

Considerations and Tips for Entering a Community Site

Learn more about considerations and tips for entering community sites prior to engaging in your service. For more information and additional resources please visit:

<http://sli.oregonstate.edu/cce/communityentrytips>.

1) Partnership Development- Creating and sustaining reciprocal relationships:

- Seek to DO WITH rather than DO FOR or DO TO the community organization
- Respect
- Appreciate
- Listen
- Commit to the relationship

2) Pre-flection- Questions to ask yourself before service:

- Identity and Impact
- Community culture and context
- Reciprocity
- Leaving your legacy
- Community Partner Information

3) Logistical Considerations:

- Pre-service requirements
- What to wear and bring
- Electronic device etiquette

4) While engaged, remember to...:

- Be appropriate in manner, dress and language
- Respect the privacy of all community agency clients
- Be open to new experiences and ideas
- Expect to learn something new and work hard
- Suspend assumptions

5) Notes from our partners:

Community partners typically appreciate working with volunteers who show:

- Flexibility (project details often change last minute)
- Humility
- Strong communication and listening skills
- Interest in building relationships
- Respect
- Interest in the issue area and the organization

Considerations Explained:

- **Respect**- Show respect for the agency you are serving- Be mindful that you are a guest at the community site.
- **Appreciate**- Most community organizations are understaffed- Show appreciation for the time spent working with you/your group!
- **Listen**- Listen attentively to the directions provided by the community representatives/staff. Ask for help when in doubt.
- **Commit to the relationship**- Understand that relationship building is key to almost everything related to one's service experience. Share oneself in ways that earn and garner trust and respect.
- **Identity and Impact**- Consider cultural differences and other identity elements between you/your group and the organization and population you will be working with and how these could impact your project.
- **Community culture and context**- It is important to acknowledge that community partner organizations can have cultures different from the culture you experience at the university. In order

to be sensitive to these differences, once you enter into the community space you should observe and learn the organization's culture. Realize that you may not come from, or be familiar with, the communities that the organizations are in, so be sure to orient yourself to the community context before you start engaging in service. Ask yourself: What is the history of this community? What are current challenges this community faces? What are the primary demographics found in this community? How is this community impacted by the local economic and political climate? What does this community aspire and hope for?

- **Reciprocity**- Reflect upon what you can do to promote a mutually beneficial experience for all.
- **Leaving your legacy**- Remember that you are a representative of yourself, OSU, and any organization you are affiliated with. Reflect on the following questions before entering your community site: How do you want the community to remember you? What do you want your legacy to be?
- **Community Partner Information**-What services does the organization provide to the community? Why are the services provided important? What is the mission and scope of impact of this organization on our local and regional community? What would happen if this organization lost funding and/or volunteer support? What are the opportunities for volunteers and ongoing engagement with this organization? Are there opportunities for philanthropy/giving, advocacy, policy work, internships, and other forms of civic engagement with the organization?
- **Pre-service requirements**- Ask if there is any training or orientation needed ahead of time.
- **What to wear & bring**- Ask the community agency what attire/dress is appropriate ahead of time. Be mindful that your clothing is appropriate for the type of work you will be completing.
- **Electronic device etiquette**- Refrain from using cell phones or other personal electronic devices while at the community site unless it's connected to the project at hand.