



FOUNDATION BEYOND BELIEF

humanism at work

Beyond Belief Network Guides: Starting Service Activities

Starting a team allows individuals to tackle larger projects, forge lasting partnerships, and create a positive community presence. The thought can be daunting, but it's a simple process if you tackle it step by step!

Tips to Get Started

1. **Find like-minded people.** A volunteer team can start out with just you and a handful of friends, or even just your family. As you grow and find your feet, more people will join the organization. So find a couple of like-minded people, and hold your first meeting.
2. **Brainstorm.** To discuss volunteer ideas, hold a brainstorming meeting. Hosting the meeting at a restaurant or with food can make it a fun, casual event. Take a look at [our other guides for inspiration for events](#), and remember that you can start small: a [blood donation drive](#) or [park clean-up](#) doesn't need crowds of people to be successful, and still does a lot of good. You might also want to decide on a name for your team at this meeting.
3. **Decide on your first event and set a date.** If you're working with another organization, like a food bank, remember to contact them first to find out when they most need volunteers. Agree when and where the members of your team should meet.
4. **Make it fun!** Who says service events have to be boring? There are a number of ways to make volunteering a lively opportunity. In general, combining a service activity with a meal or social activity makes it more fun. For example, host a [Bleed-n-Feed](#). This is where a group of eligible blood donors donates blood and afterwards goes out to eat.

5. **Don't go overboard.** The kinds of projects your team does will depend on the size of your team, the resources you have available, and your team members' competing commitments. Try to plan events on a regular schedule, like one every month or second month, so that members are able to plan around your volunteering well in advance. If your group wants to start on a smaller scale, combine a service activity with an existing event. For example, collect canned goods at a social meeting.

6. **Advertise! And don't forget social media.** [Meetup.com](#) is a very popular way to connect to likeminded people within a region, and also has event planning facilities. [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) are also great ways to keep in touch with your members and inform them of what's going on with your team. Other options include small adverts in local newspapers, or newsletters or fliers on community notice boards.

Things to Remember

1. **Don't sweat the small stuff.** While you're forming your volunteer team, decide what your main goals are, and focus on those. Your goals could be finding service events that you think are particularly meaningful, making humanist service visible in your community hosting more events, raising funds for charities, or growing your membership. Deciding on your goals and sticking to them is the best way to see if you're making progress, and avoid getting distracted or discouraged.

2. **Get organized.** While input can come from all team members, it's important to decide who will be in charge of certain tasks. For instance, you may want to allocate one person to managing the email account and social media, another to managing the budget, and another to contacting the organizations where you'll be volunteering. Work out the best ways for your team to communicate and allocate tasks, and tweak what isn't working as you go along.

3. **Keep it real.** If 5 to 10 people show up for an event, that's a decent turnout. Any event where there are 20+ participants is an amazing turnout.

Building Community and Maintaining Support

Once your team has been formed and events planned, don't forget to **offer encouragement to your members**. Take time to celebrate your achievements and get to know one another by mixing social opportunities in with your volunteering events.

You could host a potluck dinner at the end of the year, offer "Volunteer of the Month" recognition to hard-working individuals, or add social time to your regular meetings. Don't forget that [BBN awards](#) provide great motivation for team members.

Growing Your Team

Once your team has held a few service activities, you might want to devote some time to thinking about your team's mission, identity and goals. In particular, you might want to give some extra thought to considering **what kinds of causes** your group wants to support.

For example, if your team is interested in environmental issues, consider signing up for highway clean-up. If your team wants to concentrate their efforts in education, look into after-school coaching programs that need volunteers. Take a look at our other guides for inspiration on service activities for different causes.

This doesn't mean your team has to limit itself to one cause area. **Consider a few different programs**. If possible, try a few and see what fits the team members' time and resources. Remember, the size of your group will also be a deciding factor. For instance, a large group may make a significant impact during a highway clean-up whereas a small group might be perfect to manage a section of a community garden.

Consider Joining Beyond Belief Network

Beyond Belief Network (BBN) is a program run by nonprofit Foundation Beyond Belief to **reward, encourage and recognize atheist/humanist groups that actively perform community service**.

Joining BBN is quick and free, and will give your team access to perks like networking with other teams, promotion of events, free t-shirts, grants for your service projects, and both monthly and annual awards.

Learn more about BBN [here](#), and [sign up here](#).