

# field. guide to service

JOHN H. PACE JR '39  
CENTER FOR  
civic  
engagement



PRINCETON  
UNIVERSITY

This field guide to service belongs to:

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Best service moments:

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# introduction

You wouldn't head out to hike in the wilderness unprepared would you? Well maybe you would, but most of us would study a map, pack a snack and gear up. We'd savor the tranquility as we trekked, take some photos along the way, and share the experience with our friends when we got back in one piece.

Like a hike in the woods, service is about more than just the "hike" itself. At the Pace Center we believe that service is a learning experience that involves preparation, engagement and reflection.

This Field Guide to Service is designed to help you learn to do service well and have a positive impact in the community. It provides you with what you can do before, during and after your service experience to ensure it's as successful and rewarding as possible.

As we share this guide with you and others in the Princeton community, please let us know what you think. Share your thoughts at [pacemedia@princeton.edu](mailto:pacemedia@princeton.edu). We hope you keep this Field Guide close, share it with friends, and use it often!

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

—Mahatma Gandhi

### section 1

## preparation

Prepare yourself by plotting your course for action and building a team.

### section 2

## service

Manage your expectations as you move your plans into action.

### section 3

## reflection

Identify what you’ve learned as you process your experiences.

# what's on my list?

1. **Identify Your Values**
2. **Community Assessment**
3. **Self Assessment**
4. **Vision & Alignment**
5. **Building Your Team**

# preparation

**“Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.”**

—Alexander Graham Bell

So you're ready to get involved and engage in service. Great! Before you head out the door, pull up your sleeves and dive in, we want you to ask yourself one question: are you prepared?

To do service well and have a positive impact in the community, preparation is key. It serves as an important foundation for your work. It helps you understand not only why you want to engage the way you do, but also lays the groundwork for you to be able to engage in a thoughtful, respectful, and empowering way.

This section will give you the tools you need to identify your values, assess community need, clarify your own assets, understand how to plot your course and build your service team. Let's get going!

# identify your values

## why?

Before engaging in service, it's important to identify your values. What drives you? What motivates you? Why are you seeking to engage in this project, group or activity? Understanding your values gives you a foundation for making decisions and communicating your intentions to others.

## how?

At the Pace Center our work is guided by four core values:

### ENGAGED DISCOVERY

Students learn how to serve, why to serve and from service.

### COMMUNITY FOCUS

Students learn to listen to communities, understand community needs and build community on campus and beyond.

### IMPACTFUL PROGRAMS

Service is meaningful when students both grow as individuals and respond to the needs of the world.

### STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Students doing service lead in ways that go beyond position, title or role.

Identifying our values sends a clear message about who we are, what we believe in and what we stand for. Our values drive our decision-making and interactions with others. Being able to articulate our values and how they speak to our work is an important component of creating buy-in from others.



## helpful tip

WHEN ARTICULATING YOUR VALUES KEEP THEM...

Short and sweet!  
Easily understandable  
Relatable to others  
The simpler, the better!

# activity

Answer the following questions with the words, phrases or experiences that most readily come to mind:

What was a time that brought you great joy?  
Who were you with? What were you doing?

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What was a time where you felt called to action?  
What motivated you to act? What did you do?

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What are your passion areas? What do you love about them? What do they add to your life?

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What was a time when you had to overcome an obstacle? How did you overcome the challenge you faced?

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Looking at your answers above, what stands out to you as being important? Use your answers to identify and articulate your values.

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# community assessment

## why?

Taking time to understand the issue you plan to explore and how it manifests in real time for those you hope to serve is crucial to developing a successful, meaningful, and sustainable service effort.

You must also be knowledgeable about the community partners you plan to work with and the work already being done there. This information will allow you to be thoughtful in your work, and ensure you are not reinventing the wheel. Joining forces with others can be a great way to have a lasting and powerful impact.

## how?

Just like you have skills and assets, the community partners/members you plan to work with have them too. Communities also have specific needs they are hoping to fill and goals they are trying to meet.

It is critical that you not only acknowledge but seriously consider the skills/assets as well as the needs/goals of the community you plan to work with. Doing so is how you ensure your work is addressing a true need.

## helpful tip

GATHER INFORMATION  
IN DIFFERENT WAYS...

Research online, read news articles. Talk with and listen to community members. Connect with existing service groups or nonprofit organizations.

# activity

## understanding community

Identify and describe the community you would like to focus your efforts in.

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What are the various needs of that community? What issues matter to that community? What is the community concerned about?

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Who can you connect with to learn more about the community you have identified?

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What was a time when you had to overcome an obstacle? How did you overcome the challenge you faced?

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## connecting with community partners

What community partners would you like to connect with in your work?

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What are the needs of the partners listed above? Are you able to meet those needs?

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What are the skills/assets of the community partners listed above? How can you utilize them?

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# self assessment

## why?

Whether you are starting an original project or joining an existing one, taking an inventory of the strengths you can bring, as well as the areas where you might need some support, will give you a baseline for what you contribute and what you need to learn.

Being well-planned and prepared will allow you to troubleshoot effectively, plan creatively, and reflect intentionally. Not only will your project and the community you are working with benefit from this pre-work, but you will too as you work to continually sharpen the tools in your toolkit and add some new ones as well.

## how?

At the Pace Center we believe that being aware of our skills and assets is a critical component to the success of our work. This awareness is not just about highlighting what we do well, but also acknowledging where we have gaps that need to be filled for our work to be successful. An important first step is knowing the difference between a skill and an asset.

**SKILL** the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance

**ASSET** an advantage, resource

A skill is something you can develop and hone over time. Skills can be learned. An asset is a pre-existing resource that you can utilize in your work. Your skills and assets should speak to and inform each other, helping to keep your project moving forward and having a positive impact on your work.

# activity

## Who do you know and what can you do?

**SKILLS** What skills do you have that would benefit you in your work?

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**ASSETS** Who do you know who could help you? What resources are available to you? In what way could they be of assistance?

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## What are the gaps and how can you fill them?

**GAPS** What are new skills you need to learn? What existing skills do you need to improve on?

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**DEVELOPMENT & PRACTICE** Where can you learn or practice the skills listed above? Are there training opportunities you can take advantage of?

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## helpful tip

**SOMETIMES THE GREATEST STRENGTH IS KNOWING WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP.**

Challenge yourself to identify one skill to learn/work on each year. You will be surprised how fast your skill set will grow!

Tiny Teach! Get together with a friend and share knowledge you have about a skill with them. Then ask them to teach a new skill to you.

# vision & alignment

## why?

Sometimes the excitement of getting started on a project or the urgency of an issue creates an overwhelming desire to jump right in and get started. Before you start, it is important that you use all of the knowledge you gained about yourself and the community to develop a vision statement, goals, and objectives for your work. Your vision, goals, and objectives will provide you with clear and succinct ways to talk about your work, as well as the ability to measure the effect of your work over time.

## how?

Now that you've done your research, it is time to utilize your knowledge to identify the need/issue you hope to address in your work and allow that to inform your vision, goals, and objectives.

**VISION** Stated in the present tense, your vision should reflect the ideal outcome of the work.

**OBJECTIVES** Steps that move you closer to your goals. They should be measurable, achievable, and time specific.

**GOALS** Stated in the future tense, these general statements should define the endpoint of your work.

**ACTION STEPS** Specific tasks to be taken to accomplish an objective.

## helpful tip

Share your vision, goals, objectives and action plan! It's rare that we work in isolation. To achieve your vision, meet your goals and objectives, and take action effectively, others will need to understand what you are working towards and why.

# activity

## setting the stage

1 What is the issue you hope to address through your work?

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2 What does this issue look like in real time for individuals/communities? What is the community need your work will address?

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3 What other individuals/groups are already working on this issue?

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4 What can you do to have a positive impact on this issue?

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**VISION** Looking at your answers above, outline a vision statement for your work.

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**GOALS** Develop three goals that are in alignment with your vision.

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**OBJECTIVES** Develop six objectives that are in alignment with your goals.

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**ACTION PLAN** What is your plan of action to accomplish the objectives you have listed above?

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# building your team

## why?

Sometimes an essential component of doing good work is knowing that you cannot do it alone. Acts of service and civic engagement are only made stronger when folks come together, combine their assets and work towards a common vision.

## how?

The last step before you begin your service work is to develop your plan and identify those who will be working with you. It is important to pull all of the great pre-work you have done together so that you can reference it during and after your work.

## identify your key players



Who will be involved in this project and what will their role be? List and connect the pairs below.

PLAYERS

ROLES

# activity

## the work

What will your work look like? What will actually be done?

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## logistics

When and where will the work take place?

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## resources

What resources will you use and where will they come from?

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## success factors and potential obstacles

### SUCCESS FACTORS

What things must you have in order to be successful?

### POTENTIAL OBSTACLES

What things might arise while doing your work?

notes

# what's on my list?

1. Entering the Community
2. Managing Expectations
3. Effective Communication
4. Learn While Serving

# service

“Service is the rent we pay for being.”

—Marian Wright Edelman

What is service? It can mean many things to many people. You may even discover a new definition as you engage in your own work. But no matter how you define it, remember that service creates a unique opportunity for you to work with and learn from others.

As you begin to move your plans into action, you might be surprised to find that your plans needs to change... frequently! The ability to be flexible, communicate clearly, and build a strong rapport with others while you are serving will make it easier to handle bumps in the road and retool your approach when necessary.

This section will provide you with tools to help you manage your expectations, highlight learnings through your work, and share your experiences with others. We hope that you will come to see service is more than simply something to do. Service is powerful because it holds the power of transformation; transformation for those served as well as those serving.

# entering the community

## why?

Everything we say and do makes a statement about who we are and what we believe in. At times, we are doing service in communities that are not our own, and it is important to remember that entering these communities is a privilege, not a right.

Being welcomed into a community is an act of trust; one we should honor and respect. Those we work with don't need a savior, they need an ally.

## how?

Try to strike a balance between your desire to get things done and the expertise of the community. No one knows the community you are entering better than the community itself. Community partners and members are resources whose expertise and knowledge should be valued. Rather than telling a community what they need, learn from and work with them.

## helpful tip

### BE HUMBLE

Yes, you have assets, but so does the community you are working with.

### USE A LENS OF COMPASSION

Approach things that are new or that you don't understand with compassion rather than judgement.

### BE AN ALLY AND AN ADVOCATE

Allies stand with others rather than speak for them. Advocates raise awareness by not only speaking about an issue, but also creating space for those who are silenced.

### BE RESPECTFUL AND APPROPRIATE

# activity

**Learn to value the experience, thoughts, and opinions of those you work with to create positive change together.**

## the work

How did you first enter the community you are serving?  
How were you received?

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**List three things you can do to continue to nurture your relationships with community partners and community members.**

1 

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2 

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3 

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**Fill in the space provided below with words that reflect the ways you will approach your work and others.**

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# managing expectations

## why?

You've spent time outlining your vision and goals for your work, but what happens if the work you actually do does not look like what you imagined?

Your community partners want to utilize all of your skills, and any task they ask you to do has a purpose. It is your job to understand that purpose and connect the task at hand to the larger picture. In this line of work, no job is inconsequential. Remember that even when the work you are doing feels small-scale, it is playing a role in reaching the large-scale goal.

## how?

The key to managing your expectations is to regularly re-evaluate them. We all experience moments where our work doesn't feel fulfilling or like it has an impact. If we change our perspective, however, we can find the value in what we do.

## helpful tip

Take a moment to ask "why?" This one-word question allows us to think beyond a literal task and explore the meaning behind it. Thinking about the why behind the how helps to illuminate the meaning in our work. When we believe we are doing meaningful work, it becomes easier to approach that work with strength and vigor.

# activity

## evaluate

What is one component of your work that is different from what you expected?

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How do you feel about working on this task?

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## reassess

Why is this task important to your community partner?

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Why is this task important to the community you are serving?

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## connect

Why does this task matter?

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How does this task connect to your goals for your work?

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# effective communication

## why?

When we engage in service it is important that we think about not only how we communicate with those we are working with but also those who are interested in learning about the work we are doing. The way we communicate can be a source of inspiration or the root of misunderstanding. Effective communication can help you build a strong rapport with others and generate support for your work while starting a dialogue about the issues you are passionate about. While it is important that we share our experiences with others, it is vital that we do so thoughtfully, strategically and humbly.

## how?

Communication might be something we do everyday, but it is also a skill we can improve with practice. Whether you are speaking with a friend, community partner, or the media it is important to take a moment to think about what you are saying (or writing!) before you say it.

### ASK YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING:

- What is the goal of my message?
- What is the intention behind my words?
- Is my point clear?
- Am I representing myself and my community well?
- Am I speaking from my own personal experience?
- Am I allowed to share this information?
- Should I share this information?



Remember both what you say **AND** how you say it matter.

# activity

**Take a look at the statements below. How do you think they would be received? How might they be interpreted? How could you edit them to make them stronger?**

- 1 I know the community I am working in needs my help. If they didn't, more progress would have been made by now. In some ways, it is surprising that more people are not helping fix the issue of hunger, but I feel good knowing I am making a difference.
- 2 It's shocking how far behind the educational curve the students I tutor are. One even told me that her parents have never read her a book, which is unconscionable. It's really hard work, but it is also important work. These kids need me to be a positive influence in their lives.
- 3 I volunteer three times a week at a senior citizen home. I really enjoy learning from and engaging with the people I have come to know. It is so easy to fit into my schedule. Anyone who doesn't make time for service is just making excuses.

## share your work

Develop a quick pitch about your work. How would you describe your work in a few sentences? Remember to not only talk about what you do but also why it matters.

# learn while serving

## why?

One of the wonderful things about service is that while we are in service to others, we are presented with a unique opportunity to learn about the issues that matter most to us. We are able to explore the ways, the concepts and ideas we see on the pages of textbooks manifest in real life. We get to ask hard questions of ourselves and the world around us.

## how?

- Have an open mind.
- Challenge your assumptions and biases.
- Be observant, and objective in your observations.
- Think why—always. Ask why appropriately.
- Value the knowledge of others—especially your community partners.

## diversify the way you learn



Learning can take on many forms. List all the different ways you can learn more about an issue or topic in the notes section.

# activity

## evaluating

**BEFORE** What expectations did you have about your work before you began?

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**DURING** What have you experienced during your work that is different than what you expected?

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**AFTER** Have your thoughts evolved on the way you view a particular issue? How about your approach to your work? If so in what way?

## finding resources

Who/what serves as your source(s) of knowledge? Are there any additional people you can learn from?

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How can you continue to expand your knowledge base?

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notes

# what's on my list?

1. Purposeful Processing
2. Be In the Nation's Service
3. Share Gratitude
4. My Own Reflection Tool

# reflection

**“From quiet reflection will come even more effective action.”**

—Peter Drucker

Congratulations! You've just finished your service experience. Think your work is over? Not quite. Reflection is a core component of learning through service. Reflecting on your service experience helps you connect your work to prior experiences, analyze inaccurate perceptions, clarify your values, and better adapt to new people and situations.

Reflection is often linked with the Experiential Learning Cycle. As we move from asking “What?” to “So What?” and “Now What?” we evolve and grow, and then start all over again!

This section will help you learn how to process your experience “the Pace way,” analyze the intersection of your values with those of the community you serve, offer strategies for saying “thank you” and give you a chance to develop your very own reflection tool.

# purposeful processing

## why?

Taking time to reflect on the experience you had through your recent service experience is vital. Reflection allows us to evaluate our experiences, acknowledge our thoughts and feelings, recognize learnings and embrace areas for growth.

## how?

At the Pace Center we believe in purposeful processing. We recognize that reflection is not something we do just once, but rather something we should continually carve out space for. As we reflect on our various experiences we strive to keep the following in mind:

### PAUSE

Sometimes we are so focused on our acts of service that we forget to take a moment to pause. Pausing allows us to really connect with the experience we are having. Whether it is by yourself or with others, it is important to find time to stop and process.

### CONNECT

How does the work you have completed connect back to your original vision, goals, and your values? Revisit what brought you to this work and see if it is in alignment with where you are.

Whether you choose to reflect alone or with others, the important thing is that you set aside time for the process. Be intentional, be thoughtful, be honest and be specific.

### ASSESS

An important component of reflecting is assessing what you've done, who was involved, and the end result. All thoughts, emotions and feelings are important to the process, so don't leave anything out.

### EXPRESS

A critical component of reflection is being able to express what you've done and how you feel about it. This could be something you do for yourself or something you share with others. How would you choose to crystalize and share your experience?

# activity

## Reflection: The Pace Way!

### PAUSE

When will you set aside time for reflection? What type of environment do you need to be able to reflect?

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### ASSESS

What did you do? How did you feel before you started? How did you feel while you were serving? How do you feel now?

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### CONNECT

How does the service you experienced align with your values, vision, and goals? What can you do moving forward to help them align better if they are not currently?

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### EXPRESS

Who can you connect with to talk about your experience? How will you share your experience with them?

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# be in the nation's service

## why?

In the Preparation section we talked about identifying your values. It's important to not only be aware of your own values, but also those of the community you are a part of and serving in. Do the values align or is there opposition? When we examine how values intersect, we gain insight into how we can use commonalities or differences to deepen our service experience and move forward.

## how?

At Princeton, service is central to the mission of the University and is embodied by our informal motto "In the nation's service and the service of humanity." How does this align with your values? How are you serving "in the nation's service"? Depending on where you are serving, the values of your community could be quite different. No matter the values, what's important is to take the time to identify what they are and how they align or differ from your own.

## things to consider



There is no one way to be "in the nation's service and the service of humanity." For example, what do you think about the list to the right? Do all these types of service "count"? Why or why not?

- Public service
- Military service
- Social entrepreneurship
- Regular volunteerism
- Community organizing & advocacy
- Small acts of kindness
- Donating resources

# activity

## values intersection

Using the space below, list out your values and the values of the community in which you are serving. Draw a line between values to highlight positive connections.

YOUR VALUES

COMMUNITY VALUES

How will you use the commonalities above to move your work forward?

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Based on your values and the experiences you have had doing this work, what would your motto for service be?

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## things to consider



What if Princeton's informal motto was personalized to "what do you do in service?" What would you say?

# share gratitude

## why?

Something we touched on earlier is that service is not something we do alone. It involves working with others in ways that are thoughtful and purposeful. Because the nature of this work is one where we are giving of ourselves to others, it is easy to forget that we are also gaining something in doing this work. When we are in service to others we are learning new things, we are supported in a myriad of ways and we are welcomed into community. For all those reasons and many more we should willingly and joyfully express our gratitude.

## how?

Taking time to show our appreciation to others and what they have done is a way to ensure those we work with feel valued which in turn helps to nurture our relationships with others. There are so many ways to express your gratitude to those who have helped you along the way—the possibilities truly are endless. The most important thing is that you are genuine in your expression of thanks.

## helpful tip

Often one of the easiest and most powerful ways to say thank you is with a good old-fashioned handwritten note. To get the sentiment right, think before you put pen to paper. Keep it simple. Keep it personal and consider providing an example of why you are so thankful.

# activity

Who are the people you want to thank for their role in the work you have done/your experience?

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What did each of these people do that you are thankful for? Be as specific as possible.

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How did you feel when those you wish to thank did what they did? What impact did their actions have?

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Using your answers from above, draft a thank you note for someone you plan to share gratitude with below:

# my own reflection tool

## why?

Developing your own reflection exercise is a great way to stretch yourself creatively while simultaneously exploring the questions and themes that came out of your experience. It also offers you the opportunity to create a tool you can use to connect and start conversations with others.

## how?

To start crafting your own reflection tool, think about what you want to accomplish.

Are you looking to gain more **insight about yourself?**

Do you want to **take a closer look** at a particular element of your experience?

Are you looking to explore how what you did fits into **the bigger picture?**

With your end goal in mind, it's time to pick a method of reflection that matches and challenges you. Some methods of reflection to consider are:

### ORAL REFLECTION

Talk it out with a friend

Record your thoughts and feelings via video or audio

### WRITTEN REFLECTION

Journal about your experience

Free associate—jot down words, thoughts and feelings

### VISUAL REFLECTION

Go it alone or in a group

Get creative—draw or sketch it out, build a collage, the options are endless!

# activity

Using the activities in this Field Guide as a model, here are three steps to help create your own reflection tool.

## identify your goal

Develop a goal in one or more of the following categories:

### insight about yourself

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### take a closer look

---

### the bigger picture

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## develop your method

What method are you drawn to? What is most outside your comfort zone? Brainstorm what you could do via one or more of the following methods:

ORAL REFLECTION · WRITTEN REFLECTION · VISUAL REFLECTION

## find your guiding questions

What questions will you need to ask to get at the heart of what you are trying to uncover?

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notes

**“Our goal  
is to create a  
beloved  
community  
and this will require  
a qualitative change  
in our souls  
as well as a  
quantitative change  
in our lives”**

*—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

## conclusion

You've made it! You've engaged with communities around you. Fantastic! How do you feel? Maybe you have more questions than when you started. Maybe you're proud of what you've accomplished. Or maybe you feel like there is much more work to be done. Hopefully you feel inspired, challenged, engaged and invigorated.

Remember that service calls on us to be perpetual learners: to actively listen to the voice of those we serve. When we support lasting and meaningful change, we develop the skills to be both advocates and allies.

As you continue to engage in service we hope you will use this Field Guide as a resource to help you think about what it means to do service well. Strive to be humble, intentional, thoughtful, and purposeful in your work. Set aside time to reflect on the unique role you play currently, and the role you hope to play moving forward. Maintain an open mind and open heart, embrace the stories of others as both valid and valuable, and always remember that if you are to be a part of lasting change, you must truly hear the needs of your community partners and keep those needs at the forefront of all you do.

notes

## field guide to service

### OUR STORY

At the Pace Center for Civic Engagement we make service and civic engagement part of the Princeton student experience. We believe in engaged discovery, impactful programs, community focus and student leadership. This Field Guide is just one way we help students learn how to do service well and have a positive impact in the community.

### OTHER WAYS TO BE IN SERVICE TO TO OTHERS

Local volunteer	Math tutor
Public Servant	Matchmaker
Town rabble-rouser	Grant writer
Military personnel	Break bread with strangers
Giver of hugs	Talk about intolerance
Dog walker	Lead a needs assessment
Family caregiver	Plant a community garden
Residential advisor	Practice conflict resolution
Student government rep	Recycle
Eating club officer	Mentor
Protester	Advocate
Nonprofit founder	Document oral histories
Good listener	Photograph for nonprofits
Pen pal	Create art
Dinner party host	Board member

### WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

Tell us how you use your Field Guide to Service. Please accompany all submissions with a photo of you and your Guide, along with a brief narrative, to [pacemedia@princeton.edu](mailto:pacemedia@princeton.edu)

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