SEVEC Community Involvement Program (SCIP)

Ideas on a community involvement project
A Resource for Youth, Group Organizers and Educators

www.sevec.ca
This publication is intended for those involved in the SEVEC Community Involvement Program (SCIP), including:

- Community youth participants
- Students
- Group Leaders
- Educators
- Supporting adults

The SEVEC Community Involvement Program is intended to support and facilitate youth and the adults working with them, in planning and carrying out a project in their community. SCIP groups may be associated with a community organization or be a class of students. Some SCIP groups meet weekly out of school hours, others meet regularly as part of your school timetable.

For more information please our website at www.sevec.ca or contact Exchange staff:

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Ideas on a community involvement project

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Youth develop projects ideas

“If students actually come up with the idea themselves, they’ll probably be more engaged. Like in English class for example, if you are reading a book that someone told you to read, it’s not as great as reading a book that you’d want to read on your own.”

— Dougal
Participant, Quebec
SEVEC is pleased to share with you some ideas on how to choose a community project. We hope that some of these ideas will help you decide upon and implement a project in your community.

Please remember that these are ideas for you and your group to consider. Ultimately, the way you choose the project is up to you.

We encourage you to add your ideas and experiences to this resource. Kindly send anything you would like to share to your SEVEC Program Operations Assistant or info@sevec.ca Please be sure to include your name and the names of anyone else who has contributed so that we can give full credit.

We are looking forward to hearing your ideas, stories, successes and challenges.

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**Make the most of the opportunity**

“Make sure that you have fun while planning and completing your project. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity and you want to make the most of it because it’s something you are going to remember for the rest of your life!”

— Leslie  
Participant, Manitoba
What exactly do we mean when we refer to “community”? A community can be a physical space like your city or town. It may also refer to a collection of buildings that have a common theme such as a community of schools within a city or town. A community can be created between individuals or organizations with something in common, such as an issue. Examples of these might be the community of youth, or the community of people working with youth. For the purposes of this project, a community is the city/town or area where you live and implement your project.

Community can be defined in many ways

“Get to know your community. The community could be the street you live on, it could be your whole town, your basketball team; it could be whatever parameters you decide your community is. So in trying to establish a project for example, decide on what that community is and what you are trying to do will help you in that process. See who the supports are. People have different expertise in different communities and in different circles, so being able to harness and use those resources or attaching them to different communities using your own experience as well as those around you.”

— Sarah
Group Organizer, Ontario
Youth have new and fresh ideas

“Young people can make a difference in their community, whatever they determine that to be. They can be pioneers of new and fresh ideas to make the rest of the youth in the community more active.”

— Rachel
Participant, British Columbia

Volunteer Canada

http://volunteer.ca/en/node/1745
http://volunteer.ca/volunteer/pdf/youthworks.pdf

“Creating and developing youth-led volunteer projects” guide.

If you are ready to take on a challenge this guide will provide you with practical check lists, templates, tips and help you get organized to realize your community project.
Part 2 – What is a Community Project?

A community project, for the purpose of this program, has the following parameters:

- it has been identified and chosen by you and your peers
- it is S.M.A.R.T. (see below)
- it has a positive impact on your community
- it has received the support of the adults working with you on your project
- it has received the support of other groups in your community such as Mayor and Council
- it does not further the interests of a business
- it reflects positively on you, your group and community and is something that makes you proud

Every efforts helps

“Especially in the small town that we’re going to, I know there isn’t always a big project to do. So just little things to help, like building play structures for the kids there, like we’re doing.”

— A student from Quebec

EcoAction Community Funding Program

www.ec.gc.ca/ecoaction

The Eco Action Community Funding Program is an Environment Canada funding program that provides support to community groups that have measurable, positive impacts on the environment. You will find ‘A start to finish project’ chart and how to keep track of the overall impact and success of your project.
IT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AND CHOSEN BY YOU AND YOUR PEERS

The first step in planning a project in your community is to come up with ideas. Your school or group may already be involved in community projects. Members of your group may already have ideas on what kind of project the group should do. It is the job of the Project Committee to collect ideas, explore their feasibility and present the options to the whole group for consideration and selection. The two most important factors to be considered are that the project can be carried out during the exchange phase of your program. Also it is important to keep in mind that when it comes time to carry out your project, your twin group will be present to help your group. There needs to be enough work for both groups for the length of time chosen for the project.

Lots of people can help a project

“Ask for help. I had lots of help from other teachers because it was my first website that I created. It was fun, it was a good experience. I also tried to be as outgoing as I could, I dressed properly, I told them who I was and what we were doing and what we needed their help for, and if they wanted to help us or not.”

— A student from Quebec

One tool project managers use to determine whether a project is feasible is to ensure it follows the S.M.A.R.T. principle:

S: Is the project idea SPECIFIC and SUITABLE for the community and program? It is important, when you decide on a project that everyone involved has a clear and common understanding of exactly what you will be doing. For example, if you decide you want to build a skate park, will you be doing everything from arranging for the permit, to building the ramps to maintaining the park or limit your project to one or two aspects of the overall project? If a project is suitable it makes sense for the community and for those doing the work. For example, an outdoor swimming pool would not be suitable in a Northern Community where it is cold all year. It would also not be suitable for people allergic to animals to create a dog walking program.

M: Is the project MEASURABLE? How will you know when the project is done and whether or not your goals were met? For example, if you decide to develop a community awareness campaign on Recycling, you could measure the number of people who receive the information, the number of households that start recycling as a result of your project, etc.

A: Is your project ACHIEVABLE? Make sure you aren’t setting yourself up for failure! If you want a skating rink but don’t have anything to make ice, you will never achieve your goal. It is advisable to not be overly ambitious with your goals...especially the first time around. Keep things simple and remember: the point is to learn from doing something (however simple), to make a contribution and to work together. The point is not to enter the Guinness Book of World Records!

R: Is your project REALISTIC? Are you able to do what you say you’ll do in the timeframe available? Keep in mind the time of year, the amount of time you will actually be able to get together to work, the amount of time the work will take, the number of people available, the skills people have, the resources available, the amount of money you can raise, the permits and other arrangements an agreements which are necessary to have... all of these factors are extremely important to consider before making a decision.
Is your project idea TIMELY and TIME SENSITIVE? Is this the right time for your group to be doing that specific project? Make sure you are aware of other existing plans so you aren’t duplicating another similar project. On the other hand, planning a project to dovetail with another project may be an efficient use of time and resources.

In order for the program to run successfully, the project needs to be chosen as soon as possible. This way the other Committees can be more successful. The Fundraising Committee for instance will have more success raising money if they can tell potential donors what the project will be.

The first step is to collect ideas. At one of your first meetings with the entire group, start the process by asking if anyone has ideas on what the project should be and record them below. Eliminate any that cannot take place during the exchange phase of your program or that would not represent enough work to keep both groups busy for three days.

**Suggested Activity:**

*Have a discussion with your group to see if anyone has initial ideas on what the community project should be. Record the ideas below including, any factors that might need to be taken into consideration. Be sure to record who suggested the idea.*

Name of the project idea: ____________________________

Person who suggested the Project: ______________________

Project description: __________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

Name of the project idea: ____________________________

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Project description: __________________________________

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Person who suggested the Project: ______________________

Project description: __________________________________

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SEVEC would love to hear the ideas you collected on community projects — please send comments to your Program Operations Assistant or info@sevec.ca.
IT HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON YOUR COMMUNITY

It is important that your project has a positive impact on your community. In order for you and your group to get support from individuals, groups and businesses, the value of the project on the community must be evident.

Your project will allow you to better understand how decisions are made and which actions need to be taken so that the next time you would like to realize a project in your community, you will know how. Also keep in mind that this is a way for community members, organizations and businesses to be part of what you and your peers are doing. When considering a community project, make sure to collect ideas from community members outside of your group as well. Here are some suggested activities to help collect ideas:

Suggested Activity:

A picture is worth a thousand words…or so they say! Taking pictures of areas in your community where you think you might be able to make a difference is a good way to generate ideas for your community project. Divide the group up into teams of 2 to 3 people. Assign teams to different areas within the community so they are not taking pictures of the same things.

With purchased disposable cameras or digital cameras, decide on a day or couple of days that the groups will go out and take pictures of areas or things that they think might be the subject of a community project. Have the pictures developed or printed out. Purchase a poster board for each group. Have the members of each group make a poster of areas they identified including suggesting potential projects. Have each smaller group present their posters to the whole group. Record any new ideas for community projects above with the other ideas.

Suggested Activity:

One of the best ways to know what people think your community needs is to ask them. Taking your own community into consideration, draft a series of questions that you and your peers can ask people. Once the Project Committee has drafted the questions to be asked, present and discuss them with the rest of the group.

Once the questions have been confirmed, decide who your target audience is. For example you could decide to administer the questionnaire to 5 business owners, 2 government officials, 3 heads of community organizations, 10 youth from your school/organization not involved in the project and 20 random individuals encountered at a public place such as a shopping centre. Divide your group into teams of 2-3, set aside the days to administer the questionnaires and have everyone report back on the results. Add any new project ideas that fit within the parameters listed above.

Ask your community

“I think the best way for a group to determine their community project is by asking the rest of the community.”

— Rachel
Participant, British Columbia
Suggested Activity:

Invite groups and organizations in your community to submit ideas for your community project. Often groups that have begun planning community projects or identified community needs simply do not have the help they need to be able to realize their projects. The first step is for you and the other members of the Project Committee to draft a letter of introduction, describing your group, the parameters of the project, timeline and the number of people available to work on it. Be sure to include the process for submitting their requests. Would you like them to send a letter? Would you like them to come and do presentations to the group? Also be sure to include contact information in case they have questions.

Brainstorm with your group and your teachers/group leaders names of organizations that might benefit from your help. Contact your local Chamber of Commerce that lists all the businesses and organizations in your community. Ask your City/Town hall, parents, friends, and acquaintances if they know of organizations or groups in your community that might benefit from having a project.

Once you have considered all community requests, add any that seem feasible. Be sure to send thank you letters to all organizations that submitted a request.

Note: keep all names and contact information on file in case there are other things you can contact the organization about during the course of your project. For example, someone you speak to may work in an organization that could provide a meeting space or donate food during the exchange.

Environment Canada

http://www.ec.gc.ca/education/default.asp?lang=En&n=ED3D58C4-1

Official government website with lots of useful links to help you take action.
**Organizations contacted to submit community project proposals for consideration:**

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A community project will be most successful if it is supported by several partners. While holding meetings with your smaller Project Committee group or with the larger group, be sure to invite the adults that are supporting you on this project. Whether this be your teacher or other supportive adult, your project will have the most success if everyone involved has a chance to share ideas and bring their opinions forward. In many cases, these individuals will also be able to help with everything from discovering your community to drafting letters.

It’s also important to involve your parents and the parents of others in the group. Plan to hold parent meetings as soon as possible. Plan to present the progress made by the Project Committee at every parent meeting. Consider administering your community survey to the group of parents as well. Some great ideas might come out of it.

Volunteering has a ripple effect

“I think they need to think outside the box and reach beyond what’s in the immediate surroundings. The volunteerism and the community benefits have enormous repercussions so they should definitely start looking beyond their immediate town limit for support.”

— Anne
Group Organizer, Nova Scotia

SUCH AS MAYOR AND COUNCIL

There are most likely other groups in your community that could help you and your peers with your project. If you have decided to ask community groups to submit community project proposals then you have already begun a list of names of organizations that could help you. One of your most valuable resources is the Mayor and City/Town Council. They most likely have projects you could consider, and their support in moving forward is significant to the success of your project.
In most communities there is a process for being heard by Mayor and Council. Contact your City/Hall to inquire about the process. One example of this process is to send a request to be on the agenda for the next meeting to the City/Town clerk. You will need to outline the reason you would like to make a presentation, describe your group and list everyone who will appear to make the presentation. The City/Town clerk confirms your appearance and confirms the amount of time you will have on the agenda. Prepare your presentation accordingly. Practice your presentation ahead of time and be prepared to answer questions. Be sure your presentation includes what you are looking for from Mayor and Council. Do you want them to give you ideas for your project? Do you want them to give you money for your project? Do you want them to give you other resources? Or do you simply want them to be aware of what you’re doing and endorse your project?

You can use a similar process to make presentations to other organizations. After every presentation, be sure to send a letter of thanks and to follow up on any actions that you committed to during your meeting. If the presentation you made might result in funds being donated to your project, be sure to pass the contact information and details to the Fundraising Committee for follow-up.

Suggested Activity:

When preparing a presentation, answer the following questions:

Who will you be presenting to? ________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Why do you think they would want to support your project? __________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
Do you want them to give you ideas for your project? If so, have you given them the process and timeline for considering projects? ____________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
Do you want them to give you money? If so, how much? ____________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
Do you want them to allocate resources to your project? If so, what kinds of resources are you looking for? ____________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
Did you send them a thank you letter? ____________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

SEVEC would love to hear the ideas and opinions you came up with on the subject of public relations – please send comments to your Program Operations Assistant or info@sevec.ca.

**IT DOES NOT FURTHER THE INTERESTS OF A BUSINESS**

This project is the opportunity for you and your peers to plan and implement a project that will leave your community a better place. In many cases, the project you initiate and complete would not have been possible otherwise. Many organizations and individuals will have the opportunity to learn about your project and support you. To truly make it a community project, it should not further the interests of a business (for example, a project to promote a local business such as an advertising campaign is not appropriate).

**You can be proud of what you’ve done**

Whatever your group decides to do as a project, this is your opportunity to make a difference, learn about yourself, your team members and your community and have some fun. Planning and implementing a community project with a group of peers and others can be a rewarding experience… one that you will remember for a long time. So have fun!
Some ideas for community Projects:

There are no limits to the ideas you consider in choosing your community project, here are a few suggestions:

Consider the impact

“I think another reality of volunteering in a community context is that you’ll have projects so big and so all encompassing that some of the aspects of that are really tedious and really small and you get caught up in the minutia of things. If you need to peel potatoes for a week, keep the greater cause in mind. If you don’t look for the reasons you’re doing it then it’s just peeling potatoes and that’s no fun for anyone.”

— Julien
Participant, New Brunswick

Statistics Canada

http://www.statcan.gc.ca/edu/edu02_0000-eng.htm

Statistics Canada government website with lots of data, tools and resources to help you with your projects.
Part 3 – Your Project

Now that you and your group have chosen a community project, there are three important things the Project Committee needs to do:

1. determine all the resources that will be needed to complete the project
2. determine a timeline that will ensure everything needed for the project is acquired and in place for when your twin group arrives to help you with the project
3. ensure that a schedule has been set for the actual days of work and roles and responsibilities have been assigned

DETERMINING RESOURCES:

Every project needs resources. This can include everything from building materials, to food to feed the volunteers working on the project. Some of the materials you will be purchasing. In this case you will need to work with the Fundraising Committee to ensure that you have the necessary funds. In some cases you will be asking people to donate time. For instance, if some of the parents in the group are going to help then you will need to communicate the timeline with them well in advance so they can make appropriate arrangements. You may want parents or a local restaurant to donate food for the days of the project, in which case you will need to make the request, provide details on days required and number of people and finally send thank you letters after the project is complete.

Government of Canada home page
Resources Centre

http://canada.gc.ca/othergov-autregouv/prov-eng.html

This site contains links to the official government Web sites of Canada’s provinces and territories where you can find valuable links and articles for your project such as local news, community information, regulations and many more.
Brainstorming is key

“First discuss what you want to achieve and as a group brainstorm what you need for your project. Working with others allows people to bring new ideas and support to a project.”

— Shelby
Participant, Alberta

Suggested activity:

With the other members of the Project Committee and then with the group as a whole, brainstorm all the resources you will need for your project. It is suggested that you group them into resources you will need to purchase and those that you will ask for as donations.

In the case of those you will purchase:

- determine the value so that a budget for the project can be determined
- determine where you will purchase these materials
- decide when you will need to purchase them
- determine if the Fundraising Committee will ask for resources to be donated in support of the project
- if you will need to store them, determine where that will be
- establish who will be responsible for them during the actual days of the project

In the case of resources you will ask for as donations:

- determine what resources you will ask for
- determine who you will ask
- determine who will ask for the resources
- track the requests and who will be donating what
- ensure timelines and schedules are communicated to those donating resources
- if you need to store them, determine where that will be
- determine who will be responsible for collecting and distributing these resources on the actual days of the project
- Ensure recognition is given at events and thank you letters sent

DETERMINE A TIMELINE

It is important that a timeline for the project be set by the Project Committee and communicated to the rest of the group. Knowing exactly when the project will take place will allow the other committees to plan their own timelines. The project will be more successful and things will go much more smoothly if all four committees set timelines and communicate them with each other. One suggestion is that, at the beginning of each meeting with the larger group, have each committee give an update on their timeline.

The first step in making a timeline is to know when approximately you will be working on your project. Most likely these dates have already been decided with your twin group. Once you know when the days of work will take place, you can work backwards from that time and decide when all the steps are to be completed.
After determining all of the steps of your project, you will be able to decide which of these steps will need to be done before the actual project dates and which will take place when you are together with your twin group. Once all the steps have been determined, you next need to determine how long it will take you and your Committee to complete each step and who will be responsible for each step. Frequent discussions with your committee and with the larger group will be necessary in order to determine realistic timelines.

You now have what your project is, what steps are involved in realizing your project, who will complete each step, what supplies you will need, and what’s involved in getting the supplies.

Congratulations! It’s time to carry out your project.

**Realize your project one step at a time**

“I would really try and focus on step by step, and then not become overwhemed by the immensity of the project. I would encourage them to maybe make a web if they are more visual learners they could draw pictures … ok what’s the first step, what’s the goal… Definitely go step by step and then if they do lose sight of their goal, remind them that it’s a really worthwhile goal and that they can still attain that despite how complicated sometimes the planning process is.”

— Lisa  
Group Organizer, Alberta

**Beyond Your Backyard / Organizing a community project**


There are several steps involved in putting together a successful community project. This website takes you through these steps thoroughly so you will be able to create a worthwhile project that will benefit your community.

**Suggested Activity:**

**Charting your project**

Create a chart to help you plan your timeline. In the first column list all the steps required from now until your project is completed. In the second column list all the supplies needed to complete each step. In the third column list where the supplies will come from, who is getting them and where they will be kept. In the fourth column list the time required to complete each step, who the lead is on ensuring each step will be completed and how long you think each step will take. In the fifth and final column, assign a target date for completion. In the case of the three days when the actual project will take place, list the daily schedules hour by hour.
Have an impact

“Each committee should always be able to count on the other committees for their help. Working together on your project, you will broaden your knowledge of the community you live in, and have a big impact that will encourage you to continue working in your community even after your project is over.”

— Rachel
Participant, British Columbia

Green Street


Green Street gives you access to a Web platform where you will find out what other schools are doing across the country to support environmental sustainability and student engagement.

Keep in mind that you may not have all the answers to the above questions. It is important to fill in as much as you can and update it regularly as you get new information and things change.

Please send anything you would like to share on the above activity to your Program Operations Assistant or info@sevec.ca.
Part 4 – Reporting

In all of the activities you do as part of both the Project Committee and the larger group, it is important to record actions taken and decisions made. This becomes not only a means to record decisions, but keep track of changes and things to do.

Minutes taken at every committee meeting and at every larger group meeting will provide a record of the unfolding of your project. Please refer to your handout on running an effective meeting for more information on running a meeting and taking minutes. Taking pictures of your project at all stages is another great tool in reporting on your project.

We would like to share ideas to advise and inspire future groups. Please send copies of your meeting minutes, project pictures and reports to your Program Operations Assistant or info@sevec.ca.

Use pictures to document your project

“Like they say, pictures say a thousand words. Having pictures documents what you have done, is helpful for monitoring your project and helps when reporting on your project.”

— Rachel
Participant, British Columbia

Environnement Jeunesse

http://www.enjeu.qc.ca/projets/index.html (resource available in French only)
Visit this site for helpful suggestions and ideas related to community projects.
Notes: