and Community Service – All state commission offices have a disability coordinator that specializes in supporting community service organizations in engaging persons with disabilities in their work. These coordinators have information on best practices and successful programs in your state that can help you.

http://www.cns.gov/stateprofiles/index.html

Unite for Sight – This organization empowers communities worldwide to improve eye health and eliminate preventable blindness. More than 4,000 volunteers work in ninety chapters established at universities, medical schools, corporations, high schools, and in communities throughout the world. Additionally, Volunteer Teams are sent to 25 countries to provide eye care and eye health education programs to medically underserved communities.

     http://www.uniteforsight.org

Volunteers of America - a national, nonprofit, faith-based organization providing local human service programs and opportunities for individual and community involvement. From rural America to inner-city neighborhoods, Volunteers of America provides outreach programs that deal with today's most pressing social needs. Volunteers of America helps youth at risk, frail elderly, abused and neglected children, people with disabilities, homeless individuals and many others. To find out if there's an office near you, use their Local Directory.

     http://www.voa.org

VSA Arts - This international nonprofit organization was founded in 1974 by Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith. *VSA arts* is creating a society where people with disabilities can learn through, participate in, and enjoy the arts. Nearly five million people with disabilities participate in *VSA arts* programs every year through a network of affiliates nationwide and in over 60 countries worldwide

     http://www.vsarts.org

  *See Appendix J for additional resource guides that are referenced throughout this material.

- Fundraising and Budgeting -

The planning group, or a sub-component of the group, will likely be responsible for creating a project budget and monitoring expenses against this budget. A well-organized budget is crucial to the success of any service project. Planning an event that engages people with disabilities may require you to make additional considerations when allocating your money.

First, plan well in advance. When you know the type of service you will provide and who you will help, you must take accommodations into account. Sign language interpreters, alternative formats for your materials, construction items, additional staff, and accessible transportation may be among the issues you will have to address in your budget. Consult your community partners, planning group, and other resources to find answers for your accommodation-related questions.

Accommodations need not break the bank. Many accommodations don't require any additional costs, but simply altering the way things are done to make it easier for a person with a disability to participate. Investigate in-kind donations and loaned materials before you spend the money. Good sources for in-kind donations include public transit systems, municipal parks, state/local governments, and school systems.

While every project will have different requirements, the budget worksheet in Appendix C can help you plan your needs and acquire a sense of how much each will cost.

Appendix H outlines sample accommodations to commonly encountered disabilities. As you plan your budget, you may find this information useful in thinking about the kinds of accommodations that you will include in your budget.

Imagination and ingenuity are key to successful fundraising. Use your network of experts and those requesting accommodation to help you find the best solutions. Also, the organizations profiled under the Partnerships section may be able to help you locate sources of funding. Do your research and make your fundraising and donation pitches to numerous sectors of your community. Be both creative and forthright in advertising your needs; you may be pleasantly surprised by the offers of help you receive. (See fundraising worksheet – Appendix D.)

For more information on fundraising and budgeting for your service project, see the National Youth Service Day Tool Kit, available at www.ysa.org/nysd or by writing Youth Service America, 1101 15th Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005.

- Recruitment and Outreach -

This section focuses on strategies for recruiting individuals with disabilities to participate in the service day. The first thing to realize when recruiting people with disabilities as volunteers is that they are present in the community, not segregated into "special" gathering places. Although there are barriers that can prevent people with disabilities from becoming fully engaged in community service, there are people with disabilities that attend church, school, and clubs; participate in civic activities; and are actively engaged in life in the community. Therefore, people with disabilities will be in the audience when you

The many faces of volunteers with disabilities
• Children
• Youth
• College Students
• Senior Citizens
• Families
• Employees
• Leaders
• Advocates

present at schools, churches, clubs, etc. All presentations should acknowledge the desire to have people with disabilities participate in volunteer activities and the willingness of the organization to make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities.

To begin thinking about your recruitment strategy, review the Recruitment Work Sheet – Appendix E. This piece will help you clarify what resources, expectations, and goals you have for recruiting participants with disabilities. You can then establish an effective recruitment strategy, which may tap into one or more of the following suggestions:

Potential Partners in your local community

- Compeer, INC
- Volunteers of America
- Best Buddies
- United Cerebral Palsy
- ARC
- Local/Regional Mental Health Agencies
- Mental Retardation Centers
- Easter Seals
- Independent Living Centers
- Colleges and Universities

Many people with disabilities use the service of community providers. Additionally, there are numerous nonprofits that exist as advocacy organizations. You can work with these providers or affiliate members in your local community to specifically recruit people with disabilities to volunteer (see the list of contacts in the Partnership section). The simplest place to start is your local telephone directory to find agencies associated with disability services.

Generally there are two types of agencies:

- Those that provide formal support, including 24-hour living assistance. These agencies may be willing to organize their members to participate in a service event. They may also provide staff to support their clients with significant disabilities as they participate in volunteer opportunities.

- Those who serve as information and support centers. These organizations may be willing to allow you to promote your event at their meeting or through their newsletter or listserv.

Program Planning Group

If you have a planning group to coordinate your event, take a look at who is participating and use these stakeholders to generate interest among volunteers with disabilities. Have them generate ideas around how to get the message out and recruit; provide contacts; and actually go and speak to groups regarding the upcoming event. (See the Planning Group section for more information on forming a planning group). Now that you have thought about where you would like to recruit, how do you get the word out about your event? Like in any other recruitment, use the avenues you know and then just make sure everyone can access it.

Things to consider include:

- Get face-to-face contact with organizations. In creating energy around this event it is critical that you get in front of the community to generate interest for this project. Request meetings with local agencies and businesses to encourage their employees and patrons to volunteer. Get on people's calendars, speak to schools, churches, community organizations, etc. People with disabilities live, work, and play in all areas of our society. In addition, as you create visibility around this event in your community and begin to attract more volunteers with disabilities, make sure you

- Promote your activities through brochures, mailings, listservs, newsletters, or other venues of organization and the organizations that serve or people with disabilities. Be include:
  - A description of the event and volunteer opportunities available;
  - Information on in-service, training, and support activities associated with the event;

> **Case in Point…**
> **Example Strategies**
>
> One organization, when distributing their volunteer interest forms to community organizations, used different colors of paper for each organization they solicited. This allowed them to assess, upon the return of the forms, the volume and type of volunteers with disabilities they may engage in their service day. They also included space for individuals to ask for any specific tools or needs necessary to participate in the project.

> **Cons...**
> **Alternative Formats**
>
> WEB SITES
> - Print size and style
> - Color usage
> - Page size and style
> - All pictures have a text tag
>
> PRINT MATERIAL
> - Braille translation
> - Print size and style
> - Page size and style
> - Color usage
>
> AUDIO MATERIAL
> - Sign language translation
> - Speed and clarity of audio material
> - Close captioning
> - Live captioning

the process. Even if
how, they could be a
k.

all available
websites,
your own

advocate for
sure to

o A description of people with disabilities involved;
  o Supporters and funders;
  o How people can get involved; and
  o Point of contact for more information on the service event.

- The combined distribution list for these materials should cover volunteers, funders and potential funders, media, corporations, etc. In this way, you are creating visibility about your efforts not only among potential volunteers, but also among current and future partners.

- Incorporate language or symbols on promotion methods you already use (i.e., presentations, volunteer response forms, TV, radio, newsletters, and web) that indicate that your service opportunities are accessible and inclusive of all volunteers. Allow for potential volunteers to indicate (prior to the day of service) what specific assistance they may need in participating fully in the day of service. Provide a phone number they may call or add language to a volunteer response form that allows potential volunteers to indicate if they may need specific assistance or accommodation to participate in the day of service.

- Consult with or involve people with disabilities in the development of the recruitment plan and delivery of the message for the service event. As you begin this work, watch for interested board members, community leaders, and dynamic, "rock star" volunteers who might like to give presentations or create publicity or who might know the best resources for creating accessible promotional material. Also, remember that a single person with a disability involved in the process can feel isolated, so the more you can involve, the better. There are broad perspectives, talents, and interests among all people, including those with disabilities.

- When thinking about making your message accessible, don't forget to research alternative formats and how they can increase the access to your message by people with disabilities. Remember to assess who your audience could be based on previous experience or your target recruitment. Also, use partnering disability organizations or state agencies as resources for finding affordable ways of providing this service. See Appendix I for resource information.

- Liability is always something to consider when planning an event, but it doesn't have to be a barrier. When thinking through your recruitment strategy you may want to consider distributing an individual volunteer or community service partner waiver form during or prior to an event. See Appendix L for samples.

- Public Relations and Media -

Your service project will help your program receive recognition for the good work it does year-round. Your community and the nation need to see the powerful contribution persons with disabilities can make to their communities. Telling this story also sends a larger message about the importance of making service projects inclusive, capturing the potential that every person has to give. Good media coverage ensures that the public will receive these important messages.

For more information about public relations and media:

- National Youth Service Day Tool Kit, available at www.ysa.org/nysd

- Americorps Guide to Working with the Media, available at www.americorps.org/resources/media_guide.pdf

Assigning a Media Coordinator

Assign a Media Coordinator to engage local and regional media about your service project. While the Media Coordinator does not do all the work or give all the interviews, all aspects of public relations go through this person to minimize confusion. The Media Coordinator should pitch and schedule interviews for others working on the project.

The Media Coordinator should be enthusiastic about the program and well versed in issues regarding volunteers with disabilities. Make sure the media coordinator is comfortable and fluent in talking about persons with disabilities as volunteers (see Appendix A). Since reporters often like to personalize their stories, make sure the Media Coordinator can discuss a couple of specific individuals with disabilities that have been involved in the coordination and implementation of the project.

Contacting the Media

Compile an accurate, up-to-date media list with the names, titles, addresses, and telephone/fax numbers of every news organization, reporter and editor who wants, and is most likely to use, the materials you send. Watch for reporters that cover stories involving persons with disabilities or who are knowledgeable about such issues, and include them in your list. Contact these reporters directly and ask them for a personal appointment to tell them about your event. Bring along any written materials you have, make sure they understand the project, and ask them to cover your event.

You may also wish to write a pitch letter that helps sell a story that is interesting, but not late-breaking, news. You might want to write one to interest the editors, assignments editors, and broadcast news directors as your first step in making contact. Keep the letter simple and short. Immediately begin with why you are writing, and then summarize the most important information in one paragraph. The letter should be short, no more than a page. Explain why the newspaper or station's audience would be interested and include some of your most newsworthy details. Always follow up your letter with a phone call.

A letter to the editor can also be an effective way to raise public awareness about the ability of persons with disabilities to volunteer. A letter might be written by a person with a disability or by an organization that benefited from the volunteer efforts of persons with disabilities.

A good photo can make the difference between getting covered or not. Action shots are best because they communicate the energy and enthusiasm of young people in service. Media increasingly prefer receiving photos electronically, but they must be of high quality. Jpg files are best, and should be at least 300dpi (dots per inch). Black and white glossies (8x10 or 5x7) are preferred for print media; use color slides for television. Always include a cut line, or short typed caption with each photo. The cut line should identify the main figures, left to right, and should describe the action, e.g. San Francisco Conservation Corps Crew Rehabs Housing for Elderly. Be sensitive to the feelings and rights of those who are being photographed; get their permission before submitting photograph(s). If someone is willing to be photographed, but wishes to remain anonymous, note that fact on the back of photograph. Do not submit photo if a subject is uncomfortable, and be sure to carry plenty of release forms with you. See Appendix K.

Almost any type of media will want something in writing describing your event. You will probably want to prepare a public service announcement, a media advisory, and a media release.

When talking to the media about your event, remember that they choose stories based upon these characteristics:

- **Timeliness:** Is there a good reason to do the story now? If your event is tied into a national day of service or larger event, be sure to let reporters know.

- **Human Interest:** Tie your local event to a larger news event or issue that people in your area are discussing (i.e. education, violence, youth leadership, etc.). Make sure the reporter understands the role of persons with disabilities in those issues.

- **Uniqueness:** What makes the event different, surprising, or outstanding? Let reporters know why this is an important model for the community.

- **Impact:** Does it have an effect on individual young people? Can you give examples? Does the event or story affect a large number of people in your community?

- **Prominence:** Involving celebrities and local VIPS adds value to a story.

The more characteristics you can involve in your story, the greater chance it has of being placed in the media. Focus on the aspects of your story that demonstrate these characteristics when meeting media personnel.

Media Vehicles

Weeklies - Weekly newspapers, including shopper's guides, focus on stories of interest to the local community. They are a major source of information for people outside metropolitan areas and it is usually easier to place stories in these publications.

Magazines: Get started ASAP to place a story about your project in local and regional magazines. Magazines have a long lead-time – at least three months before the story is published. Most of these magazines can offer more time and space to devote to your story, and you will have a printed product that can be saved and calculated.

Television: Television is a medium for the eyes, and you must have a visual component to your story to get airtime. Explain what reporters will see going on at your project, and stress the

visual aspects of seeing volunteers with and without disabilities working together. Prior to the day of service, designate persons with disabilities as spokespeople who are comfortable speaking about their ability to serve.

Radio: More and more radio stations provide airtime for call-in, news, and talk shows. They are also a great venue to air public service announcements. Call in your story as an actuality, a live interview given over the phone, write press releases for on-the-air delivery, and offer to participate in talk shows.

Examples:

➢ The Muhlenberg South High School JROTC will conduct a follow-up to their "Recycling in Muhlenberg County" National Youth Service Day project on November 15th – America Recycles Day. Tying a service project to a nationally recognized day is a great way to gain media exposure.

➢ The Parent Support Network in Orangeburg, New York succeeded in having the Town Supervisor proclaim National Youth Service Day and Children's Mental Health Week at the Town Board Meeting.

➢ The City of New Bedford informed Miss Massachusetts about their efforts to engage youth with disabilities in their service project, Paint your Heart Out. Miss Massachusetts participated in the day's events and helped draw community attention to the project.

➢ Clifford the Big Red Dog, Honorary Chairperson for Hands on Orlando's Youth Days of Caring, was on hand to draw attention to the great work volunteers performed across the city on National Youth Service Day.

DON'T FORGET!

Plan ahead and have photo release forms available. You will need permission from volunteers to be able to use photographs taken the day of the event. See Appendix K for a sample form.

- Strategies for Collecting Data on your Volunteer Participants -

> *"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."*
>
>   -- Albert Einstein

But we're going to try to count everything that counts!

An important part of evaluating your project is determining how many people you were able to recruit to participate (Learn more in the *After the Event: Evaluation* Section). During your goals setting session, way back when you first started planning for the event, one of your goals focused on how many people you needed to accomplish your project, and how many people with disabilities you wanted to try to recruit. How do you know how many came out to participate? Here are some strategies for tracking those numbers.

Self Identification: One of the easiest and least invasive ways to track attendance of persons with disabilities is for them to self-identify. This strategy offers the respect to which people with disabilities are entitled, and it allows individuals to assess their own ability.

Pre-project registration: If you are requiring participants (regardless of ability) to "sign up" for the project in advance, your form or registration template can include a place for the participant to identify a disability and, if necessary, accommodations they might need to attend (such as a wheelchair ramp, ASL interpreters, transportation help, etc.).

Project Site Sign-in: If you do not have a pre-project registration requirement, it is important to have all participants sign in at the site. Have a visible sign-in table or area that is easy to find from where you anticipate most volunteers arriving. Make sure you project leadership knows where registration or sign-in is and direct in-coming volunteers to the table. At the sign-in table, volunteers can self-identify their disability.

Post-project evaluation: If you choose, you may want to take the opportunity for all participants to give feedback on their experience. Have everyone fill out a survey that assesses how they enjoyed the project, if they felt utilized as volunteers, etc. This survey should also allow for feedback on what could have been done better from their perspective.

Group Recruitment: When you are conducting outreach, make presentations to groups that serve the disability community, like Centers for Independent Living, or membership organizations made up of people with disabilities. If you receive an interest and a commitment from that group to attend, you can allow that "team" to register together, and include disclosure of the disability.

Day

of the

Event

- Orientation and Training -

Effective orientation and training are important first steps for any community service experience. Information should be provided for volunteers about the community, the issue, and the agency or community group. People need training that will provide them with the skills needed to perform their volunteer tasks. Finally, volunteers should understand how their efforts that day will make a positive difference.

Preparing your site leadership for the day:
It is important that everyone who will be leading other volunteers on the event day is familiar with all aspects of the project. Take the time to do a walk through of the project site and the day's agenda with site leaders in the day or two before the event. Some things to consider in this on-site orientation:

> *THE SITE:*
> - Where will people park? Is there clear access from the parking area(s) to the service projects?
> - Where is the registration/orientation desk? Is it easy to find from the parking area or from where people will be arriving?
> - Will there be a kick-off speaker for the event or a mass orientation speech? Is the space large enough to accommodate all the people expected? Will you need amplification of sound? Where will sign language interpreters be positioned, if necessary?
> - Where will restrooms, first aid, tools, food, etc. be positioned? Are these areas accessible for various disabilities?
> - What are some potential problems or hazard areas at the site for children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities?
>
> *THE STAFF:*
> - Everyone should be briefed on who is expected to be coming to the event.
> - Who will be responsible for the first aid booth or kit? This person should have access to emergency telephone numbers, know location of nearby hospitals, and preferably have a cell phone.
> - Who will be the representative or liaison for visiting members of the media? This person should be briefed on all the details of the event: who is participating, how many people are there, what are you doing, and why.
>
> *THE AGENDA:*
> All leaders for the event should be clear on the flow of the event day.
> - When are volunteers expected to arrive?
> - Will there be food for breakfast, lunch, or a snack? When will this be available to volunteers?
> - Will there be a guest speaker that will address the volunteers? When will this speech happen in relation to the service of the day? Will leaders need to announce a "break" in the day for food and/or a speaker?
> - When will the service projects be completed? Will there be a closing ceremony or celebration? How will the event leaders communicate the end of the project to volunteers?

Providing Volunteers an Orientation on the Event Day:

On the event day, you may need to communicate some logistical information or special instructions to all participants, such as the location of restrooms and water, the day's agenda, etc. Also consider a welcome event that "breaks the ice", introduces a community representative, thanks the volunteers, and provides a context for what people are about to spend their day doing, and why.

"BREAKING THE ICE": Welcoming Volunteers
It is important that volunteers get to know each other. Icebreakers, energizers and other team games are valuable tools that allow individuals to meet each other and begin forming connections that they can draw from throughout the service event. There are many forms of games that will allow participants of all abilities to participate. Come prepared with a few in case you need to adapt to the needs of your audience.

Also consider giving information regarding the community where the service is taking place; what will participants be doing today and how will it help improve the neighborhood, enrich lives, or build community? Often, a member of the community that is directly benefiting from the service is the best at articulating this message, and can show true thanks to the volunteers for their effort on the day. They are, after all, the hosts of the volunteers, and they should be given the opportunity to welcome them and show their gratitude. This is also a great way to say, "Get to work!"

Special Instructions on Service Activities
How are you orienting or training volunteers to the service activity? When sharing projects or activities available on the day of service, focus on sharing the skills required for these tasks. Then provide any necessary training to complete the tasks. This way, people can select activities in which they can contribute their talents or skills. Before deciding that a person with a disability can't accomplish a particular activity, be sure to examine all that goes into it. Often, there are ways to restructure an activity or there are parts of an activity in which people can contribute. Also, don't be afraid to ask volunteers how they see themselves participating.

Consider these accommodations when planning your volunteer orientation and event-day communication: Thinking through the best ways to share information with volunteers will allow every person the opportunity to get the information they need in order to have a great experience.
- How are you communicating your information at the orientation and training (and throughout the day of service)?
- Is your information always communicated through speech (are you always speaking)?
- Do you need to use a microphone to be more audible?
- Do you need to use instructional or educational videos that will allow people to visualize the information?
- Is a sign language interpreter needed and present?
- Should you provide agency information, history, and event instructions in writing so that people can choose whether they prefer to read or listen to instructions? Does it need to be in Braille?
- Are you using language that is common and understandable to all people? (Avoid using agency lingo or acronyms. Provide simple and clear instructions.)
- Should you break your volunteers into small groups to review or confirm information?

- Creating an Inclusive Event -

The key to planning a quality service event is to design it to <u>include</u> people with disabilities as a part of the overall volunteer effort. The primary step in creating an inclusive event is to assess and understand what skills and tasks will be involved in each activity. Most activities can be adapted to make them accessible for all volunteers to participate. See Appendix G for an activity analysis to help think through what would be involved in your activity.

In addition, work with partner organizations and volunteers to determine what they would like their roles to be and where they would like to participate. By creating space for volunteers to select the type of activities they want to engage in, you will avoid making assumptions about what people can or cannot do and will allow each volunteer to participate in activities in which they feel comfortable and will enjoy participating.

Start small. Limit your event to one or two activities so that you can focus staff and resources on these events. Otherwise you may find that you have spread your staff and support from your partner agencies too thin, which will affect the quality of the volunteer experience.

Avoid creating volunteer events exclusively for people with disabilities. This can perpetuate the misconception that people with disabilities are not able to participate fully in overall volunteer efforts and should therefore be isolated from other volunteers.

The following list includes examples of service activities that can be accessible to all volunteers. By deconstructing an activity into its tasks, you are better able to inform and support volunteers with disabilities. See Appendix F and G for useful tools to think through creating an accessible event or activity.

Activities List

Type of Activity	Skills / tasks involved
Making repairs and painting a house	Washing, and spraying walls to clean them, climbing, standing/sitting (on a ladder or on the ground) to paint, transporting materials (paint, water, brushes, cloth, etc) to and from the painting sight.
Building garden boxes	Transporting wood to and from the construction site measuring, cutting, painting, using a hammer and nails, filling boxes with dirt and flowers.
Park landscaping and clean-up	Designing a plan for the landscape (where will flowers and other items go?), planting, shoveling, picking up trash, raking.
Working at a Senior Home	Making gift baskets; reading with seniors
Schools and Children	Reading to and with children; planning and painting a mural. Note: schools are a great place for projects and events, because they are usually ADA compliant facilities and have many of the accommodations you might need to account for when planning and choosing your site.

Working with the Red Cross	Serving juice and attending to donors.
Day Care Centers or out-of school children's facilities	Cleaning toys, organizing books, playing with or reading to children.

- Problem Solving -

Anticipating problems that might arise and planning out how they will be solved will make a huge difference in your project. One area where you might face challenges is the area of "reasonable" accommodations.

Accommodation Issues
On the day of the event, you may find that the parking space won't allow for a van door to drop down, or that the bathroom doesn't have a turning radius for a particular wheelchair. Remember that most people with disabilities can assist you in solving problems of accommodation. Simply ask the person what they need and how you can resolve a problem. Many individuals will have suggestions that may also be used in future activities. Be prepared with extra supplies, such as, towels, water, bacterial hand soap, sunscreen, pencils and paper (especially when working with volunteers who are deaf). Before the event, coordinators should brainstorm a list of supplies that will be needed for each activity and have them on hand.

Weather
Weather may not cooperate, making your intended project harder to accomplish. It is true that some people with disabilities are more affected by weather issues than others, and may not be able to tolerate extreme heat or cold. These issues should be addressed prior to the event, and options for indoor or less extreme exposure to the elements may need to be provided. Many activities can be re-arranged rather than canceled.

Transportation
Transportation can also prove to be a last minute problem. Often individuals with disabilities are dependent on others to provide transportation for them. These providers may include paid staff, family members, or public transportation. Evening and weekend events may present challenges, since bus schedules are lighter and paid caregivers may have other duties. Anticipate problems and practice patience. Remember that as disconcerting as transportation may be for your volunteer activity, it is an on-going problem for the person with a disability. Schedules of activities may need to be flexible or offer staged "start-times" to allow for latecomers. If possible, have drivers/vehicles available for contingency transportation.

Complaints
Despite a successful volunteer activity, some individuals may be dissatisfied. Individuals with disabilities are no different from other volunteers when it comes to accepting feedback and resolving complaints. Listen to the individual's complaint, assess the situation, and follow up in an appropriate manner. It is important not to generalize the complaint of one individual as a complaint from the "volunteers with disabilities," but to act on the complaint in accordance with your established procedures.

Liability/Waivers
In anticipation of the day's events, your organization should insure adequate insurance coverage. Specific insurance for people with disabilities is not required, nor should specialized waivers be developed. Individuals with disabilities should sign the same waivers required of any other volunteer if needed. In order to avoid discrimination claims, the wording "reasonable accommodations" should be used in any waivers signed by all volunteers. See Appendix L.

Point Person

29

Individuals should be identified to act as troubleshooters on the day of the event. A special T-shirt or other apparel that can be easily distinguished can make these persons easily identifiable. Volunteers should be instructed to seek out these troubleshooters with problems and concerns. A special gathering place might also be established for problems and concerns. Access to this space should be considered.

Cultural Barriers
Within the context of disabilities, there are also cultural issues to consider. Language barriers may be increased by cognitive disabilities. It may be extremely difficult for a person with a hearing impairment to understand a person with a heavy accent. Volunteers and trouble-shooters at an event should be selected with these factors in mind. Additional considerations for local cultural norms should be considered as with any volunteer event. For example, a senior citizen may be unaccustomed to persons with cognitive disabilities, and reluctant to have such volunteers involved in a service project to refurbish his or her home. Rather than consider this a discrimination issue, recognize that individuals with disabilities were segregated from previous generations. Older people may need to be introduced to the concept of having people with disabilities, especially people with noticeable cognitive disabilities, involved in volunteer projects.

- Reflection -

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

-- Oliver Wendell Holmes

As with any service experience, it is important to include time and space for an organized and thoughtful reflection. This will allow volunteers to review what was accomplished, assess the project's impact on the community served, and share their own experiences and lessons learned.

In the context of these projects and events, reflection activities can serve several crucial purposes:

1. It gives meaning to the experience and creates a heightened sense of accomplishment. This is important for all participants, especially those completing their first service experience.
2. It provides an open space for feedback that you and your organization can use to improve your projects for inclusion of persons of all backgrounds and abilities.
3. It provides an opportunity to thank volunteers and officially wrap-up the event.
4. It allows for you to encourage continued involvement in service; advertise the next opportunities your organization is developing; or work with the participants to create their own service project next time.

There are many ways that you can facilitate reflection for the participants of your service event, but you may want to focus some of this reflection on the relationships that were made between diverse groups of people. Below are two examples of activities that can elicit good discussions around this topic:

A reflection roundtable discussion:
This format is a terrific way to get instant feedback from the group of all participants. It is important for everyone to have the opportunity to share his or her feelings and early impressions of the event. Allowing for a roundtable immediately following the service activity or shortly thereafter can capture some negative experiences that are equally important for growth and improvement. This reflection roundtable might:

- Point out the "what-was-accomplished" of the day.
- Involve an assessment of the community needs and what some people in the group learned about those needs.
- Highlight the growth of the participants: learning a new skill, making a new friend, etc.
- Address negative experiences, discuss how it came about, and how others in the group can learn from mistakes or make improvements.
- Celebrate the success of the day in real numbers.
- Encourage the group to make an open commitment to continued service and continued friendship or contact with one another.

The Human Sculpture activity:
    This is a great physical and visual reflection activity. It works best with large groups (20+). Divide volunteers into small groups. This activity is about creating a sculpture garden where people can reflect and contemplate the art before them. Each small group is to create a particular sculpture using the people in the group as the material for its construction. It should be based on their experience in the service event (it can also be framed by questions posed to them). Give each team 15 minutes to discuss what they

would like to present as their artwork. Have the small groups cluster around each other, but in their small groups. One by one have each sculpture pose for the group. Once each has posed and the group has captured its meaning, have the entire group pose in their sculpture.

Also check out other great reflection exercises that can meet the needs of your time constraints, number of participants, materials, etc. at EPICenter, http://www.cns.gov/resources/epicenter/

> *"The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn...and change."*
>
> -- Carl R. Rogers

Evaluation

Reflection activities can be an excellent source of feedback for your organization, but reflection is as much, if not more, for the personal growth for the volunteer. Additional feedback in other formats can help your organization improve logistics and expand the opportunities for future inclusive projects. See "After the Event: Evaluating the Process" for more information.

After

The

Event

- Evaluating the Process -

> *"Few people even scratch the surface, much less exhaust the contemplation of their own experience."*
>
> -- Randolph Bourne

After everyone has gone home and the project is complete, it's important that you understand what happened. In order to do this, you'll need to get feedback from as many perspectives as possible. Asking people about their experience is a key factor in engaging them in the future and the only way to improve upon what has already been accomplished.

Partner Organizations:
It is important to solicit feedback from partners and other groups who contributed a large number of volunteers. Ask the planning group to create a survey for collecting feedback. Use this survey to *engage* partners in finding solutions and making improvements, rather than simply pointing out problems and leaving the responsibility for action on you.

Some things to consider for your partner evaluation survey:
- Communication:
    - Was communication adequate to describe the event? Was it what you expected?
    - Was the turnout what was expected? If not, what could have been done differently to ensure better participation?
- Transportation:
    - Were transportation arrangements adequate? Were there any "surprises"?
    - How can your organization support transportation improvements in the future?
- Accommodations:
    - Were service sites barrier-free on the event day?
    - What types of barriers did you miss?
- Service experiences:
    - Did individuals from your group enjoy their service experience?
    - Are there any stories respondents would like to share with you that illustrate the experience of the group?
- Continued support
    - Would the respondent's group like to continue to participate in service projects with you?
    - How can your organization help in a more involved way or in a leadership role?
    - What service opportunities – hosted by your organization or other groups - are you aware of in the next few months? How can these opportunities be publicized to volunteers who participated in the recent event?

Remember, this survey does not necessarily need to be done impersonally through the mail! In fact, it might be better to organize a *focus group* of service participants from each organization with whom you partnered and administer the survey with that group. This extends an offer of leadership and demonstrates that you are seeking input for the continued support of these efforts. A focus group also often allows for the participants to become "inspired" by their peers in the group and brings forth more in-depth answers and suggestions.

Some key points of focus groups:

- *Come prepared with as many questions as possible*. Brainstorm ideas with your planning group. You don't need to ask them all, but be prepared to fill any dead space with a new question, even if some questions don't get fully answered.
- *Organize your questions into logical groups*. What made them want to participate in the first place? What did they accomplish? What did they like? What did they dislike? What was challenging? What should future events look like?
- *Be an active listener*. Pick up on statements made and ask clarifying, follow-up questions based on what you hear.
- *Be mindful of some of the less engaged people in the group*. Try to draw them into the discussion by asking simple questions about their experience.
- *Be prepared to ask for suggestions*. Some groups may require a facilitated discussion around serious challenges they faced or conflict that may have arisen during their experience. Position yourself with humility in a way that shows that you value their feedback, that you hope to get as much information from them as possible to find out what went wrong, and are committed to working with them to find a solution.

- **YOUR TURN! Facilitating your Own Debrief -**

"Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him."   **--Aldous Huxley**

You and your planning group should also have an opportunity to reflect together on what you were able to accomplish during the event and look critically at the process. Ask yourself…
- What did we get done? How can we quantify our accomplishments? How many volunteers did we recruit? What did we do on the event?
- What worked well in the planning?
- What were the challenges?
- What did we learn?
- How will we continue to foster the relationships we created with those with disabilities?

There are a number of interactive activities that can elicit good reflection and answers to these questions. Visit EPICenter at www.nationalservice.org/resources/epicenter or see the Northwest Service Academy's Service Learning Tool-Kit at www.northwestserviceacademy.org for some ideas.

"Sometimes when you innovate, you make mistakes. It is best to admit them quickly, and get on with improving your other innovations."
                                                                                                -- Steve Jobs

- Sustaining the Service –

You have planned, organized, and put on a terrific event that engaged persons from many backgrounds and perspectives and with many abilities and experiences. You've taken the time to sit back and reflect on that success and think about the ways that you have grown and the things that you have learned through the experience.

Hopefully, you want to do it again! Service can become the common expectation and opportunity for all members of your community. As people are exposed to service they will remain engaged if they have the opportunity.

1. Continue to organize projects together: *If you are part of an organization that offers ongoing volunteer opportunities stress your interest in having your participants join you in that service! Have information available that details the types of opportunities that are upcoming and ways they can contact you to get involved. Also, follow up with both the people who participated in the event and those that showed interest but couldn't make the date. Let them know what you are planning and how they can get involved either as a participant or a more in-depth leader of the project.*

2. Help the participants find other volunteer opportunities in your community: *There are many outlets for service, and they vary greatly throughout the country. Some potential places to look for service opportunities:*
   a. *Check with CityCares to find an affiliate near you. www.citycares.org*
   b. *Find a Volunteer Center near you www.pointsoflight.org*
   c. *Search for service activities by zip code at http://www.servenet.org/*

3. Help your participants become planners themselves. You've heard that allegory about teaching a man to fish, and he will eat for a lifetime? Well it holds true for service, too! Some of your participants may want to learn how to organize their own project or event. Share your experience with them, along with resources that helped make your event successful.

Appendices

- Interacting with Persons with Disabilities -

In your first meetings with persons with disabilities, consider the following concepts. It is important to be conscious of people with disabilities and prepared to interact with them as naturally as any one else. Whatever you do, don't let fear of saying or doing something "wrong" prevent you from getting to know someone who has a disability. If you are unsure of what to say when you first meet, just say "Hello." Here are some more tips:

- First and most important - people with disabilities, like everyone else, deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. People with disabilities have different personalities and different preferences about how to do things. To find out what a person prefers, ask.

- When you meet someone with a disability, it is appropriate to shake hands, even if a person has limited hand use or artificial limbs. Simply touch hands (or the person's prosthesis) to acknowledge his/her presence. Shaking the left hand is also fine.

- Always ask before you assist a person with a disability, and then listen carefully to any instructions. Do not interfere with a person's full control over his/her own assistive devices. For example, before you push someone who uses a wheelchair, make sure to ask if they want to be pushed. Likewise, never move crutches or communication boards out of their owner's reach without permission.

- People with disabilities usually do not want to make the origin or details of their disability the first topic of conversation. In general, it's best not to ask personal questions until you've become friends.

- Be considerate of the extra time it might take a person with a disability to get certain things done.

- Speak directly to the person with a disability rather than to a companion or sign language interpreter who may be along.

- Relax. Don't be embarrassed to use common expressions such as "I've got to run now," "See you later," or "Have you heard about..." even if the person doesn't run, see, or hear well. People with disabilities use these phrases all the time.

- Some terms that might have sounded acceptable in the past, such as "crippled", "deaf and dumb", and "wheelchair-bound" are no longer accepted by people with disabilities because of negative associations. Instead say "person with a disability," "Mary is deaf (or hard of hearing)," "Denise uses a wheelchair," and "Joe has mental retardation." This type of language focuses on the person first, and their disability afterwards. (See the list of "person-centered language" attached).

- Avoid excessive praise when people with disabilities accomplish normal tasks. Living with a disability is an adjustment, one most people have to make at some point in their lives, and does not require exaggerated compliments.

- Don't lean on a person's wheelchair; it is considered an extension of personal space.

- When you talk to a person in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, try to sit down so that you will be at eye level with that person.

- Give unhurried attention to a person who has difficulty speaking. Don't pretend to understand when you don't; ask the person to repeat the message.

- Speak calmly, slowly, and directly to a person who is hard of hearing. Don't shout or speak in the person's ear. Your facial expressions, gestures, and body movements help in understanding. If you're not certain that you've been understood, write your message.

- Greet a person who is visually impaired by telling the person your name and where you are. When you offer walking assistance, let the person take your arm and then tell him or her when you are approaching inclines or steps or turning.

Be aware that there are many people with disabilities that are not apparent. Just because you cannot see a disability does not mean it doesn't exist.

Words that Empower

Negative Phrases	Affirmative Phrases
The blind	Person with a visual impairment
The disabled, the handicapped	Person with a disability
Suffers a hearing loss	Person with a hearing loss
Afflicted by MS	Person with MS
Stricken by MD	Person with MD
Retarded; mentally defective	Person with developmental disabilities
Epileptic	Person with epilepsy
Fit (as in epileptic)	Seizure
Confined/restricted to a wheelchair	Person who uses a wheelchair
Normal person (implies person with a disability isn't normal)	Able-bodies/non-disabled
Crippled, lame, deformed	Disabled
Dumb, mute	Person who does not speak
Has overcome his/her disability; courageous	(People with disabilities live around it and don't feel as if the disability is anything to overcome) DON'T USE THIS
Crazy; nuts	Person with mental disabilities
Admits she has a disability	(This implies guilt or shame – DON'T USE IT)

Use person-centered language, not disability-centered language

- **Assessment of Organizational Readiness to Support Meaningful Service -**

YES   NO   Does your organization have a positive, widely-shared vision about the role of people with disabilities as volunteers and leaders in the organization?

YES   NO   Do people in your organization see people with disabilities as a valuable resource for fulfilling your mission?

YES   NO   Are people with disabilities an active part of decision making processes that affect them and the work/service they will do?

YES   NO   Do agency staff say more positive than negative things about people with disabilities?

YES   NO   Does your organization have policies that allow people of all abilities to volunteer?

YES   NO   Are meetings held at times and locations at which people with disabilities can participate?

YES   NO   Are training and orientation materials about your agency provided in a language, format and style that people with disabilities can understand and enjoy?

YES   NO   Is your orientation and training geared to the diversity of the person with disabilities who will be serving?

*Adapted from "A Practical Guide For Developing Agency-School Partnerships For Service-Learning"

- Budget Worksheet –

Materials	Amount	Cost per item	Total Cost	Possible Funding Source
Staff/Consultant				
Equipment				
Printing/Design				
Copying				
Accommodations				
Promotions				
Transportation				
Telephone/Fax				
Rental of space				
Food				
Miscellaneous				

- **Fundraising Worksheet -**

Possible Sources/Contacts	Priorities/Interests	Fundraising requirements
Businesses/Corporations • **National** • **Local** **Foundations** • **National** • **Local** **Individual Donors** **Government support** • **National** • **State/Local** **Faith-based organizations** **Schools/Universities** **Other**		

- **Recruitment Work Sheet -**

This worksheet is a tool to help clarify and shape the information you will need to effectively recruit people with disabilities to participate in service events.

1. How many people with disabilities do I want to involve?

2. What ages of people and types of disabilities do I want to involve?

3. What am I asking them to be involved in? Long term/ Short term, time, date, and role of their involvement?

4. Are there people with disabilities that I know that would help me recruit?

5. Where are good places to find people with disabilities in my community?

6. Who are good liaisons in my community that could help me recruit?

7. Other considerations:
   - Recruitment material, is it accessible?
   - Transportation, is it available and accessible?
   - Site, is it accessible?
   - Time

8. What messages do I want to be sure I communicate when recruiting and promoting this event?

- Barrier Buster Survey Sample -

Event Site Survey for Handicap Accessibility
Please give detailed information for the following questions.

1. Is the site near a transit station or bus route? If yes, what is the name of the station? Approximately how far from site is the nearest stop?

2. Are there stairs, grass, and street (no sidewalk) in the path of travel to the project site?

3. Do curbs on the path have curb cuts at drives, parking, and drop-offs?

4. Are accessible parking spaces available (8 feet wide for car plus a 5 foot access aisle and signage)?

5. Can a person with a visual disability detect any protruding objects in the path with a cane?

6. Is the front entrance accessible to main floor?

7. Are workspaces accessible to wheelchairs that would be at least 27"H X 30"W and 19" in depth? Is there an elevator?

8. Are bathrooms (stalls, railings, sink, soap dispenser, towel dispenser, etc.) fully accessible?

9. Are the public phones wheelchair accessible? Are they text equipped (TTY or TDD)?

Surveyor: _____ Phone Number: _____

- Activity Analysis -

What is the activity?

What types of tasks or skills are involved in accomplishing the activity?

Physical Analysis

Strength/lifting

How much weight is the member required to lift and how often?

❑ Less than 5 lbs.　　　　　　　　　❑ 50lbs or more

❑ 5 - 20lbs　　　　　　　　　　　　❑ Once or twice

❑ 21 - 40 lbs　　　　　　　　　　　❑ Multiple times/repeatedly

❑ 41 - 50 lbs

Mobility

Walking required　　　　　YES　　　　　NO

If YES, approximate distance:_____

Endurance/ Sensitivity

❑ Push	❑ Stoop	❑ See	❑ Smell
❑ Pull	❑ Kneel	❑ Color vision	❑ Taste
❑ Reach	❑ Crouch	❑ Depth perception	❑ Touch
❑ Run	❑ Crawl		❑ Hear
❑ Climb	❑ Sit	❑ Finger dexterity	
❑ Balance	❑ Turn		

Task and Skill Analysis

❑ Problem solving/ Reasoning　　　　❑ Counting

❑ Devise new ideas, better work　　　❑ Making and using measurement

❑ Conduct activities in a sequence　　❑ Basic calculations

❑ Recognize and use procedures　　　❑ Use of charts, diagrams, tables

❑ Obtain resources to carry out activity　❑ Read simple directions

❑ Analyze and synthesize information　❑ Read technical information

❑ Collect and organize information　　❑ Identify symbol/signs

❑ Evaluate for accuracy and completeness　❑ Listen

❑ Summarize　　　　　　　　　　　❑ Talk

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　❑ Report out what others have said

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　❑ Follow intent or oral direction

- Sample Accommodations -

The following examples represent accommodations that some AmeriCorps programs have made to help persons with disabilities participate in service. These examples are not designed to be prescriptive, since each individual will need tailored accommodations to address his or her disability. However, these examples can help project planners think about what types of accommodations might be necessary and budget accordingly.

Mobility Impairment

An AmeriCorps Program works with children ages three to five in school readiness activities with their parents. Members make home visits and coordinate group meetings to facilitate interaction and learning between parents and children. A member who uses a wheelchair joins the program. Meetings between program staff and members are moved to a downstairs room that is accessible because there is no elevator to the upstairs meeting room usually used. When assigning members to families, the Program Director ensures that the member is assigned to families with homes that are moderately accessible (e.g., the member can enter a home without much difficulty by using a portable ramp to wheel up one or two steps at an entrance.)

Learning Disability

Another AmeriCorps program works with the Asian refugee population to help youth assimilate into their new environment and to teach socialization, school readiness, and English language skills to children. An AmeriCorps member with a learning disability joins the program. After some discussion, the program routinely tapes memos and instructions for all members. All paper documents that are not easily taped are printed in large print and are copied on brightly colored paper.

Visual Impairment

An AmeriCorps program provides community safety workshops in local schools and community based programs. A member who is legally blind conducts the workshops. Occasionally, a second member accompanies her to assist with orientation and direction. All materials for the program are provided on disk, and some of the materials she uses for reference have been Brailled.

Hearing Impairment

An AmeriCorps Program that helps build and maintain trails in local parks and recreation areas recruits a member who is deaf. The program sponsors a training that focuses on effective communication skills so that the other members and program staff are aware of accommodation needs. All instructions are produced in writing. An interpreter is hired to assist the member in meetings and trainings.

Down's Syndrome

An AmeriCorps program that addresses local environmental concerns by coordinating park cleanups and urban gardening projects recruits a member who has Down's Syndrome. Each task that the members are to perform is broken down into several smaller tasks. With the assistance of a job coach from a local agency, the member is provided with one-on-one training on the job. The program director assigns different AmeriCorps members to work "buddy style" with this member on regularly assigned tasks. The job coach also assists the member in developing relationships with other members.

Diabetes

The schedule for an AmeriCorps program allows for two 10-minute breaks and one half hour lunch break. This does not allow sufficient time for a member with diabetes to test her blood sugar and take insulin if necessary. Nor does this schedule allow her to eat several small "snacks" throughout the day as required to maintain her blood sugar level. The schedule for the program was adjusted so that the member with diabetes was permitted to take five minute breaks at regular intervals throughout the day.

Chemical Sensitivity

An AmeriCorps member is particularly sensitive to chemicals. Through a comprehensive review of the program site, several allergens were removed, and steps were taken to ensure that fresh air was circulated through the site. Members and program staff were trained in emergency procedures for chemical sensitivity. The member was permitted to alter his schedule based on a need to remove himself from the site at different periods during the day. He was also able to make up this time.

(Taken from http://www.txserve.org/programs/disailit/examples.html. Website states that this is reprinted with permission from Access AmeriCorps, a cooperative agreement with United Cerebral Palsy and the Corporation for National and Community Service.)

- Alternative Format Resources -

- State Community Service Commissions can sometimes provide the use of items for translating or supporting alternative formats. Contact your state Commission at http://www.asc-online.org

- Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) works to make Web page formats and protocols accessible to people with disabilities so that Web page creators can build in usability of people with disabilities. Visit www.w3.org/WAI

- Bobby is a tool that helps identify changes to Web pages needed so users with disabilities can more easily use them. Visit www.bobby.watchfire.com

- The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) in an international toll-free consulting service that provides information on job accommodation and the employability of people with disabilities. JAN offers instant access to the most comprehensive and up-to-date information about methods, devices, and strategies that can help people with disabilities in seeking opportunities. Contact 800 526-7234 or jan@jan.icdi.wvu.edu.

- Referenced Guides and Resources -

- EPICenter is an online database of effective program practices, sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Visit EPICenter at www.nationalservice.org/resources/epicenter.

- Northwest Service Academy's Service Learning Tool-Kit available at www.northwestserviceacademy.org

- A Practical Guide For Developing Agency-School Partnerships For Service-Learning published by the Points of Light Foundation, available at 1 800 272-8306 (Order #343).

- National Youth Service Day Tool Kit, available at www.ysa.org

- AmeriCorps Guide to Working with the Media, available at www.americorps.org/resources/media_guide.pdf

- Sample Photo Release Forms -

(This is a hypothetical notice, used only to illustrate the concept)

(PRINT ON YOUR LETTERHEAD)

For Adults

I hereby give _____ permission to take photographs of me in which I may be involved with others for the purpose of promoting **National Youth Service Day**.

I hereby release and discharge (photographer), (name of organization), and Youth Service America from any and all claims arising out of use of the photos.

I am 18 or older. I have read the above statement and fully understand its contents.

Signature_____ Date_____

Name (Please Print) _____

Address _____

Witness _____

Address _____

....

For Minors

I hereby give (name of photographer) permission to take photographs of the minor named below or photographs in which the minor may be involved with others for the purpose of promoting **National Youth Service Day.**

I hereby release and discharge (name of photographer), (name of organization), and Youth Service America from any and all claims arising out of the use of the photos, or any right that I or the minor may have.

I, _____ am 18 or older, and am able to contract for the minor in the above regard. I have read the above statement and fully understand its contents.

Signature _____ Date_____

Name (Please Print) _____

Address _____

Name of Minor _____

Address of Minor _____

- **Sample Waiver Form –**

For Individual Volunteer

Waiver Form

In connection with my voluntary involvement in activities undertaken for, and with the participation and support of <<your organization here>>, a non-profit charitable organization, I hereby agree, for myself, my heirs, assigns, executors, and administrators to release and discharge <<your organization here>>, its officers and directors, employees, agents, and volunteers from all claims, demands, and actions for injuries sustained to my person and/or property as a result of my involvement in such activities, whether or not resulting from negligence, and I agree to release and hold <<your organization here>>, its officers and directors, employees, agents and volunteers harmless from any cause or action, claim, or suit arising there from. I hereby attest that my attendance and involvement in such activities is voluntary, that I am participating at my own risk, and that I have read the foregoing terms and conditions of this release.

_____

Participant or Legal Guardian Signature

- -

For Community Service Partner

Release of Liability

1. _____, its organizations, successors and assigns (collectively, the "Project Partner," referred henceforward as "PP"), is or will be working with [insert your organization's name] and its volunteers as they perform volunteer services for the community service organization in connection with various types of community service activities. [insert your organization's name] hereby releases and discharges the PP, and any of its directors, officers, employees, partners or agents (collectively, the "PP-Related Parties"), from any and all liability of, or responsibility for, any accident or injury to person or property which may occur during the course of such community service activities, except for any liability or responsibility resulting from the negligence or willful misconduct of the PR-Related Party claiming release. The PP hereby releases and discharges [insert your organization's name], Inc. and any of its directors, officers, employees, partners, organizations, successors, assigns, agents and volunteers (collectively, the [insert your organization's name]-Related Parties) from any and all liability or responsibility for any accident or injury to person or property which may occur during the course of such community service activities, except for any liability or responsibility

resulting from the gross negligence or willful misconduct of the [insert your organization's name]-Related Party claiming release.

2. The PP hereby agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the [insert your organization's name]-Related parties from and against any damage, claim, loss, liability or expense incurred in connection with or arising out of any accident or injury to person or property which may occur during such community service activities, except for any damage, claim, loss, liability or expense resulting from the gross negligence or willful misconduct of the [insert your organization's name]-Related party seeking indemnity.

3. Each provision of this Release shall be valid and enforceable to the fullest extent permitted by law, and the invalidity or unenforceability of any other portion.

4. The person signing this Release on behalf of the PP and on behalf of [insert your organization's name] each represents that he/she is duly authorized to so act.

(Insert your organization's name here)   Project Partner

By:	By:
(Signature)	(Signature)
Print Name:	Print Name:
Title:	Title:
Date:	Date:

Addendum to Community Service Partnership Liability

The volunteers who contribute to our communities represent a variety of viewpoints. (Insert your organization's name) values this diversity and seeks to maximize the opportunities to bring people together across differences through volunteerism. All volunteer opportunities coordinated through (insert your organization's name) should discourage bigotry and judgmental attitudes to facilitate broadened exposure to new perspectives and an ability to reflect on one's experience.

In seeking to establish these opportunities in conjunction with (insert your organization's name), I, _____, a representative of _____ (hereafter referred to as "my organization"), agree that my organization and its employees will respect the faith and traditions of the diverse volunteer base represented by (insert your organization's name) and not diminish or belittle the faiths that are different.

Signature _____
Date _____

NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 15, 2005

CONTACT: Christina Wessell / Robert Bisi
Youth Service America
202-296-2992
cwessell@ysa.org, x 28
Rbisi@ysa.org, x 24

THE CLAY AIKEN 'ABLE TO SERVE' AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

**The Bubel/Aiken Foundation Unites with Youth Service America
to Engage Youth With Disabilities for National Youth Service Day**

WASHINGTON -- (April 15, 2005) – The Bubel/Aiken Foundation and Youth Service America announced the first recipients of the **Clay Aiken ABLE to SERVE grants** providing grants of up to $2,000 each to youth with disabilities for community service projects for National Youth Service Day, April 15-17, 2005. Four premiere national organizations that work with youth with disabilities – Best Buddies, Special Olympics, National Service Inclusion Project, and VSA arts – distributed the grants.

"Conventional wisdom often looks upon youth with disabilities as a population to be served BY volunteers, instead of as a group that can serve AS volunteers," said Clay Aiken. "The Bubel/Aiken Foundation and Youth Service America seek to change this misperception by engaging youth with disabilities to serve create and lead others in service projects on National Youth Service Day and every day of the year."

The ABLE to SERVE Awards provide young people with and without disabilities the opportunity to work side-by-side to serve their communities. Award winners are also eligible for an additional grant of $1,000 for continuing the service project beyond National Youth Service Day. National Youth Service Day, the largest volunteer service event in the world, focuses attention on the amazing contributions that young people make year-round to their communities while recruiting the next generation of volunteers and educating the public about the benefits of volunteering and doing service-learning. For more information, visit: www.ysa.org/NYSD.

The ABLE to SERVE awards include:

- American Idol star **Clay Aiken** will join young people with intellectual disabilities and their **Best Buddies** to plant more than 40 six-foot tall palm trees and clean up a

neighborhood in <u>Hollywood, FL</u>. The Flanagan High School ROTC will also participate in the project.

- **Special Olympics of Virginia** will team up with various clubs focused on civic engagement in <u>Richmond </u>Public Schools to implement and manage the Third Annual Urban Program Track & Field Meet at Huguenot High School. They will manage media relationships, volunteer recruitment, and logistics of the event.

- **Genuine Concern for Others** is teaming up with student bodies and community service clubs at three local high schools for a food drive to benefit the <u>Santa Barbara</u> Food Bank for National Youth Service Day. Volunteers will staff a booth outside each participating grocery store to receive donations of food and non-perishable items from customers.

- The **Best Buddies** Chapter of Marion High School and Dr. Arthur F. Sullivan Middle School will host a special dinner celebration honoring the elderly community members of <u>Worchester, Massachusetts</u>. The youth will create and serve the meal, provide a magic show, and lead a sing-a-long with local firefighters. They will play bagpipe music, and a local dance studio and stomp team will provide a performance.

The mission of **The Bubel/Aiken Foundation** aims to create awareness about the diversity of individuals with disabilities and the possibilities inclusion can bring. Through collaborations with the disability, education, entertainment, and media communities, the Foundation will recognize those whose commitment to breaking the stereotypes attendant to the developmentally disabled has broken barriers and extended the boundaries of the human experience for all. For more information, visit: http://www.thebubelaikenfoundation.org.

Youth Service America is a national nonprofit resource center that partners with thousands of other organizations committed to strengthening the youth service movement. Youth Service America's programs and services help to strengthen the effectiveness, sustainability, and scale of the youth service and service-learning fields on a local, national, and global level. In addition to National Youth Service Day and Global Youth Service Day, which take place concurrently each April, YSA also hosts SERVEnet (www.SERVEnet.org), providing the largest database of volunteer opportunities in America. For more information, visit: www.YSA.org.

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