# PROJECT PLANNING GUIDE

Thank you for your interest in SPARTANS WILL. SERVE, a year-round initiative that encourages Spartans around the globe to make an impact in their local communities.

This Project Planning Guide is intended to assist alumni clubs, employers, individuals, and MSU departments and programs in the creation, promotion, execution, and follow up of a service project.

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ABOUT SPARTANS WILL. SERVE
SPARTANS WILL. SERVE is a year-round initiative and is our way of showing the world the extraordinary impact Spartans can make through service. This organized, collaborative effort brings Spartans together to serve others in their communities while demonstrating the reach and power of the Spartan network.

Global Day of Service
Every year in April, as part of the SPARTANS WILL. SERVE initiative, there is a Global Day of Service to harness the power of this spirit of service and demonstrate what Spartans can do in a single day.

Since 2013, SPARTANS WILL. SERVE has been a great success. Nearly 45,000 hours of service have been donated by more than 9,000 volunteers in 725 locations. These volunteers have provided a collective impact valued at $1,007,282 to their causes.

WHY SHOULD YOU PARTICIPATE?
When you’re a Spartan, you’re part of something far bigger than campus’ 5,200 acres. We’re a global community more than 550,000 strong, and we’re passionate about making the world a better place. Spartans have a proud tradition of service—many MSU alumni are inspired to serve in their personal and professional lives. This extends to our alumni clubs, employers, individuals, and MSU departments and programs who are actively involved in their communities. Additionally, thousands of students give back each year through campus’ Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement.

SPARTANS WILL. SERVE is an opportunity for alumni clubs/employers/individuals/MSU to:

- Demonstrate that any alumni club/employer/individual/MSU, regardless of size or proximity to East Lansing, can make a difference in their communities.
- Represent the values of Michigan State University across the nation.
- Diversify alumni club offerings.
- Attract new volunteers, including service-minded individuals and alumni of all ages.
- Engage Spartans in your community.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING RESOURCES
For your use, here are the official social media accounts of the MSU Alumni office and the university:

- Hashtag: #SpartansWillServe.
- Facebook: @msualumni and @spartans.msu.
- Twitter: @msualumni and @michiganstateu.
- Instagram: @msualumni and @michiganstateu.

Marketing and promotion tools: serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm includes sample social media posts for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and email. For some graphics, there may be instructions provided, so please be sure that you review these requirements.

- Refer to the “Promoting Your Service Project Through Graphics” document on serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm.

The MSU Alumni office wants to see your content. Share your posts, photos, and videos by using the hashtag #SpartansWillServe. Using this hashtag will make your posts easily searchable for the MSU Alumni office and other Spartans. Post your content to all of your social media platforms and, if possible, tag your alumni club, employer, MSU department or program, community partner/organization, and volunteers.
The success of your service project will depend on many factors, but having an alumni club/employer/individual/MSU volunteer who is willing to take on a leadership role during the planning phase is perhaps the most important. You may also want to consider creating an inclusive planning committee to represent the diverse interests of your community—one of the more noteworthy aspects about service projects is that they bring individuals from different backgrounds together to focus on a common goal.

THE ALUMNI CLUB/EMPLOYER/INDIVIDUAL/MSU VOLUNTEER OR PLANNING COMMITTEE SHOULD:

1 DEVELOP AND DEFINE THE VISION AND GOAL(S)
A service project should target a specific community need and work to address it. Regardless of the scale of the project, its success depends on careful planning, with the focus always on the specific goal.

Questions the alumni club/employer/individual/MSU volunteer or planning committee should ask:
- What community need are we looking to fill?
- What type of project is our community interested in?
- How many volunteers can our community accommodate?
- Is there a financial commitment/ outlay?

2 INVESTIGATE POSSIBLE SERVICE PROJECTS
Identify a community partner/organization.
- Talk to alumni and friends in your community to solicit ideas for community partners/organizations that might be good partners for a service activity.
  - Ask for recommendations of organizations they have volunteered with in the past.
  - Post requests in your alumni club/employer/individual/MSU social media channels.
  - Discuss the options as a group if possible. This can be helpful and create a broader sense of ownership for the service project.
- Do not hesitate to reach out to community partners/organizations to discuss possibilities.
- Volunteers are diverse in interests, ages, and physical capacity, so consider project options that accommodate a variety of needs. If you live in a larger community, geography may be a factor.
  - Consider doing several projects with several community partners/organizations to attract different audiences.
  - If you are considering more than one project in your community, think about including both an indoor and outdoor option, or a morning and afternoon option.

Things to keep in mind:
- How many volunteers is the community partner/organization in need of?
- Does the proposed project date fall on a nationally-recognized day of service, or other day that may affect volunteer participation?
- The vision and goals the volunteer or planning committee set forth for the service project.
- Many projects harness large volunteer groups yielding impressive outcomes, but even the smallest of projects has the potential to make a difference and impact your community.
Examples of previous service projects include:

- **Outdoor clean-up**—beaches, campgrounds, cemeteries, parks, streams/rivers/lakes, statues/sculptures.
- **Drives**—books, clothing, food, school supplies, pet supplies.
- **Maintenance/construction**—housing, park benches and tables, painting, playground equipment.
- **Landscaping**—flower and tree planting, urban gardens, beautification.
- **Social services**—meal assembly/packing/delivery, meal preparation and service, activities with children/families/senior citizens in need, animal welfare.

Below are several national organizations that may be in your community and are potential sources for service projects:

- American Red Cross.
- Habitat for Humanity.
- Feeding America.
- Salvation Army.
- Ronald McDonald House.
- United Way.
- Kiwanis International.

### 3 Select a Service Project and Appoint a Project Coordinator

Taking all of the above into account, select a service project.

Up to this point, an alumni club/employer/individual/MSU volunteer or a planning committee has been doing the work during the planning phase. You may continue to operate in this manner, but you should select a project coordinator for the service project, and if you are doing multiple service projects, select a coordinator for each one.

**The project coordinator should:**

- Act as the point person/liaison with the community partner/organization, if appropriate.
- Have their name and contact information listed on the specific project page on the [serve.msu.edu](http://serve.msu.edu) website.
- Field questions from volunteers.
- Do the on-site walk through with the community partner/organization, if appropriate.
- Attend the service project and serve as the on-site contact.

### 4 Finalize Service Project Details with Community Partner/Organization

This includes:

- Scope of work—description of work to be done.
  - This should be as thorough as possible in order to best describe the volunteer activity on the [serve.msu.edu](http://serve.msu.edu) website.
- Date, time and location.
- Hours of service desired.
- Minimum and maximum number of volunteers, if relevant.
- Any age or other volunteer restrictions, e.g., no children under 6.
- Are volunteers requested to adhere to a dress code or bring materials, e.g., must wear closed-toed shoes, bring own shovel, etc.
- Any other information that is pertinent for volunteers, e.g., park in the lot across the street.
- Are there any additional forms that volunteers need to complete prior to the service project, e.g., some community partners/organizations have their own forms that must be completed by anyone who volunteers.
- Name and contact information of the person at the community partner/organization who will be the main liaison with the project coordinator.

Many community partners/organizations are well versed in working with volunteers, so the above information should be straightforward, but do not hesitate to ask if anything is unclear or you need further clarification. Remember, you want this service project to be rewarding for your volunteers and these details are important to their experience.
REGISTER SERVICE PROJECT ON SERVE.MSU.EDU
Refer to the “Registering a Service Project on serve.msu.edu” document on serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm.

COORDINATE WITH YOUR MSU ALUMNI OFFICE ENGAGEMENT DIRECTOR
Please keep in touch with your MSU Alumni office engagement director (alumni.msu.edu/get-together/alumni-clubs/index.cfm) so they are aware of your service project and can assist in promoting your event through their social media. Additionally, the MSU Alumni office and Michigan State University will be doing overall outreach and promotion of the event to all alumni, and service project information will be solicited from engagement directors and appropriated directly from the serve.msu.edu website.
PROMOTING YOUR SERVICE PROJECT

1 COORDINATE WITH YOUR MSU ALUMNI OFFICE ENGAGEMENT DIRECTOR

Please keep in touch with your MSU Alumni office engagement director (alumni.msu.edu/get-together/alumni-clubs/index.cfm) so they are aware of your service project and can assist in promoting your event through their social media. Additionally, the MSU Alumni office and Michigan State University will be doing overall outreach and promotion of the event to all alumni, and service project information will be solicited from engagement directors and appropriated directly from the serve.msu.edu website.

2 PROMOTE AND RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS FOR YOUR SERVICE PROJECT

For alumni club projects, your alumni club will take the lead in volunteer recruitment. For all other projects, you will take the lead in volunteer recruitment.

Suggestions include:

- Use your alumni club/employer/individual/MSU social media channels and other communication tools, e.g., email, newsletter.
- Ask your community partner/organization if they can assist in outreach and promotion using their communications channels.
- Encourage people to invite alumni and friends via word-of-mouth.
- Promote your service project through the media.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND EMAIL RESOURCES

For your use, here are the official social media accounts of the MSU Alumni office and the university:

- Hashtag: #SpartansWillServe.
- Facebook: @msualumni and @spartans.msu.
- Twitter: @msualumni and @michiganstateu.
- Instagram: @msualumni and @michiganstateu.

Marketing and promotion tools: serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm includes sample social media posts for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and email. For some graphics, there may be instructions provided, so please be sure that you review these requirements.

- Refer to the “Promoting Your Service Project Through the Media” document on serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm.
- Refer to the “Promoting Your Service Project Through Graphics” document on serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm.
- Refer to the “Digital Storytelling” document on serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm.

Tips:

- The MSU Alumni office wants to see your content. Share your posts, photos, and videos by using the hashtag #SpartansWillServe. Using this hashtag will make your posts easily searchable for the MSU Alumni office and other Spartans. Post your content to all of your social media platforms and, if possible, tag your alumni club, employer, MSU department or program, community partner/organization, and volunteers.
- By making sure you tag and mention MSU Alumni social media channels, you’ll be opening up your message to a much larger audience. Additionally, we’ll be able to see your story as well and can help to amplify your efforts from our end.
• Tag your alumni club, employer, MSU department or program, and any community partner or organization.
• Don’t forget to use the hashtag #SpartansWillServe in all of your social media communications leading up to, and on the day of SPARTANS WILL. SERVE.
• All outreach should encourage all volunteers to register for the service project on serve.msu.edu. This will ensure that accurate headcounts and volunteer information is collected, permitting the alumni club/employer/individual/MSU to effectively communicate with volunteers leading up to, on the day of, and after the service project.
• If your service project has a maximum number of volunteers and that number is reached, the registration function on serve.msu.edu will be disabled and a message will be posted stating that the project is full.
• If your service project fills quickly, you may want to consider adding another one.

FIELD QUESTIONS FROM VOLUNTEERS
The name of the project coordinator will be listed on the specific project page on the serve.msu.edu website as the contact for your service project. As such, volunteers may be in touch with that person with specific questions or to clarify information.

Volunteers are requested to contact the project coordinator if they have to cancel their registration or change any contact information.

For details on how to remove a service project volunteer or change any of their contact information:
• Refer to the “Managing a Service Project on serve.msu.edu” document on serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm.

For general questions volunteers may have:
• Refer to the “SPARTANS WILL, SERVE Frequently Asked Questions” document on serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm.
FINAL SERVICE PROJECT PREPARATIONS

1. COORDINATE AN ON-SITE WALK THROUGH, IF APPROPRIATE
   Depending on the project, the project coordinator may want to do an in-person, on-site walk through with the community partner/organization one to two weeks in advance of the event to ensure that everyone is clear on the scope of work. Make sure that there is an appropriate area where the volunteers can meet when they arrive to check-in.

2. DEVELOP A “RAIN/INCLEMENT WEATHER PLAN,” IF APPROPRIATE
   If your service project is being held outside, develop a rain plan with the community partner/organization, e.g., an indoor activity such as stuffing envelopes for a mailing. In most instances, the service project will proceed as initially planned, but your no-show rate may be fairly high.
   • Be sure the rain plan includes communication with the service project volunteers.
   • An email the morning of the service project letting volunteers know that the project is still taking place should decrease the potential no-show rate.
   • Consider a rain date if the service project cannot move forward.

3. CONSIDER REFRESHMENTS FOR THE SERVICE PROJECT
   Determine if there’s a way to provide water and/or snacks to your service project volunteers. Perhaps an individual or organization would be willing to sponsor the service project in this way. In some instances, the community partner/organization can make refreshments available.

4. CONSIDER GATHERING AFTER THE SERVICE PROJECT
   After a day of service, consider celebrating. Invite volunteers to socialize and share stories of the day, especially if there is more than one project in your community. Some alumni clubs/employers/individuals/MSU might plan a picnic or let people know that they should plan to bring a lunch for after the service activity. Others might designate a centrally located restaurant where volunteers can gather as they finish their work. It’s up to the alumni club/employer/individual/MSU to decide how/if this will work, but many volunteers really enjoy the opportunity to build on the friendships they made during the day. Additionally, it’s a great opportunity for you to engage new and returning volunteers and share future opportunities for connecting locally.

   Be sure to communicate with the service project volunteers if there will be an opportunity to gather after the service project, and, if so, the details. A reminder email to volunteers is a great way to communicate this.

5. SEND A REMINDER EMAIL TO VOLUNTEERS
   Two to five days in advance of the service project, send a reminder email to all volunteers. The email should include:
   • A reminder about the service project for which they have registered.
   • Date and time.
   • The service project address, directions, parking and/or public transportation information, if applicable.
   • Location of where volunteers should meet to check-in.
   • What to wear and/or bring.
   • For outdoor service projects, what to do if it rains/inclement weather.
   • Name of, and contact information for, the project coordinator.
FIELD QUESTIONS FROM VOLUNTEERS

The name of the project coordinator will be listed on the specific project page on serve.msu.edu as the contact for your alumni club/employer/individual/MSU service projects. As such, volunteers may be in touch with that person with specific questions or to clarify information.

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DAY OF THE SERVICE PROJECT

THE PROJECT COORDINATOR SHOULD:

• Plan to arrive early at the service project and stay until the work is done.
• Set up the volunteer check-in/registration table, or have another alumni club/employer/individual/MSU volunteer do so. This will allow for better engagement with the volunteers.
  • Request that all volunteers sign a media release to grant your alumni club/employer/individual/MSU permission to use any media captured. Refer to the “Media Release Form” document on serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm.
• Direct volunteers to work or refer them to another alumni club/employer/individual/MSU volunteer who can direct them. Be sure that all volunteers have something to do.
• Plan to have someone take pictures and/or video.
  • Refer to the “Digital Storytelling” document on serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm.
• Do a brief welcome.
  • Open the event with a few words about the goal of the event and the value of the work that the volunteers are doing.
  • Thank everyone for attending.
  • Thank the community partner/organization and have them say a few words.
  • Review the schedule of events/timing of the day.
  • Emphasize the importance of safety and, if relevant, identify other on-site leaders and what they will be working on.

TIPS:

• Consider having another alumni club/employer/individual/MSU volunteer greet volunteers as they arrive and direct them to the volunteer check-in/registration table.
• Have all volunteers sign in, and don’t forget pens.
• Introduce volunteers to one another and encourage interaction.
• Build a sense of working as a team among your volunteers by using name tags.
• Make sure volunteers know how to post their photos of the day to social media.
• Have all volunteers sign a media release to grant your alumni club/employer/individual/MSU permission to use any media captured.
  • Refer to the “Media Release Form” document on serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm.
AFTER THE SERVICE PROJECT

1. SAY “THANK YOU”
   Send volunteers a “Thank You” on behalf of the alumni club/employer/individual/MSU to let them know how much you appreciate them. You absolutely cannot skip this step. You can do this in several ways:
   - Post on social media and/or send a blanket thank-you email.
   - Send individual thank-you's. However, make sure you still do a blanket statement as well. While it’s important to recognize those who went above and beyond, you cannot forget that every volunteer matters.

   Additionally, alumni clubs should use the occasion to invite volunteers to connect with your alumni club.
   - Refer to the “Tips for Volunteer Recognition” document on serve.msu.edu/volunteerTools.cfm for some additional suggestions.

2. COMMUNICATE THE SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES OF THE SERVICE PROJECT TO YOUR MSU ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT DIRECTOR

3. DOCUMENT THE SERVICE PROJECT
   Document the service project, including contacts at the community partner/organization you worked with, and volunteers. Keep this information for your records as a reference when planning future events. You may also want to consider a debriefing meeting with the members of the committee to give members a chance to provide additional feedback.

4. STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR VOLUNTEERS
   For alumni clubs, keep in touch with the volunteers from your service project by sending them information about upcoming alumni club events and opportunities and ways they can connect with your alumni club, including social media.