



FL&S

Florida Learn & Serve

FLORIDA SERVICE-LEARNING MONTH TOOLKIT



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Florida Learn & Serve (FL&S), a partner in the Florida Alliance for Student Service, is a statewide service-learning grant program administered through a collaboration between the Florida Department of Education and Florida State University's Center for Leadership and Civic Education. This material is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service under the Learn and Serve America grant #06KSSFL001. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Corporation or the Learn and Serve America program.



FLORIDA SERVICE-LEARNING MONTH TOOLKIT

Guide adapted from MLK Day Toolkit from the Corporation for National and Community Service

What is Florida Service-Learning Month?

April 2008 has been declared FLORIDA SERVICE-LEARNING MONTH by Governor Charlie Crist. The intent of this proclamation is to call upon the people of Florida to engage in service-learning projects, promote the spirit of service learning, and observe the month with appropriate activities, programs, and ceremonies.



CHARLIE CRIST
GOVERNOR

FLORIDA SERVICE LEARNING MONTH

WHEREAS, service-learning allows students and other youth to practice knowledge, skills, and behaviors, through meeting community needs; and

WHEREAS, service-learning brings schools and communities together to work jointly on societal needs and problems; and

WHEREAS, service-learning empowers students and other youth to take leadership roles in improving society; and

WHEREAS, service-learning integrates service activities with academic curricula and Florida's Sunshine State Standards, providing students with hands-on, real-life learning opportunities; and

WHEREAS, service-learning activities provide students and other youth with opportunities for career exploration and the chance to develop and practice job skills; and

WHEREAS, students not only learn about democracy and citizenship, they become actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform; and

WHEREAS, it is important to encourage all Florida teachers and schools to participate and engage others in service-learning activities;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Charlie Crist, Governor of the State of Florida, do hereby extend greetings and best wishes to all observing April 2008 as

Florida Service-Learning Month

in Florida and call upon the people of the State of Florida to engage in service-learning projects, promote the spirit of service-learning, and observe the month with appropriate activities, programs, and ceremonies supporting the theme, "Raising Our Voices For Service-Learning."

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed at Tallahassee, the Capitol, this 15th day of February, in the year, two thousand eight.




Governor



WHO PARTICIPATES IN FLORIDA SERVICE-LEARNING MONTH?

Students and teachers of all ages from projects from all over Florida who engage in Service Learning. Non-profits and Community Based Organizations with Service Learning projects also participate. Community partners and sponsors also participate. Florida Learn & Serve staff provides support and coordinates FSLM events.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING FLORIDA SERVICE-LEARNING MONTH?

To celebrate and take advantage of Florida Service-Learning Month, you should plan to do as many of the following things as you can:

- Conduct service-learning activities in your school and/or community
- Make the media aware of your activities
- Invite key stakeholders (administrators, elected officials, media, parents, community representatives, businesses) to participate in service-learning activities with you
- Attend the April 21-22, 2008 “Raising Your Voices For Service Learning” conference at the Florida Capitol. Students will receive training in how to be effective communicators and advocates, meet with legislators, display their projects at the Capitol, and participate in the news conference celebrating the designation of April as Florida Service-Learning Month.

April is also celebrated as Florida Volunteer Month, and National Service Day falls on April 25. Providing information about students’ service-learning efforts to the public and to officials is another form of service learning and can lead to increase awareness and support of your efforts.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN FLORIDA SERVICE-LEARNING MONTH

Please note that students should be completing as many of the activities related to Florida Service-Learning Month as much as possible, from contacting legislators to developing Press Releases. This way the experience will enhance the service learning of the project.



FLORIDA LEARN & SERVE

Vision

Through service-learning participation, Florida's K-12 students will meet real needs, have improved academic outcomes, be more prepared for careers, have greater social skills, and be more civically engaged.

Mission

To provide the leadership, financial support, training, technical assistance, standards of practice, and products and facilitate networking, advocacy, and collaboration for schools and school districts to engage Florida's K-12 students in quality, curriculum-based service learning.

Florida Learn & Serve is a federally funded grant program, supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service, that awards grants to schools and school districts to engage youth in [service learning](#). Approximately 3,000 awards have been made since 1991. Each year, approximately \$1 million is awarded for 85 projects and 150 mini-grants. [Research](#) from past projects indicate that students who participated in service-learning—especially those at risk—improve their grades, attend school more often, and have fewer discipline referrals.

Florida Learn & Serve is part of the Florida Alliance for Student Service (FASS). [FASS](#) is a collaboration among several statewide programs dedicated to infusing service learning into the curriculum of all Florida schools, from Kindergarten to Higher Education.

Program Types

Florida Learn & Serve Formula Grant - Schools can apply for funds for projects in which students learn and apply learning through serving their communities, helping other students, and/or serving the public good. Service must be integrated into curricula and Florida's Sunshine State Standards. Funds support costs associated with engaging students in service learning, including materials, supplies, coordination, substitutes, transportation, and training. This grant supports three types of projects.

1. One-Year Pilot Projects—Competitive awards of up to \$7,500 for schools to initiate service-learning.
2. One-Year Renewal Projects—Competitive awards of up to \$10,000 for previously funded Learn & Serve sites (schools or districts) to continue, improve, expand, dissemination, and sustain their service-learning efforts.
3. Model School and District Infrastructure-Building Projects—Multi-year awards (up to 6 years) non-competitive after the first year, for model efforts to build the programming, staff, training, support, partnerships, and evidence to institutionalize service-learning efforts. Schools can receive up to \$10,000 a year, and districts up to \$50,000 a year.

Florida Learn & Serve Special Initiatives Grant – Eight established service-learning models have been tapped to expand, improve, and disseminate their service-learning efforts in the areas of prevention, teacher education, the arts, dual enrollment courses, and the environment. These projects are funded for three years.

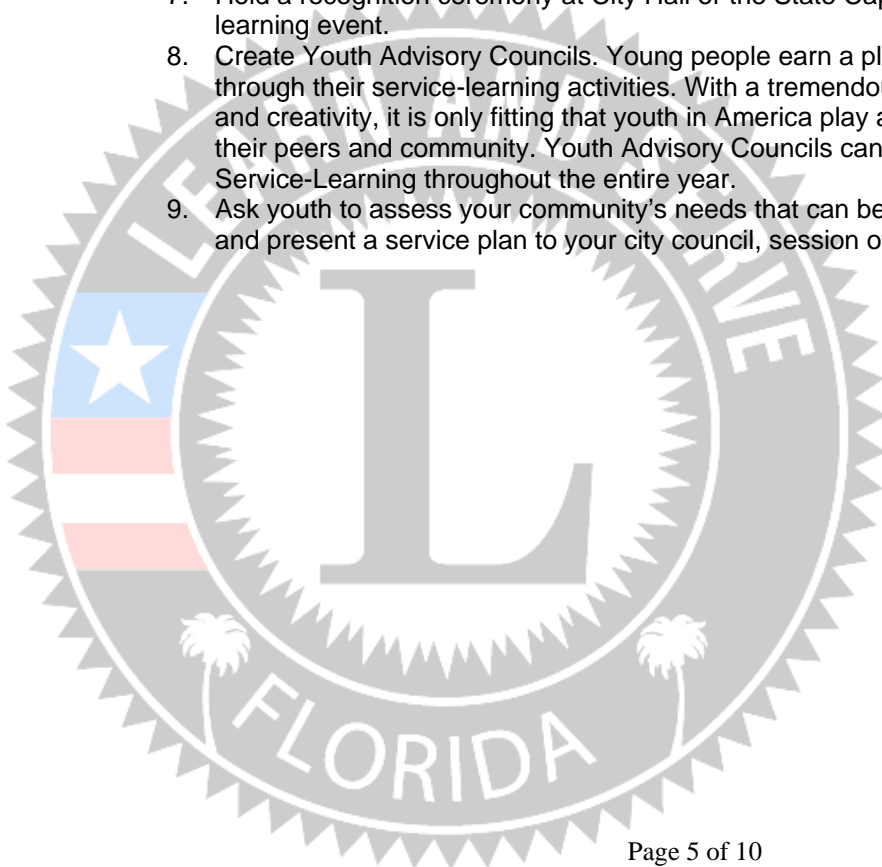


ENGAGING ELECTED & AGENCY OFFICIALS IN YOUR PROJECT

For service-learning to continue as a viable solution for schools and citizens all over Florida it must be better understood by more people. The best first step for this is reaching out to legislators and decision-makers in your community.

Before you contact officials, you should decide how you would like them to be involved in your event. The more specific a request you make, the more likely the official is to accept. Also, having multiple options for the official to consider makes it more likely that you will receive his or her support in some way. In addition to attending your project, remember that officials have considerable influence and communications channels at their disposal that they can use to spread the word about your event. Here are some things you can ask officials to do:

1. Volunteer at your service-learning project, leading youth by example.
2. Address volunteers at the kick-off rally or closing celebration.
3. Proclaim April 2008 to be Service-Learning Month in your school, district, city, or county.
4. Distribute a press release or a PSA highlighting your service-learning project and other service-learning activities taking place in your school or community.
5. Write an op-ed or letter to the editor encouraging youth participation in service-learning events and year-round service.
6. Invite your state's congressional delegation, legislators, mayors, and local government officials, judges and their staff to participate in and/or organize activities related to service-learning events.
7. Hold a recognition ceremony at City Hall or the State Capitol for participants after a service-learning event.
8. Create Youth Advisory Councils. Young people earn a place at the decision-making table through their service-learning activities. With a tremendous amount of energy, commitment, and creativity, it is only fitting that youth in America play a role in addressing the needs of their peers and community. Youth Advisory Councils can build on the positive impact of Service-Learning throughout the entire year.
9. Ask youth to assess your community's needs that can be addressed through youth service, and present a service plan to your city council, session of state legislature, etc.





PROJECTS DURING FLORIDA SERVICE-LEARNING MONTH

Conducting service-learning activities during April will help draw attention to students' efforts. If you have already planned to conduct activities in April, make a push to get media coverage for them as part of Florida Service-Learning Month.

For your Service-Learning Month related projects:

START EARLY. Allow ample time to develop, organize, and carry out your project. Come up with timelines and stick to them. Take into account the breaks leading up to the event (FCAT, spring break, etc.), because people often are unavailable during those times. Make a checklist of what you need to do.

SET REALISTIC GOALS. Volunteers and partners feel better about giving their time and resources when they see results. Remember, quality counts more than quantity: a small but successful service-learning project is better than a poorly run, large-scale project.

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS. A service-learning project is a great way to introduce your organization and your mission to potential partners and sponsors. Schools, area businesses, congregations, and local government agencies make natural partners as do volunteer centers, national service programs, and local service clubs. By joining with others, you'll increase the size and impact of your project.

INVOLVE YOUR PARTNERS. Partners, sponsors, and members of the community should be included in the planning and implementation of your project. Don't just ask for their time, money, or products, seek their input. Make sure you clearly define responsibilities and roles.

BE INCLUSIVE: FSLM service projects and events are a great way to reach out across neighborhoods and socioeconomic divides. Try to involve everyone in the community—young and old, rich and poor, people of differing faiths, races, and ethnic origin. Invite young people who are served by community programs to give back through service.

ACTIVELY RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS. Volunteers don't just show up—they need to be recruited. Your partners are good sources of volunteers. So are local congregations, schools, businesses, and community groups. Be sure to sign people up in advance and to keep in touch with them.

CHOOSE PROJECTS CAREFULLY. Try to accomplish something meaningful to the community. If your project is important to your community, potential partners, volunteers and sponsors will want to help. Try to tackle projects that would not get done without the added energy of volunteers.

BE FLEXIBLE. Choose a project that can easily be scaled up or down, depending on the number of volunteers you are able to attract. Have a contingency plan for a low volunteer turnout, and one for excess volunteers

SEEK OUT DIVERSITY. Try to attract as large and varied a group of volunteers as possible. Youth, senior citizens, and people of all races, religions, and ethnic backgrounds ideally should be part of the mix. A diverse group will best capture the true results of service-learning projects.

COLLECT CONTACT INFORMATION. Have potential volunteers fill out a basic sign-up sheet that includes their name, address, phone number(s), e-mail address, and any special skills they may have. Be sure to send out reminders to your volunteers about a week before the project. The quickest, easiest, and least expensive way is via e-mail.



REACH OUT TO THE MEDIA. If you are planning a large project, advance coverage in local media outlets will draw attention to your event and attract additional volunteers. Media coverage the day of the event can heighten volunteer pride and ensure the success of future projects.

TELL US YOUR PLANS. E-mail us to tell us about what you are doing. We will spread the word about your event and help draw national attention to those who serve.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND COALITIONS

GROUPS WITH SIMILAR MISSIONS. Groups that are involved in the same issues as your organization—the future of young people, homelessness, literacy, health care, the environment—are a good place to start. Look for organizations that have made a commitment to strengthening your community and whose expertise you may need.

YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS. Young people should be an important element of any service project. To get them involved, contact organizations such as America's Promise, Camp Fire USA, Boys and Girls Clubs, 4-H Councils, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA and YWCA. A guide to involving young people is available at www.ASC-online.org.

Service-learning community activities can be a great way to spread the word about your project and to reach out across barriers to attract partners and sponsors.

CORPORATIONS, BUSINESSES, AND UNIONS. Invite corporations to join you early on as full partners. Ask companies in your community, especially those that have operations near a service site, to help with project planning and to pitch in with employee volunteers, as well as with funds and supplies. Trade unions are actively involved in community events and are a good source of volunteers with special skills.

SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES. Many school districts have a community service requirement and are looking for partnerships to help students reach their goals. Start by approaching service-learning or community service coordinators. If you are near a college or university, contact the local service-learning center, campus service organization or work-study office. Approach other teachers, teachers associations, and sororities and fraternities.

NATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS. The Corporation for National and Community Service administers several programs that would make excellent partners for your project. Contact your local AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, or Senior Corps program; your state service commission; or the Corporation office in your state. To find your local contact, visit www.nationalservice.gov/about.

FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS. Churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship have long been partners in service-learning projects. Many—if not most—are already providing valuable services in their communities.

SPORTS TEAMS. Professional and semiprofessional sports organizations are supporters of a wide range of community initiatives. Players often participate in service projects and lend their names and



images to good causes. Team owners and managers can provide free tickets or run promotional ads on their scoreboards or in their programs.

GOVERNMENT LEADERS. Don't be afraid to reach out to the elected leaders in your community; they can be extremely helpful in issuing a call to service and in getting partners on board. You could, for example, invite your mayor, county executive or governor to serve and learn with an activity with your project.

MEDIA OUTREACH

COMPILE A MEDIA CONTACT LIST. The list should include local and regional newspapers and magazines; local television, cable TV, and radio stations; wire services such as Associated Press and Reuters; and special-interest media such as ethnic publications, college and community newspapers, church bulletins, and corporate and community newsletters. Most libraries have media directories that you can use; your state commission or state office also can be helpful. Keep up with your local TV and newspaper coverage to identify reporters who cover social and community issues, or columnists who might be interested in your efforts.

DEVELOP A PITCH. Think about a succinct message or "pitch"—a few words that will convince the media that your story is interesting, timely, and newsworthy. This message can be reinforced in your media advisory, press release, and any interviews you or other spokespeople may give.

Using the media effectively is an excellent way to promote your project and educate the public about your organization's mission. By putting effort into media outreach, you can reach thousands of people at once. That publicity can help you recruit new volunteers, attract potential funders, recognize hard-working volunteers, and develop media relationships that will help you in the future. The following tips will get you started:

WRITE A PSA. Radio Public Service Announcements, or PSAs, run at no cost to you and are a great way to recruit volunteers and to get the word out about your event. The message should be short but complete, and include a phone number to call for more information. Send the announcement to the radio station's public service director and allow plenty of lead time.

FAX A MEDIA ADVISORY. Five to seven days before the event, you should fax a media advisory to everyone on the press list. Keep it short and specific, including key information about the event—who, what, where, when, and why—and contact information. Be sure to fax the advisory to wire service "daybooks," which are the daily calendars of events that reporters use to plan their day. A sample media advisory is available at <http://www.fsu.edu/~flserve/resources/mediakit.html>.

WRITE A PRESS RELEASE. A press release gives a reporter a base for writing a story on your event. It's like a news article—except that you write it. Press releases can be written before the event, to attract advance notice or attention, or they can be written after the event, to inform the media about the day's accomplishments. Include quotes from organizers and participants, details of the project's goals and activities, background about your organization, and your contact information. A sample press release can be found at <http://www.fsu.edu/~flserve/resources/mediakit.html>.



WORK THE PHONES. Follow up PSAs, media advisories, and press releases with telephone calls to remind reporters and editors of your event. When you call newspapers, ask for the city desk; when calling radio and TV stations, ask for an assignment editor in the newsroom. Point out "photo opportunities"—times when photographers would be able to find lively scenes to shoot—and suggest interesting volunteers whom reporters could interview.

WRITE AN OP-ED/ LETTER TO THE EDITOR. The editorial page is always looking for material and is one of the most widely read sections of a newspaper. An opinion column or letter to the editor should explain how your project ties in with Service-learning's teachings.

ASSEMBLE A PRESS KIT. Each reporter at your event should receive a press kit that includes your press release, the day's agenda, fact sheets on the project and organizations involved, information on corporate sponsors and partners, background on Service-learning and the FSLM, and contact information. Make plenty of copies, and post the information on your website.

SELECT A SPOKESPERSON. Identify one or two individuals to articulate your message to the press. Condense your message and get it down cold.

GREET THE PRESS. Have a separate sign-in table for reporters and other members of the media. Also, make sure that a representative of your group is on hand to greet the press and to introduce reporters to the project's spokesperson or director.

CLIP STORIES. Make copies of all newspaper stories about your event and be sure to turn on the VCR to record any TV pieces that run. Collecting these materials will help you recruit for next year's project and thank your partners.

SAY THANKS. Be sure to thank reporters for good coverage. Like all of us, news people appreciate kudos for a job well done.

IS YOUR PROJECT NEWSWORTHY?

Here are some ways to make your project more newsworthy:

LOCAL INTEREST. Pick a project that is of great concern in your community. You have a better chance of making the news if you can show that your project will be of interest to local readers, viewers, and listeners.

DIRECT TIE-IN TO SERVICE-LEARNING EVENT. When you discuss your project with reporters or editors, note that you will be conducting newsworthy activities to address specific needs in the community—the event can draw news coverage.

TIMING. Timing is everything when it comes to attracting coverage, especially from TV. The best time to stage your events, or invite press to them, is between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. The later in the day, the less chance there is that stations will have time to send a camera crew, edit the coverage, and get a story on the evening news. Newspaper reporters also need time to research and write their stories.

CELEBRITIES. You are more likely to get media attention if you involve well-known people in your kick-off event or actual service project. Possibilities include local athletes, news anchors, or weather reporters, elected officials, and business people.

INTERESTING VISUALS. For a TV reporter or a newspaper photographer, the "look" of your project is very important. TV cameras and newspaper photographers like sites where they see people in action



and which have visually appealing or arresting background or other elements. Anything that involves children usually makes for good visuals, but be sure to get permission from their parents ahead of time.

WRITE THANK-YOU NOTES. A successful service project requires the collective efforts of many people. Be sure to show your appreciation by writing thank-you notes to donors, partners, team leaders, volunteers, speakers, members of the media, and any others who may have contributed time, goods, or money to your service project.

DEBRIEF YOUR PARTNERS. Organizers, sponsors, and key participants should meet soon after the event to discuss the project's strengths and weaknesses. Be sure to seek input from the host site and to conduct a comprehensive review of the volunteers' service-day evaluations.

SPREAD THE WORD. Submit press releases, articles, photos, and other information about your completed event to your local newspaper and to the Corporation for National and Community Service. Be sure to post the information on your web site and have it available for your partner organizations to post on theirs.

KEEP IN TOUCH. Send copies of news stories and video coverage to sponsors and partners. This will help illustrate the impact and exposure of your service project, and may encourage continued participation in Service-learning Day of Service and other community service events. Add your partners to your mailing list and keep in touch with them throughout the year.

Even after FLORIDA SERVICE-LEARNING MONTH has ended, you still have a little more work to do. The tips below will help ensure that future FSLM events are even better than the one you just completed.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

The tips below can help you think about partnership ideas and opportunities:

- Engage community partners who can assist with project planning, fundraising, publicity, and volunteer recruitment
- Schedule regular planning meetings or conference calls, and assign clear roles and responsibilities
- Recognize project partners and sponsors at service activities and in publicity leading up to FSLM
- Reconvene following the event to discuss successes and areas for improvement
- Thank project partners and sponsors

LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

- Set specific goals
- Build partnerships
- Choose appropriate sites
- Recruit volunteers and team leaders
- Develop a media plan
- Secure adequate transportation and supplies
- Arrange for security if needed
- Choose a kickoff site and design a kickoff event
- Assign volunteers and team leaders to work sites
- Confirm speakers, media, transportation, and security for the event
- Evaluate the service project and volunteer service experience
- Clean up the site
- Celebrate your success
- Conduct follow-up activities and send thank-you letters