CITIES OF SERVICE .ORG

PLAYBOOK

HOW TO DEVELOP A
**HIGH-IMPACT
SERVICE PLAN**

ABOUT CITIES OF SERVICE

Cities of Service supports mayors and city chief executives to activate impact volunteering initiatives – city-led, citizen-powered programs that target specific needs and seek measurable outcomes. Cities use proven tools and methods to engage community members in addressing needs like revitalizing neighborhoods and supporting youth and education. Residents are recast as co-producers of solutions and work side by side with municipal government to create real and lasting change.

With comprehensive strategic planning, meaningful partnerships, cross-sector collaboration, and best practices, municipal government leaders in the Cities of Service coalition design and implement service strategies to address myriad local challenges and engage city residents who want to volunteer and improve their communities.

Founded in 2009 by New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, the Cities of Service coalition is comprised of more than 200 cities in the United States and United Kingdom, representing more than 50 million people in 43 states, and more than 10 million in the UK.

ABOUT THE PLAYBOOK

The **Cities of Service Playbook** can guide cities of any size and makeup, i.e. whether mayor-council, council-manager. It guides city leaders in the development of a citywide service plan – an essential, living document that establishes goals and means, evolves over time with city priorities, and is key to successful implementation of impact volunteering initiatives. This Playbook provides examples and planning tools to help cities assess needs and arrive at their own unique plans. Many cities use the Playbook as a step-by-step guide while others reference specific sections and/or resources.

JOIN US!

Members of the Cities of Service coalition can network with other cities in the coalition as well as receive assistance from Cities of Service staff to develop citywide service plans.

"When Mayor Dyer and I convened our stakeholders, we used the Cities of Service Playbook as our 'bible' to help us develop Orlando's high-impact service plan. The Playbook provides the framework that helped us engage all of our stakeholders in the planning process from beginning to end. It has been invaluable to have a concrete plan to share with partners, potential funders, government agencies, and citizens."

MARCIA HOPE GOODWIN
CHIEF SERVICE OFFICER; ORLANDO, FL

1.

INVEST IN LEADERSHIP

Cities of Service coalition member cities are proof that engaging city residents in impact volunteering is an effective municipal strategy to help solve pressing, local challenges. **Cities that achieve the greatest results in using service as a strategy are led by a mayor or chief executive who (1) commits and gets involved in the planning and implementation of service strategies and (2) dedicates a senior-level staff member to oversee the work.**

The mayor or chief executive provides the vision for local efforts, convenes potential partners, raises public awareness, provides access to resources, and overrides bureaucratic barriers. He or she should appoint a senior-level Chief Service Officer or designated "city lead" to plan and execute the service efforts. This individual will also be accountable for outcomes. To reinforce the city's overall commitment to impact volunteering, the Chief Service Officer or "city lead" for service strategies should be a member of the mayor's staff and have direct and frequent access to the mayor in order to facilitate successful planning and implementation. For cities where this position is not feasible, or in a city beginning to implement one initiative, the mayor may assign an agency lead or senior staff person whose existing role encompasses relevant and compatible responsibilities (e.g. Chief Innovation Officer, Chief Resiliency Officer, Department of Parks & Recreation Director).

EXECUTIVE ENGAGEMENT IMPROVES IMPACT

"I am constantly focused on moving Birmingham forward through citizen engagement and collaboration among nonprofit, public, and private partners. Building on early success with our Love Your Block initiatives, I pledged to make these efforts part of my citywide strategy to make Birmingham a healthier and safer city. With the support of Cities of Service, we created a movement across the city – distributing 20 mini-grants to support neighborhood groups in new and continued revitalization projects. We have also added a community policing component and are forming neighborhood watch groups to promote a sense of pride and community for neighborhood residents."

MAYOR WILLIAM A. BELL, SR.
BIRMINGHAM, AL

Key Questions:

- How has the mayor/chief executive expressed commitment to impact volunteering as a service strategy?

- What resources and assets, including human capital, are available to the city and mayor's office to contribute or offer?

- Who can effectively lead the process of developing a citywide service plan?

- Where will accountability for the implementation of our services reside?

Cities of Service supports Chief Service Officers

Since 2009, Cities of Service has partnered with key city leads and cultivated a community of practice for Chief Service Officers. In addition to providing technical assistance and resources, Cities of Service hosts opportunities for city leads to network with one another, including at conferences and member convenings, and provides a forum online and off for the exchange of best practices with other cities in the coalition.

"When Mesa experienced flooding in 2014, leaving residents without power, food, and the comfort of their own home, the mayor turned to me in the Chief Service Officer role to mobilize volunteers for recovery efforts. Working together with city agencies and nonprofits, we coordinated 361 volunteers to remove nearly 220 tons of debris, create and distribute sandbags and food boxes, and visit approximately 680 homes. As a result, volunteers are now a key component of the city's disaster preparedness plan. It was a great illustration of the importance of Chief Service Officers in local government."

MICHELLE ALVIS-WHITE
CITYWIDE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM COORDINATOR; MESA, AZ

2.

IDENTIFY PRIORITIES & ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

A crucial step in developing a citywide service plan is to **identify the city's most pressing priority areas of need within which citizen service might make an impact, and confirm them through stakeholder engagement.** Impact areas are often based in part on the mayor's existing agenda, and include, but are not limited to: community development, economic recovery, education and youth, homelessness, hunger/healthy food access, neighborhood revitalization, preparedness and safety, sustainability, and veterans.

CHOOSING IMPACT AREAS

There is no ideal number of impact areas. Larger cities or those with more resources may choose to focus on multiple areas, while smaller cities or those with fewer resources may choose to focus on just one. Consider existing areas being addressed that could be improved by participation and leadership from the city, and existing and potential resources for citizen volunteers in the community.

Engage stakeholders and experts to further identify specific challenges, resources, opportunities, and areas of collaboration within those priority areas that might be addressed, in part, by citizen service. Tap into the existing knowledge, creativity, capacity, and volunteer management experience of others to create opportunities for greater impact.

Conversations with stakeholders and experts provide an opportunity for you to build an engaged group of supporters and champions who will help shape and implement your service plan and specific initiatives *(see Step 3)*. **Conduct individual conversations and interviews with experts, then consider hosting roundtables or focus groups with key stakeholders and potential partners, and/or administering surveys, to gather more input or affirm ideas presented by others.** Also, review existing data relevant to your initiatives *(i.e. on local volunteerism, public opinion surveys, related issue area research, etc.).*

COMPILING INPUT FROM CITY RESIDENTS

It is critical to secure input from city residents and target populations in the process of flagging priorities. If your city has an existing channel through which to compile this input (e.g. 3-1-1, virtual suggestion box, surveys), acquire and study that data to distill what city residents identify as their most pressing challenges.

STAKEHOLDERS / EXPERTS / POTENTIAL PARTNERS	RESOURCES THEY OFFER
Citizen-led groups and faith-based institutions	Identification of and information relating to community needs and priorities, meeting spaces
Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)	Grants, training, research, technical assistance, volunteers, and volunteer recognition programs (see Appendix)
Local and national impact area (issue) experts	Knowledge of specific needs, trends, local/national data, existing programs
Local colleges/universities	Program design support, research, evaluation, training and technical assistance, student volunteers
Foundations or corporations (local and/or national entities with a local presence)	Program development, research, knowledge of needs, funding, volunteers, visibility, sustainability of plan
Partner government/social service agencies (e.g. local sanitation, parks departments)	Vertical and operational expertise, ideas, knowledge of specific needs/potential roadblocks, human capital, additional budget resources, equipment and tools, meeting space
Nonprofits (local and/or national entities with a local presence)	Existing programs, knowledge of specific needs, volunteers
State Service Commissions	Funding, grants management, training, technical assistance, connection between CNCS and individual state government, nonprofit relationships, volunteers (see Appendix)
Volunteer organizations (e.g. HandsOn Network, United Way)	Volunteers, volunteer management resources, networks

It's prudent to proactively **identify infrastructural challenges** that may stand in the way of your city's success in implementing service strategies. These challenges may include volunteer recruitment, management, and retention; general staff capacity; interagency communication or systems barriers; ability to gather and measure metrics; and public awareness.

Examine trends and deficiencies with stakeholders and experts **across programs, city agencies, and nonprofits that might benefit from systemic solutions (such as a centralized website through which to recruit and manage volunteers)** as part of your citywide service plan.

Key questions:

- How can impact volunteering enhance how we address priority areas of need in our city?
- Who are the stakeholders we need to engage to: help shape and refine the city's vision of success, clarify specific challenges, and assist in the development and implementation of our plan?
- What are the infrastructural challenges we need to address to increase and sustain impact across priority issue areas?

CITIES OF SERVICE MEMBER BENEFITS

As part of a community of practice, Cities of Service coalition members can learn the methods of engagement that have worked best for comparable cities, and can receive problem-solving assistance from peers who have created and implemented citywide service plans.

RELATED RESOURCES (IN APPENDIX)

- *Sample questions to engage stakeholders to identify specific challenges*
- *Overview of Corporation for National and Community Service and State Service Commissions*

The City of Orlando's Partnership with the University of Central Florida

Orlando's Chief Service Officer Marcia Hope Goodwin engaged Dr. Tom Breyer, a professor of civic engagement at the University of Central Florida, and nine PhD students to research the city's level of civic engagement and impact volunteering to assist the city in creating a successful high-impact service plan. With a focus on education and crime prevention, they used the Cities of Service Playbook to help create, collect, and analyze targeted questionnaires for various stakeholder groups that allowed the city to build and implement a comprehensive citywide service plan based on valid, informative data collected and analyzed by experts putting theory into practice.

The City of Atlanta's Mayoral Board of Service

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed convened a diverse group of leaders to drive recommendations and collaborative action for the city's civic good. The Atlanta Mayoral Board of Service (AMBS) is an advisory body of dedicated philanthropic, nonprofit, education, community, and business leaders. Each member shares their expertise and institutional knowledge, leverages resources to fill existing projects and support gaps, and connects the mayor's office to foster additional, successful collaborations with partners including Atlanta Public Schools and local YMCA and Boys & Girls Clubs affiliates.

The Board works with the city's Chief Service Officer to help shape and advise on the city's impact service initiatives, such as their Centers of Hope and Love Your Block projects. In addition, the Board reviews other citywide initiatives and provides input to align the initiatives with Mayor Reed's vision.

The City of Philadelphia's Landscape Analysis Leads to SERVE Philadelphia

Between January and March 2010, the Philadelphia Mayor's Office performed a citywide scan of the city's volunteer engagement strategies. Among its key findings were that while partner organizations are committed to working more closely with the city and with one another to further enhance their collective impact, the organizations look to and expected the city to establish a clear vision for service with tangible goals. The culminating report assessed volunteer practices across 10 city departments, as well as included an analysis of the city's relationship with nine nonprofit organizations that rely heavily on volunteers. It found that:

• *While numerous city departments engaged volunteers "extremely effectively," there was little consistency or formal coordination across departments.*

• *The city lacked a clear mechanism for citizens to get involved in city-led volunteer opportunities.*

As a result, the Chief Service Officer met individually and in small groups with an expanded cohort of local and national service experts, nonprofit organizations, grassroots community groups, faith communities, schools, colleges, private sector partners, and public agencies to determine the most effective strategies for addressing their findings.

SERVE Philadelphia was developed in 2010 as a direct result of this process. It has since implemented innovative impact volunteering initiatives like Waste Watchers. At the last three Philadelphia Marathons, Waste Watchers volunteers have succeeded in diverting up to 88 percent of waste from landfills, and are engaged to guide attendees to sort trash, recyclables, and compost at additional attendee events.

3.

ENLIST PARTNERS & DEVELOP TO PRODUCE IMPACT

Once you have confirmed your city's priority areas of need and engaged a range of stakeholders, the next step is to develop high-impact service initiatives to address each of the specific priority needs and infrastructural challenges you have identified. These service initiatives will form the heart of your service plan.

Generate ideas and gather proposals -- Generating ideas for specific initiatives requires time and structure. It is important to set expectations high and think as creatively as possible in order to devise the boldest ideas. Ideas for new initiatives and/or improvements to existing initiatives may have started to come up during conversations and research with stakeholders, some of whom will likely become your partners in this work.

- **Group brainstorming sessions can be a powerful way to generate new ideas.** Brainstorming sessions have two purposes: (1) to widen the field of potential ideas, and (2) to deepen the participation of stakeholders and potential partners inside and outside of city government. Brainstorming sessions are typically conducted over the course of several hours or a whole day, with between 15 to 50 participants, and at least one facilitator. Brainstorming sessions require sufficient time and a strong structure to be robust and productive. Attendees should be drawn from a variety of stakeholder groups that are leaders or experts in your service plan's priority need areas (see Stakeholders/Experts/Potential Partners chart).

- **Idea competitions can generate new ideas and highlight new approaches to persistent challenges.** Put out a request for proposals for existing initiatives and new ideas with an accompanying proposal template and submission guidelines and selection criteria. Use the same selection criteria for ideas and proposals gathered through other means. Additionally, review ideas and suggestions from any focus groups or surveys/questionnaires you conducted in the identification of priorities and challenges (Step 2) and follow up with organizations or individuals to develop proposals.

Continue to engage stakeholders, potential partners, and citizens – those who will engage in service and those who will be impacted by the service – in the process. Leverage effective, existing projects or programs (local or national) that might serve your community's needs. Consider more proposals than you plan to implement so that you can choose initiatives with the highest potential for impact. A key benefit of an inclusive idea generation process is that partners feel that they have shared in the creation of the ideas they will be responsible for implementing.

Cities of Service cities may be implementing impact volunteering initiatives that address challenges and priority needs similar to those of your city. **Visit citiesofservice.org to read service plans and Cities of Service Blueprints and consider how you might import these programs, or elements of them, to your city.** Cities of Service staff can connect you to cities with comparable needs and initiatives. When adapting an initiative that was successful elsewhere, it is important to understand what core pieces and approaches drove its success. Consult with the designers and implementers of programs to get specific tips. Visiting another city to see an initiative in action can also provide great insight.

Choose Initiatives

Once you have solicited and developed a number of ideas and suggestions for specific high-impact initiatives, assess and select service initiatives based on established criteria. In most cases, you will prioritize initiatives that are both highly feasible and likely to achieve high impact. Consider the amount of risk involved in particular initiatives, the distribution of initiatives among your priority need areas, and the balance of initiatives that have short-term versus long-term impact.

CITIES OF SERVICE BLUEPRINTS (AVAILABLE AT CITIESOFSERVICE.ORG)

Cities of Service Blueprints are comprehensive, customizable, high-impact service strategies that address specific city needs in a variety of impact areas. Each blueprint outlines the necessary steps to bring a service initiative to life and ensure its success, including required elements and examples from cities that have successfully implemented the initiative.

Define, Develop, Design

After selecting the top initiatives for implementation, **take time to fully develop initiative plans and address anticipated challenges.** For initiatives that aim to expand on existing efforts, work with the existing program or project owner to figure out what is needed to grow the impact of the work. For new initiatives, write a short business plan or blueprint to follow. **Define your goals, the required elements to ensure successful implementation, how you will measure impact, and the timeframe to achieve that impact.** Figure out and assess what the volunteer involvement will look like in terms of activities performed, skills needed, and time commitment. You will learn a lot during the development of an initiative; do not be afraid to significantly change, add, or remove initiatives if necessary.

WHO'S ON FIRST

It's important to identify an owner for each initiative. Ideally, the city's Chief Service Officer or city lead will assume responsibility for developing, executing, and measuring the impact of an initiative. In many cases though, a partner – another city agency or nonprofit organization – may be the owner. Work closely with the project lead to establish responsibilities, communication systems, and reporting structures.

City of Austin, TX - *Love Your Block*

Since 2014, the City of Austin, TX has utilized the Cities of Service Love Your Block blueprint to guide the planning and implementation of a local impact volunteering initiative focused on neighborhood revitalization in low income communities. The mayor's office provided mini-grants to community groups, including groups that had never interacted with the city before, and coordinated with city agencies to develop a menu of city services to complement volunteer efforts to improve the physical conditions of blocks. In less than one year, as a result of the mayor's leadership in facilitating local citizen service opportunities, the City of Austin revitalized 73 blocks, removed 960 pounds of litter, created 11 community gardens/ green spaces, and developed a fruitful partnership with the University of Texas at Austin that engages a cohort of students in Love Your Block community outreach, grant-writing, and project support. To ensure Love Your Block's long-term sustainability, the initiative transferred from the mayor's office to the city's Department of Public Works in 2015.

City of Nashville, TN - *Storm Busters*

As part of Nashville's recovery and restoration efforts from devastating floods in May 2010, Mayor Karl Dean and Chief Service Officer Laurel Creech worked with the city's Water Department and community partners including HandsOn Nashville and the Cumberland River Compact to identify ways to reduce the impact of future flooding, strengthen the city's stormwater management system, and prepare the city to be more resilient in the face of future natural disasters. This planning process resulted in the development of the Storm Busters impact volunteering initiative. Since 2010, HandsOn Nashville, the Cumberland River Compact, and other local conservation organizations have planted more than 15,994 trees and 320 rain gardens across the city, mitigating over 13 million gallons of stormwater. In addition, thousands of volunteers have assessed more than 200 miles of waterways and cleaned 30 miles of waterways, removing nearly 300 tons of trash and debris. The mayor's office remains active in the initiative by convening partners and coordinating their various roles and responsibilities, utilizing Mayor Dean's bully pulpit to promote the initiative to various stakeholders, and tracking the initiative's impact.

To view the City of Nashville's high-impact service plan, visit citiesofservice.org/content/nashville-davidson-county-tn-service-plan.

- *Cities of Service coalition members can access an online community with discussion forums, downloadable templates and resources, best practice sharing, and more.*

- *Cities also receive ongoing support and technical assistance from experienced program staff.*

- *Group brainstorming methods*

- *Sample focus group structure*

- *Initiative plan template*

- *Sample questions for city that has implemented similar initiative*

- *Questions to answer before saying yes to an initiative*

4.

ESTABLISH IMPACT METRICS FOR EACH INITIATIVE

Why Metrics Matter

To ensure that your service initiatives are having a measurable impact on your city, you must develop specific metrics for each one. Measuring impact will allow you to determine whether your efforts are making a real difference on city needs and challenges, giving you the information needed to adjust and adapt your approach effectively.

Metrics also allow you to communicate your results using verifiable facts. Strong metrics with strong results not only show a return on investment for all of those involved, but will encourage partners, funders, citizens, and volunteers to engage with your initiatives in more meaningful and substantial ways going forward.

Be "SMART"

The strongest metrics show what changed as a result of the initiative and should be directly tied to the goals of the initiative. For example, if 100 volunteers each spend two hours a week reading with a third grader who is reading significantly below grade level, the outcome or impact metric should be around the gains each child (and the group of children) makes between the start of the program and the end of the program. **Outcome or impact metrics** often mark an "increase in…" or "decrease in…" or "% change."

Cities should primarily focus on outcome metrics such as these because they show the impact of the work being done.

For this reason, it is critical to conduct pre- and post-assessments for your initiatives. Having SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely) goals will help you determine what needs to be part of the assessments and help you more easily define your metrics. Using your goals and metrics as a guide, determine what the starting point is so you can measure the change. This is applicable for all of your initiatives, regardless of the issue area (i.e. education, sustainability, food access, etc.).

Cities can also track outputs (e.g. number of trees planted, square feet of roof painted) and participation metrics (number of volunteers, number of hours served) because they can support the impact metrics (e.g. "because we painted X square feet of roofs, carbon emissions were reduced by Y%"), show the "cost" of a program, the level of engagement, and the amount of resources needed, but output metrics should not be the primary focus.

CITIES OF SERVICE MEMBER BENEFITS

Developing impact metrics focused on outcomes can be a difficult task. Cities of Service coalition members receive support and guidance from program staff and fellow coalition members in developing strong metrics.

WHO'S COUNTING?

As you develop your metrics – for both service and infrastructural initiatives - it is important to determine who will be responsible for tracking the metrics, how often the metrics will be tracked, and the tools, systems, and processes for collecting the data and communicating progress. Often, cities that receive funding from outside sources will have specific reporting requirements to follow.

% Reduction in the amount of rainwater runoff from specific residential properties

% Decrease in energy consumption measured by average monthly energy wattage used and utility bill cost after upgrades

% Increase in cumulative reading level scores for K-2nd graders in each selected high-need school

% Participants who have had fewer suspensions compared to the previous semester

% Participants who demonstrate increase in knowledge of agricultural terminology and nutrition information

City of Birmingham, AL

Since 2013, the City of Birmingham has experienced great success with its Love Your Block initiative. Supported by city-funded mini-grants and local sponsors, between 2013 and 2014, volunteers removed more than 26,000 square feet of graffiti, disposed of more than 167,000 pounds of trash and debris, planted over 500 trees, and revitalized 117 blocks. The mayor's office tracks these outputs after the completion of each Love Your Block project, with assistance from other city departments. For example, the Department of Public Works directly transports and weighs debris after projects are completed and the Planning and Engineering Department provides input on varying block sizes.

As successful as those statistics are, there are more outcomes that illustrate the value of the initiative. In 16 neighborhoods implementing Love Your Block, overall crime, including violent crime, fell 11% after one year (2013-14). The neighborhoods cumulatively saw a 13% reduction in property theft and a 16% reduction in auto thefts. The Birmingham Police Department's Statistician reviewed crime data in all Love Your Block target neighborhoods at the beginning of the program year and at the conclusion of the program year to calculate the difference. While other factors certainly exist, the reduction of crime and the increase in residents' quality of life is a significant, meaningful outcome of Love Your Block.

5.

FINALIZE AND SHARE THE PLAN

Finalize

Now is the time to ensure all the pieces are in order for the rollout and implementation of your overall service plan and high-impact volunteering initiatives. Identify the owner responsible for each initiative; the team/partners and their roles and responsibilities; goals and metrics; expected start dates; required resources and budgets; and more. The initiative action plan(s) and overall citywide service plan will serve as guiding documents for your efforts and will provide shared language and an ongoing reference for partners, funders, and other stakeholders.

Share

Once you have clearly articulated your plan for implementation and all partners are on-board and ready to get to work, share your plan with a larger audience across the city – including members of the communities you plan to serve. It is important to share the plan publicly for several reasons, including:

- **Transparency:** Public offices should be transparent in the work being done to serve their city. Transparency can also help attract volunteers, enhance recruitment and enable the city to engage more partners as the programs grow. Herald the vision and milestones so constituents know what City Hall is doing to help solve the city's most pressing challenges.

- **Accountability:** Sharing the plan publicly allows the public to hold the city and its partners accountable for the work and the changes the city is trying to bring to the community.

- **Innovation:** At its core, the Cities of Service model encourages innovating ways to engage community and to try new and different approaches to solving problems. Sharing the plan showcases intentional innovation and invests residents and others in looking at city challenges from new angles, as well as encourages citizens to help make a difference in their own communities. Additionally, as innovation involves moderate uncertainty or risk, programs may be introduced as "pilots" to be scaled only if/when certain benchmarks of success are met.

- **Progress:** Sharing the plan before it commences allows the city to clearly articulate specific challenges and to explain how it will try to move the needle on those issues. As the city begins the work and makes progress, it can celebrate "wins" and milestones with the residents, and increase engagement over time.

Cities can share their completed service plans with the public through multiple vehicles. Coordination with the mayor's or city's communications/public information office is critical to helping elevate the service plan across agencies and audiences, in addition to reaching media. Tactics for debuting initiatives traditionally include:

- **Press releases** from the mayor's office and appropriate agencies

- **Email blasts** to key organizations and constituents subscribed to agency newsletters

- **Public launch events** serve as opportunities to introduce and engage partners and residents, indoctrinate local media on city needs, highlight partnering organizations and agencies, and energize new and existing volunteers.

⦿ **CITIES OF SERVICE MEMBER BENEFITS**

Cities of Service coalition members can receive support and input on their citywide service plans from staff and city counterparts.

⦿ **RELATED RESOURCES (IN APPENDIX)**

• *Sample Service Plan Outline*

CONCLUSION:

IMPLEMENTATION AND BEYOND

Congratulations! Now, it's time to implement.

A lot of hard work has gone into the creation of your service plan and the details of your initiatives. It is important to treat plans as living documents to be monitored and modified through the duration of your initiatives – innovative, new projects and changes to an existing initiative may require tweaks as parts of the plan and your impact volunteering movement mature. Monitor associated programs, outputs, and outcomes at regular intervals to measure progress toward your goals and make adjustments as needed. Note and share lessons learned with stakeholders, to improve future iterations of implementation.

Throughout the implementation process, meet and communicate regularly with partners to understand successes, challenges, and to tackle any unforeseen roadblocks together.

CITIES OF SERVICE MEMBER BENEFITS

Cities of Service coalition members have access to a network of small to large cities whose leadership has experienced comparable local challenges, as well as Cities of Service staff who can help them make modifications to plans, tweak metrics, and more to help them be successful.

A group of Love Your Block volunteers gather to update an urban garden in East Liberty.

PITTSBURGH

PHOENIX

Utica, NY - *Leadership Leads to Results and Lasting Impact*

Smaller cities can still make a large impact with one initiative. In Utica, NY, graffiti was a vexing problem. Working closely with the mayor, the Chief Service Officer engaged hundreds of citizen volunteers of all ages in program design and implementation for the city's Graffiti Busters initiative. To date, volunteers in Utica have improved more than 100 graffiti-vandalized sites; painted over 20,000 square feet, including three murals; and provided anti-graffiti education to teens in after-school workshops. Ninety-nine percent of the painted sites have remained graffiti-free since being cleaned in 2014. In addition, volunteers have painted more than 500 fire hydrants, lampposts, and sign poles in the city, and cleaned up trash and litter at all sites.

A high level of community engagement led to the success and expansion of the program. City residents who participated shared their positive experiences with others, and other community members and local business consistently inquire about future projects with which they might be involved.

Utica community members have formed informal watch groups to monitor the painted sites and contact city personnel if they notice any damage. As a result of these efforts, legislation is being drafted that will enable the city to coordinate additional graffiti abatement on private property throughout the city.

Phoenix, AZ - *Mayoral Investment in Multiple Initiatives*

Since joining the Cities of Service coalition in February 2012, Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton has championed impact volunteering initiatives to improve community health and local environmental sustainability. Through its Let's Grow Phoenix Gardens initiative, the city has provided hundreds of residents and families in at least three public-housing complexes with direct access to thousands of pounds of fresh, healthy food.

In 2013, Phoenix launched Cool Roofs to enlist city residents in energy conservation efforts. More than 200 volunteers coated over 50,000 square feet of city-owned rooftops with reflective paint, reducing over 20 metric tons of carbon emissions in the city.

Phoenix's partnership with Cities of Service continues in 2015 with neighborhood revitalization programs in low-income communities. Using the Cities of Service Love Your Block blueprint, the city will engage and support residents and local organizations in building local community capacity with which to cultivate healthier and safer neighborhoods.

Pittsburgh, PA - *Sustaining Success*

The City of Pittsburgh launched their Love Your Block initiative in 2011. Leveraging significant funding, grants and in-kind donations from corporations and private sector partners, the city provides community groups with mini-grants to fulfill revitalization projects including improving blighted and vacant lots. Since the inception of Love Your Block, the City of Pittsburgh has received nearly $500,000 in cash and grants and more than $85,000 in in-kind donations. In 2014, enterprising community groups who were awarded Love Your Block mini-grants raised nearly $350,000 in additional funds and donations.

1. Build capacity (including, but not limited to) via national service resources

2. Engage other city agencies and departments as full partners

3. Establish and sustain partnerships with community organizations

4. Convene partners and finalize details early

5. Specify opportunities for and seek early wins, but pace yourself and the program to achieve goals

6. Figure out the right communications plan

7. Foster support through an advisory council or similar body

8. Expect fundraising to be ongoing

9. Leverage Cities of Service colleagues – put these peers on speed dial

10. Rigorously track metrics and set clear expectations for project leads, including procedures for data collection

11. Seek and share stories of impact

12. Keep the mayor informed and involved in the work

13. Consistently promote and champion impact volunteering and service as a strategy for helping to solve problems

14. Be fearless

15. Expect that the citywide service plan and programs will evolve, and adapt/adopt accordingly

APPENDIX

APPENDIX CONTENTS

Making the Case for Citizen Service as a Serious Municipal Strategy

While engaging citizens in volunteer service to make a real impact in their cities is a strong and growing trend, the Cities of Service model is still new for many cities. Following are some talking points to use with a variety of stakeholders, including the mayor, as needed in your efforts to make citizen service a reality in your city.

- The leadership and hard work of mayors, their chief service officers, and other support staff are the key drivers of success for citizen service initiatives. By capitalizing on the resources, convening power, and bully pulpit of local elected officials, cities are able to more effectively develop and implement citywide service plans.

- Mayors are immersed in local problems and service delivery every day. One of the first steps in developing a citywide service plan is to identify priority areas of need and specific challenges that face the city that may be addressed, in part, by citizen service. This deliberate focus allows mayors and city leaders to target the most pressing needs to make real and meaningful change for their communities.

- Once a mayor identifies and prioritizes the city's most pressing needs, s/he works with staff to create a plan to address those needs. Partnering with established community organizations, cities either work to expand and improve upon existing programs or implement new service initiatives. These partnerships help city agencies, nonprofits, and others accomplish their goals by expanding the role of volunteers in their work.

- As a representative of the mayor and vested with the ability to coordinate efforts across sectors, a city's chief service officer or city lead can be an invaluable resource to city agencies and nonprofits.

- A key part of the Cities of Service model is that cities must determine how they will measure impact through the development of specific metrics for each service initiative (e.g. increase in reading scores for third graders who have the benefit of volunteer tutors; decrease in a city's carbon footprint thanks to a volunteer recycling program). Measuring outcomes allows individual cities and the Cities of Service coalition to learn where successes and challenges exist, and to improve initiatives for future implementation.

- The Cities of Service model is attractive to funders and partners that are interested in solving a specific problem in the city (e.g. improving education outcomes, reducing homelessness). These stakeholders are increasingly interested in outcome measures and collective impact models.

- Participating Cities of Service coalition members prove every day that service can be a serious strategy employed by municipalities to achieve measurable impact in existing and emerging priority areas. Examples include:

  - Flint, Michigan: Volunteers removed more than 3.9 million pounds of trash, brush, and yard waste from city streets and blighted properties.

  - Phoenix, Arizona: 205 volunteers painted 52,000 square feet of city-owned rooftops with reflective white coating, resulting in an annual CO_2 emissions reduction of 20.34 tons.

  - Utica, New York: Volunteers have removed 19,500 square feet of graffiti from 104 locations throughout the city.

  - Many more examples are available at citiesofservice.org.

Ready to recruit your mayor? Check out our *Recruit Your Mayor* blueprint at http://citiesofservice.org/content/recruit-your-mayor.

THE CITIES OF SERVICE
DECLARATION OF SERVICE

WHEREAS America has a proud tradition of service and volunteerism that dates back to the colonial era and today can be found in communities across the fifty states;

WHEREAS the bipartisan Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, signed into law by President Barack Obama on April 21, 2009 builds on this tradition, encouraging all Americans to serve their communities in new ways;

WHEREAS cities, home to many of the nation's most persistent challenges, are positioned to bring new leadership, facilitation, and innovation to the service movement;

WHEREAS the current need for public-spirited residents to help address increased hardship resulting from the global financial and housing crises is clear;

WHEREAS service enriches the lives of Americans of all ages, and each new generation of young Americans must be engaged to tackle emerging challenges;

NOW, THEREFORE, we resolve to develop a coalition of mayors from cities large and small to work together to harness and focus the energies of our citizens. Cities of Service coalition members will support efforts to increase service opportunities in our cities by:

Developing a comprehensive service plan and a coordinated strategy focused on matching volunteers and established community partners to the areas of greatest local need;

Working with other mayors and elected officials to advance strategies and best practices that accelerate the service movement and produce measurable results;

Encouraging other mayors to join this national effort to engage our citizens; and

Ensuring that the voice of cities is heard in federal legislative, policy, and program discussions related to service, which will help the country achieve the ambitious goals of the Serve America Act.

MAYOR'S SIGNATURE   MAYOR'S NAME – PLEASE PRINT   TODAY'S DATE

MAYOR'S OFFICE ADDRESS   CITY, STATE, ZIP

MAYOR'S EMAIL ADDRESS   MAYOR'S TELEPHONE

STAFF CONTACT NAME   STAFF CONTACT TITLE

STAFF CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESS   STAFF CONTACT TELEPHONE

TO JOIN CITIES OF SERVICE:

Please read and sign the Declaration of Service. Return the completed form to Cities of Service by email or fax: **info@citiesofservice.org** / **(888) 335–3886**

If you have any questions, please call: **(646) 324–8403**

CITIES OF SERVICE.ORG

Chief Service Officer Job Description

About Cities of Service

Cities of Service supports mayors and city chief executives to activate impact volunteering initiatives – city-led, citizen-powered programs that target specific needs and seek measurable outcomes. Cities use proven tools and methods to engage community members in addressing needs like revitalizing neighborhoods and supporting youth and education. Residents are recast as co-producers of solutions and work side by side with municipal government to create real and lasting change.

With comprehensive strategic planning, meaningful partnerships, cross-sector collaboration, and best practices, municipal government leaders in the Cities of Service coalition design and implement service strategies to address myriad local challenges and engage city residents who want to volunteer and improve their communities.

Founded in 2009 by New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, the Cities of Service coalition is comprised of more than 200 cities in the United States and United Kingdom, representing more than 50 million people in 43 states, and more than 10 million in the UK.

Job Description

The Chief Service Officer (CSO) is a cabinet-level (or otherwise senior-level) staff member who reports to the Mayor and/or has direct access to the Mayor. The CSO plans, directs, coordinates, and evaluates the implementation of a comprehensive citywide service plan. The CSO works with local partners including nonprofits, community-based organizations, colleges and universities, the private sector, and government agencies to achieve the Mayor's strategic agenda through service and impact volunteering.

Responsibilities include:
- Serve as the liaison between community partners and the city in achieving the goals of the citywide service plan.
- Assess the local service landscape by convening city government experts, nonprofit organizations, community groups, colleges and universities, funders, and other key stakeholders to evaluate existing service levels and participants.
- Produce and routinely update a coordinated citywide impact volunteering service plan with detailed and specific initiatives and goals that address the city's most pressing challenges through service.
- Track and regularly report on outcomes and impact metrics to the mayor, Cities of Service, and relevant funders and stakeholders.
- Identify and develop collaborative working relationships across city agencies and with local and state service partners, community-based organizations, colleges and universities, and nonprofits that drive support toward the service plan's goals.
- Secure funding from federal and state programs, corporate partners, and philanthropic sources to support the service plan's initiatives and ensure sustainability and growth.
- Coordinate and maintain an online resource that allows local citizens to easily connect to high-impact service opportunities.

✉ info@citiesofservice.org   🐦 @citiesofservice

![CITIES OF SERVICE .ORG]

- Participate in a community of practice with other chief service officers and city leads, including attending in-person, online, and telephone meetings.

Qualifications:
- A minimum of **five years of work experience** is preferred.
- Significant understanding of city government, nonprofit organizations, and volunteer coordination.
- Knowledge of the local political, philanthropic, and nonprofit environment.
- Ability to form strong relationships with internal and external parties.
- Outgoing, cooperative, and collaborative.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Skilled and confident public speaker.
- Experience managing a team.
- Confidence in delegating tasks — to colleagues and partnering organizations.
- Willing to actively participate to get things done.
- Ability to lead and influence city policies and confidence in partnership development and collaboration.
- Bachelor's degree or combination of college-level education plus relevant experience.
- Ability to think about the big picture while paying great attention to detail.
- Experience working in city or other government entity preferred.

info@citiesofservice.org   @citiesofservice

Sample Questions for Focus Groups, Roundtables, Interviews, and Surveys
Cities can use a variety of methods to better understand a city's existing assets, build support for the overall plan and process, identify specific challenges within priority need areas, define and prioritize infrastructural challenges, discover existing work that might be elevated through implementing the Cities of Service model, and generate new ideas for service initiatives.

Many cities conduct one-on-one interviews, focus groups, roundtable discussions, and/or surveys to gather information from organizations and individuals like those listed as **Stakeholders/Experts/ Potential Partners** in the chart in Step 2 of the Cities of Service Playbook.

If you do not have experience conducting focus groups or roundtables, we highly recommend engaging professionals or those with experience using those formats, and researching the best way to facilitate in order to achieve your goals. If you plan to send surveys to large numbers of stakeholders, we recommend creating a mix of open-ended and multiple choice/checkbox questions to help you analyze the data to note trends wherever possible.

Sample Questions
The following are sample questions to ask various stakeholders. They represent only a portion of the possible questions you might ask. Please customize as you see fit.

> **General**
> • Which organizations, initiatives, or events do you believe most successfully engage citizens in service in our city?
>
> • What characteristics of those organizations, initiatives, or events contribute to their success?
>
> • What challenges do volunteer-engaging organizations and city agencies face when trying to offer service opportunities to more people?
>> - What challenges do volunteer-engaging organizations and city agencies face when trying to offer service opportunities to more people?
>
> • What challenges do citizens face when trying to find and participate in service opportunities?
>> - What existing systems help make these connections?
>
> • What challenges do organizations that are key sources of volunteers (e.g. colleges, universities, local companies) face when trying to connect their students or employees to service opportunities?
>> - What do they do to overcome these challenges?
>
> • Who are the critical partners to consult with in order to address these infrastructural challenges?

Priority Areas of Need (for agencies/organizations working on specific priority area(s))
• What is your vision of success in this priority need area?

• What is preventing you from achieving this vision of success?

• What work is already underway to address this priority? How might we use service to expand or accelerate these efforts?

• Who are the stakeholders that we need to consult to shape and refine our vision of success, clarify specific challenges, and assist in the development and implementation of our service plan?

• What new citizen service efforts could be implemented to address these challenges?

Volunteer Engaging Organizations/Agencies
• Do you currently focus any of your volunteer efforts on addressing [insert priority area of need]?

• What specific challenges do you focus on within each priority need area?

• What existing service efforts are in place to address these issues?

• What barriers do you face in engaging more individuals in your service efforts? Potential survey checkbox answers:
  - Lack of time/money/staff required to create new volunteer opportunities
  - Lack of time/money/staff required to manage existing volunteer opportunities
  - Difficulty attracting sufficient numbers of volunteers
  - Difficulty retaining committed/repeat volunteers
  - Difficulty measuring the impact of our volunteers
  - Other (Please describe)

• What other service efforts do you know of that successfully address these issues? Who is leading those efforts?

• Generally, what do you believe are the characteristics of the most successful volunteer programs?

• Do you have a staff person dedicated to volunteer management?

• Approximately how many unique volunteers does your organization engage each year?

• Do you measure the impact of these volunteer activities? If so, what are the typical metrics that you use?

• Do you currently collect any information on volunteering in your city beyond what is directly relevant to your own organization (e.g. studies of volunteerism)?

• Describe how you engage volunteers along with information on how volunteers are utilized (on a one-time basis, regular commitment, etc.) and what functions they perform.

• Which of your volunteer programs (if you have more than one) do you think are the most successful and why?

Organizations/Agencies That Do Not Currently Engage Volunteers
• Why have you not engaged volunteers to date?

• Could volunteers be helpful to your agency? How?

• Do potential volunteers ask to get involved with your agency? Where do you refer them?

• What has been your biggest challenge in recruiting and engaging volunteers? (Potential survey checkbox answers:
        - Lack of time/money/staff required to create new volunteer opportunities
        - Lack of time/money/staff required to manage existing volunteer opportunities
        - Difficulty attracting sufficient numbers of volunteers
        - Difficulty retaining committed/repeat volunteers
        - Difficulty measuring the impact of our volunteers
        - Not a good fit with the type of work we do
        - Other (Please describe)

• Does your agency operate other service programs? For example, projects where youth or other populations are engaged in service projects and receive a stipend? (Please do not include academic fellows or summer interns when answering these questions.)

Schools with Potential Student Volunteers
• How many students are enrolled in your school?

• Does your school require students to perform community service?

• If service is not a requirement for all students, how many students participate in service through school-led opportunities (e.g. service clubs, service-learning classes)?

• What are the barriers or challenges you face in offering service opportunities to more students? Potential survey checkbox answers:
        - School leaders and teachers do not think such efforts are valuable
        - Lack of staff/money/time to create opportunities
        - Lack of staff/money/time to supervise activities
        - Lack of appropriate/attractive opportunities
        - Transportation costs
        - Other (Please describe)

• Do you have a staff person dedicated to student service?

• How do you identify service opportunities?

Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)
CNCS is a federal agency that engages more than five million Americans in service each year through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Social Innovation Fund programs. AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) support a variety of programs around the country by engaging citizens in individual and team-based volunteer programs respectively. Several Cities of Service coalition cities utilize AmeriCorps VISTA members to support their work and build capacity. For more information, visit nationalservice.gov.

CNCS supports collaboration among national, state, and local entities through its State Offices and in partnership with State Service Commissions. CNCS State Offices can provide technical assistance as well as help you access national service funding. Cities of Service coalition cities like Orlando, Philadelphia, and Dallas have acquired AmeriCorps VISTA members from their respective CNCS State Offices. For a complete listing of CNCS State Offices, visit nationalservice.gov/stateoffices.

State Service Commissions
State Service Commissions are located in every state and the District of Columbia. They are charged with promoting service and volunteering in their states. Furthermore, they provide AmeriCorps State grants to nonprofit and government entities and offer training and technical assistance to build the capacity of the volunteer sector. For a complete listing of State Service Commissions, visit nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions.

There is a vast array of potential approaches to group brainstorming. Based on the experience of practitioners, there are six core elements that successful group brainstorming sessions often share:

1. Clarity at the outset about objectives and ground rules. Participants should be clear on why they are there, and what they are being asked to do. Ground rules should be established, including a philosophy of "no constraints" on potential ideas (for instance, "that would never work because it is too expensive").

2. Warm-ups or "thinking differently" exercises. The first exercises of the sessions are not designed to generate real ideas, but simply to "get the creative juices flowing." A typical example is asking the group for ideas about how to make the problem worse rather than better.

3. Well-structured group work with good prompts. Ideas are often generated most effectively in small groups, in a series of exercises. There are many ways to encourage participation, often involving common objects such as whiteboards, easels, and sticky notes. As a rule, effective group exercises are thoughtfully framed by a facilitator, time-limited, and involve every group member. Some cities have found it helpful to organize idea-generating exercises around the contributing issues that have been identified, such as by repeating the same exercise for each major contributing issue.

4. A collaborative winnowing down of ideas. Starting in small groups and progressing to the larger group, selection of a short list of the most promising ideas should proceed collaboratively. There are several creative and fun ways to set up a selection-by-collective-voting process, including allowing each person to "star" his or her favorite ideas or deposit a token in a "piggy bank" for each idea; having each group rate a different group's ideas; and setting up physical stations for ideas and allowing participants to vote by movement.

5. Group development of the short-listed ideas. The short-listed ideas are then discussed, critiqued, altered, torn down, and built back up by group discussion.

6. Ending with next steps defined. The purpose of a group idea generation session is to expand the pool of ideas and draw partners into the process, and it is possible that none of the ideas generated during a given session will ultimately lead to initiatives. But, participants should always leave the session with a clear idea of what will happen next in the larger process.

- Focus group 1: Volunteer-connecting organizations (e.g. HandsOn)

- Focus group 2: Volunteer-engaging organizations focused on priority need area 1 (e.g. nonprofits)

- Focus group 3: Volunteer-engaging organizations focused on priority need area 2

- Focus group 4: Government agencies

- Focus group 5: Colleges and universities

- Focus group 6: Local business representatives

In addition to a facilitator, each focus group should have a note-taker to record the discussion. The note-taker should also record contact information, including title/position for each participant.

At the end of the focus group session, the facilitator should outline next steps and the note-taker should summarize the discussion and takeaways for the key questions.

STEP 3
Initiative Plan Template

Prior to committing to implementing an initiative, ensure that it has been properly vetted for feasibility; below are some questions to help you think this through.

You can also include these questions as part of a request for proposals to gather and evaluate new ideas. Be sure to include contact information (yours and that of the person submitting) if you distribute to others to fill out.

- Is this a new idea or does it build on an existing program or effort?
    - If it builds on an existing program or effort, please provide the name of the current initiative if different from above.

- What challenge does the proposed initiative aim to address (specific challenge within priority need area, infrastructural challenge)?

- Please provide a detailed description of the initiative, including an overview of:
    - how it will work,
    - how the chosen initiative(s) will impact the specific challenge(s),
    - expected outcomes, and
    - role and frequency (one time vs. ongoing) of volunteers.

- What types of volunteers will be involved? (Please provide detail on qualifications needed by volunteers such as an age range, professional qualification, prior work experience, health/ fitness requirements, background check requirements, etc.)

- Which group(s)/individuals will recruit, train (as necessary) and manage the volunteers?

- What impact metrics will be used to evaluate the initiative?

- What resources will this initiative require (e.g. financial, human, equipment, infrastructure, other)? How will these resources be secured? Provide specifics on the resources, plans to secure them, and dollar value where applicable.

- Provide a detailed timeline for the initiative, including start dates, end dates, and key milestones.

- Who is responsible for overall execution of this initiative (the initiative lead)?

- List the people/teams (including their names and backgrounds/qualifications) that will:
    - design the initiative,
    - implement the initiative,
    - recruit, train, and/or manage the volunteers, and
    - design and/or track the impact metrics.

- Who are the potential partners for this initiative? Please list organizations, their role, and plans to solicit their help.

- What risks (e.g. legal, execution) do you foresee in launching this initiative? What contingency plans/courses of action do you have to address the risks that you have identified?

- What questions do you still have regarding this initiative? What is your plan to address these?

Initiative Plan Summary
It is helpful to create a summary of the initiative(s) to share with stakeholders and partners. An example of what a summary might look like is as follows:

<u>High-Impact Service Initiative</u>
Priority Need Area: Education
Specific Challenge: 45% of third graders in neighborhood XYZ are reading below grade level.
High-Impact Service Initiative: Third Grade Reads
Impact Metrics:
- Pre-and post-reading scores of tutored students and their reading grade level

- Teacher feedback on student engagement and skills to capture incremental progress achieved between the pre- and post-reading score assessments (e.g., collected using a brief survey)

- Number of students tutored throughout the school year

Initiative Lead: Chief Service Officer
Initiative Team/Partners: Book Buddies
Description of Volunteer(s):
- literate in English,

- able to follow a regular schedule that enables them to spend at least two hours a week across multiple sessions with students during program hours, and

- comfortable working with children.

Required Resources: Curriculum for tutoring children and training the mentors, space to hold tutoring sessions, materials and supplies
Expected Start Date: September 1st
Expected End Date: May 15th

<u>Infrastructural Initiative</u>
Infrastructural Challenge: With no volunteer opportunity database in the city, volunteers have a hard time identifying opportunities to serve and organizations have a difficult time recruiting volunteers to meet their needs.
Infrastructural Initiative: ServeCity will be a state-of-the-art, city-run website enabling volunteers to self-select service opportunities that match their interests, skillsets, and availability.
Impact Metrics:
- # of volunteers using the website to find service opportunities
- # of organizations recruiting volunteers from the website
  - increase in number of volunteers engaged as a result of recruitment via website

Initiative Lead: Chief Service Officer
Initiative Team/Partners: Local website developer to support the city's IT department
Description of Volunteer(s): Technology partner who is willing to work with the city's IT department for free or at low-cost
Required Resources: City's IT department must be able to host the website.
Expected Start Date: ASAP
Expected End Date: six months from the start

Planning the Initiative
• Did you go through a planning process for your initiative?
- If so, what were some challenges or best practices you encountered?

• How does the impact volunteering initiative relate to the priority areas of need outlined in your city's service plan?

• How is your mayor involved in the initiative?
- Do you see any other potential ways your mayor could be engaged in this initiative?

• What marketing or communications materials do you use for this initiative?

Measuring Impact
• What are the specific metrics you're tracking?
- How are those impact metrics being measured?
- How did you decide on which impact metrics to use?

• Did you use publicly available or primary data to measure outcomes?

• How much time elapsed between initial launch and measurable impact?

• How do you define success and when do (or did) you know you had achieved it?

Convening Partners
• Which partners did you convene for this initiative?
- What made you bring these specific partners to the table?
- How did you decide on which impact metrics to use?
- What was each of those partners' roles?
- Did you partner with any higher education institutions for this initiative? Why or why not?
- How did you engage other city agencies or departments in the initiative?
- Did you bring partners together periodically?

• How were volunteers involved in the initiative?
- How were they recruited?
- Who was responsible for on-site training and management of the volunteers?
- What was each of those partners' roles?
- Any suggestions for things I should consider when engaging volunteers?
- How do you recognize or thank volunteers?

• Did you utilize national service members to support the planning and implementation at all?

Implementing the Initiative

• What are the elements of a "minimum viable product" for your city's initiative - the most bare-bones implementation that would still have a real impact?

• What are the essential differences between your program and Program X (i.e. a competing approach)?

• Who is responsible for the day-to-day oversight of the initiative?

• How much did the program cost? Over what timeframe?
     - What funding or in-kind resources were leveraged for the initiative?

• How will your initiative be sustained moving forward?

• What were your biggest obstacles to success and how did you overcome them?

• Looking back, are there any pieces that you would change about your project?

Questions to Answer before Saying Yes to an Initiative

It is likely that in the process of having conversations with stakeholders and gathering information to identify priority areas of need and specific challenges, many ideas for initiatives will also naturally arise. Not all initiatives are created equal – and not all should be implemented. The following is a list of starter questions to ask before deciding to further expand upon plans to implement an initiative.

Feasability
• Do we have or can we reasonably access the financial, human (including volunteers), and political capital required to accomplish the goals of the initiative?

• Once we secure all of the required resources, will we be able to execute the initiative with relative ease?

• How long will it take to achieve the desired impact? Is this a reasonable amount of time?

• Is there an existing initiative that has been successful and is similar enough to provide "proof of concept" for this initiative?

• Does the initiative have a committed owner, team, and partners?

Impact & Innovation
• Does the initiative provide a demonstrable impact on priority need areas, helping the mayor or chief executive make progress against existing or emerging priorities and challenges?

• Does the initiative have potential to reach significant scale if this "pilot" initiative proves successful?

• Is the initiative innovative in the way it engages volunteers, solves problems, eliminates barriers, or enables collaboration between partners?

Risk
• What are the potential risks associated with implementing this initiative?

• Are there any potential legal risks connected with the initiative? (We highly recommend you engage legal experts to help answer this question.)

Balance of Initiatives (if plan to do multiple initiatives)
• Does the portfolio of planned initiatives have an appropriate balance from each of the city's priority need areas?

Sample Service Plan Outline

- Message from the Mayor (and Message from the City Manager or other chief city executive as appropriate)

- Executive Summary

- Introduction: About Cities of Service

- Service in our City: Landscape Analysis
  - How we define service
  - Our city's tradition of service
  - Using service to respond to city challenges
    - Priority areas of need (impact areas)
    - Specific challenges
    - Infrastructural challenges

- Methodology

- Initiatives
  - High-impact service initiatives
  - Metrics designed to track progress of initiatives

- Acknowledgements

- Endnotes/References

- Appendix
  - Initiative summary/action plan

Include quotes, photos with captions, and other images to enhance the document and make it attractive for readers.

1. **Build capacity (including, but not limited to) via national service resources**
    You can't do it alone. Grow your team through partnerships with colleagues and other departments, interns, volunteers, and national service resources. AmeriCorps VISTA members can be a tremendous resource for developing, implementing, scaling, and evaluating high-impact programs. Get to know the staff at your CNCS State Office and State Service Commission. Engage them early and often, especially given the lead time that accessing their resources typically requires, which could be six months or more.

2. **Engage other city agencies and departments as full partners**
    Consider the volunteer needs of other city departments, and be sensitive to any budgetary or capacity constraints that they may be facing. Position your work as a value-add to help them meet their goals and objectives. Remember that in many cases, the initiatives that you are working to get off the ground will eventually transition to these same departments for sustainability, and so you want to align yourself as a full partner.

3. **Establish and sustain partnerships with community organizations**
    To help support, grow, and sustain your initiatives, it is vital that you build strong partnerships with organizations in the community. For impact initiatives that have a narrow focus, work with nonprofits whose work aligns with your initiatives. For impact initiatives that are broader and cross-cut numerous sectors, partner with your local Chamber of Commerce, umbrella volunteer organizations, and nonprofit management agencies. For fundraising, establish rapport with local businesses and corporations. If possible, bring these partners on-board with you before or when you launch the service plan so they are committed partners throughout the implementation process.

4. **Convene partners and finalize details early**
    Invest the time and energy up-front to ensure that once your citywide service plan is public, all partners included in the plan feel a sense of ownership in its success.

5. **Go for early wins, but pace yourself**
    At the beginning, it's important to see some early success. If you are working towards launching a number of new initiatives, you don't need to necessarily start with the heaviest lift. See where you can show impact immediately to continue to build energy, momentum, and excitement for the effort. However, it is important to pace yourself and the program to achieve goals. Don't feel pressured to tackle everything all at once. It's okay to put initiatives in your citywide service plan that you may not launch immediately upon launch of the plan.

6. **Figure out the right communications plan**
    With so many stakeholders engaged, it's important to communicate up, down, and sideways. You may want to consider an internal communications plan to keep your mayor in the loop, as well as an external communications plan to ensure that the work stays in the public eye. This not only elevates the work and is often a positive source of press for your mayor, but it also ensures that your initiatives can get into the hands of everyday citizens who want to make a difference. Leave no opportunity on the table – consider social media, video, a well-placed op-ed or letter to editor from a volunteer, and more.

7. **Foster support through an advisory council or similar body**
    You may have developed an advisory council as you were developing your city's service plan. Don't let it dissolve now! An advisory council can help keep the work on-track, serve as thought leaders and advocates, and develop meaningful partnerships and introductions. In some cities, the advisory council was critical to positioning the work for sustainability during a change in mayoral administration. Invite new members, or cycle off members who are no longer a good fit, to keep the council fresh and most able to provide expertise for your major impact areas.

8. **Expect fundraising to be ongoing**
   Funders can be tremendous partners, providing everything from needed resources (cash and in-kind), employee volunteers, technical assistance, introductions, and more. Carve out the time that you need to make fundraising an ongoing part of the job. Foster funding relationships by sharing stories and providing invitations for visibility and site visits. Approach nontraditional and national funders to encourage new investments in your community. One cautionary note here – be careful about approaching the same funders as your major partners without prior discussion. Competition for resources can be fierce, and you want to be mindful of any repercussions in this sphere.

9. **Leverage Cities of Service colleagues – put these peers on speed dial**
   The learning network that Cities of Service offers is nothing short of incredible. Learn from other communities, develop relationships with your counterparts in other cities, and stay in touch. Take advantage of the opportunities for learning and sharing that Cities of Service offers – both virtually and in-person. The National Conference on Volunteering and Service is a great place to make connections, but don't let it end there. In many cases, the cross-city learning network that occurs through the coalition becomes an incubator for best practices and emerging models for impact.

10. **Rigorously track metrics**
    This is where your work can really shine. Utilize the extensive guidance provided by Cities of Service to be intentional about how you can track impact, and make it central to the building out of your service initiatives. Metrics are infinitely valuable in approaching funders, communicating with your mayor, and making a business case for the work.

11. **Seek and share stories of impact**
    Even when it feels like you're a broken record, continue to tell a story of impact. It is so easy to slip into counting volunteers and volunteer hours, especially when you will inevitably get questions about both. Stay on message: speak to the impact that the initiatives are making and go beyond the metrics. Tell stories – about why your mayor believes in citizen service or an extraordinary result achieved by a volunteer – that are both personal and universal.

12. **Keep the mayor informed and involved in the work**
    Find ways to showcase the positive results of your work to your mayor, and don't underestimate the value that they may see in being a member of Cities of Service on the national level. In many cases, mayors were drawn to office by a commitment to public service, and so this work can really resonate. Oftentimes, they'll have stories about their own volunteering experiences, and perhaps they're interested in serving through the initiatives that you develop. Follow your mayor's preferred style, but whether it's regular briefings, press opportunities, coordinated thank yous from community members, or otherwise, make sure that they stay energized and engaged. As their priorities evolve, so must yours.

13. **Champion impact volunteering and service**
    As the lead for developing the city's service plan, you are the champion and cheerleader for service in your city. Embrace this role and share the enthusiasm with your mayor, your partners, and your community.

14. **Be fearless**
    Chief Service Officers are government innovators. Do not be afraid to innovate. And, if you are, hide it!

15. **Your service plan will continue to evolve**
    As you test and learn, be prepared to make any needed course corrections. Don't be afraid to sunset programs that aren't working. Conversely, keep your finger on the pulse of trends in your community, so that you can respond accordingly. Grow what is successful, and continue to innovate around your city's most pressing needs.

Cities of Service supports mayors and city chief executives to activate impact volunteering initiatives —city-led, citizen-powered programs that target specific needs and achieve measurable outcomes. Our coalition is comprised of more than 200 cities in the US and UK, representing more than 50 million people in 43 states, and more than 10 million in the UK. By prioritizing impact, creating capacity, and instilling a model that can be replicated, our approach works across multiple issues. Cities use proven tools and methods to engage community members in addressing multiple issues, from revitalizing neighborhoods to supporting youth and education. Residents are recast as co-producers of solutions and work side by side with municipal government to create real and lasting change.

Join us at **citiesofservice.org**
or on Twitter **@citiesofservice**