REFLECTING ON SERVICE

What is Reflection?

- Reflection allows volunteers to acquire the knowledge and skills to learn and develop through thoughtfully organized community service projects and gain an in-depth understanding of the value and impact of their work.
- Reflection is the defining piece between community service and service learning.
  - Reflection is a time to look back so that you can look forward. This is the time for your team to figure out what they did well, accomplished, learned, and observed from your project experience.
- Reflection allows volunteers:
  - To meet actual community needs and are coordinated in collaboration with the community;
  - To provide opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations and their own communities;
  - To help to foster the development of a sense of caring for other beings and things.

Why Reflection?

The Department of Community Service is committed to helping students engage in discussions about the social issues that connect to their service. By reflecting on your service experience through discussions and interactions it helps you feel both challenged and supported. Reflection allows for:

- Greater civic engagement
- Increase sensitivity to community issues
- Expand capacity to serve more effectively
- Ask “why”
- Enhance service opportunities
- Build a deeper connection with the community
- Challenge attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, privileges, prejudices, and stereotypes
- Place your experience in a broader context

How long and how many times should our volunteers meet for reflection?

Reflection can occur before or after a project, both are valuable to the experience of a volunteer. For example, it can be done in the van on the way back from a project site or in a more formal meeting at the end of the semester. Having at least one formal reflection each semester allows your volunteers to connect with each other and discuss their thoughts on the social context of your programs in greater detail. The length of the reflection can vary depending on the activity you have chosen.
How should I reflect?

People can reflect through *speaking, writing, and performing activities*, essentially anything that can help you think about the experience and connect your service with the broader social issues your program addresses.

Examples include:

- Presentations from community organizations
- Group discussions
- Reading and discussing relevant news articles
- Journaling
- Photo essay
- Free write/drawing
- Trivia or bingo related to your program
- Book club on relevant social issue
- Watching and discussing a relevant documentary

How is reflection different from assessment?

Reflection and assessment can often overlap, especially when discussing how the program is going, lessons learned, and how to improve aspects of the program. However, reflection should dive deeper and connect your volunteer experience with the broader social issues that your program’s address. It should challenge your volunteers to consider how, if at all, their experience has changed their mindset and how it may influence their future thoughts and actions in other environments. Assessment evaluates your program by obtaining quantitative and qualitative data.

What if I need help selecting, developing, or facilitating a reflection activity?

Email the Graduate Assistant for Waltham Group Assessment and Advocacy at *wggradassistant@brandeis.edu* or the Waltham Group Reflection Planning Committee for any recommendations, questions, or to set up a time to meet!

Please do not hesitate to ask if you have any questions!