

Community Service

Selecting and Conducting Projects

Most units do not automatically plan service projects as part of their program; they need prompting. That is one reason why you have this manual: to select and promote service projects. You have many to choose from. Some are short-term, some long-term. A few call for funding, but most do not.

The best way to begin selecting a service project is to ask, "What do the units want to do for their community?" Remember, the service projects won't be done by council or district Scouters. To be successful, they must attract and then hold the interest of unit members and leaders—and must have their strong, enthusiastic support.

Remember that each project should not only be useful but fun. Don't let repetition of one kind of service or of service to one place make these projects routine. They should be special. Don't let waiting on tables at the sponsor's dinners, for instance, become a chore like washing dishes at home. Try to select, over a period of time, as broad a range of projects as possible to make the process fun for members with all kinds of interests.

The following criteria should help to ensure that service projects appeal to the unit members.

Reality

The young people must feel that the project is worthwhile, and they must be interested in it. It must be within their abilities, yet still challenge them. This is especially true for high-school-age

people. Their involvement must be adultlike and have significant meaning if it is to impress them.

Democratic Process

In every phase of a project, from its selection to its conclusion, decisions must be shared by the young people involved. This will vary, of course, with the troop.

Significance

Every project should require the young people to apply their knowledge and skills and to get personally involved. The significance of the service should be clear to them and to the public. The results should be clear, and the Scouts should be given recognition for a job well done. (This could be a tangible reward for major projects—like a patch or pin, or voiced praise, or both.)

Definition

A project should have a definite beginning and ending and specific steps in between. An ill-defined project would seem meaningless and would not give the satisfaction of a completed service.

Preparation

A project should require the participants to read, observe, inspect, survey, discuss, or somehow prepare in advance for the service.