



PROJECT SELECTION

Project Planning Module

VOLUNTEERS FOR OUTDOOR COLORADO
STEPPING UP

STEWARDSHIP

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About Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC)

Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado is the oldest and largest outdoor stewardship organization in the state. We work to connect people to Colorado's outdoors in ways that inspire them to be caretakers of the state's natural resources. This is especially important because the demands on our outdoor resources are extensive and Colorado's stewardship needs are reaching a near-crisis level. VOC is playing a leading role in addressing these challenges in three ways. First, we're fostering statewide collaboration on issues and solutions. We're also expanding stewardship efforts by helping others build and grow successful volunteer programs. Finally, we're continuing to engage 5,000 volunteers each year in on-the-ground, hands-on stewardship work.

Executive Summary

This guide will provide your organization with information and tips about how to select the most appropriate volunteer stewardship projects.

- ▶ **Five areas to keep in mind when selecting a project:**
 - ▶ **When picking a project**, begin by developing criteria for which to evaluate potential projects: How do you want your projects to benefit the environment? The volunteers? The land managers? Establishing questions like these will help you stay on track with what you want to accomplish.
 - ▶ **Develop a convincing case** about the purpose of your organization's work. Strong marketing materials that describe your organization's mission will bring about more volunteers and tighter partnerships.
 - ▶ **Decide on the types of projects** that you want your organization to offer: Traditional volunteer projects that are planned and scheduled on set dates and times? Or projects with a more flexible/ongoing schedule?
 - ▶ **Promote project application forms** to land management organizations and agencies. These applications will be integral for generating ideas about how to promote stewardship.
 - VOC's "Project Application Template" can be found in [Supplemental Materials](#).
 - ▶ **Visit and assess potential project sites.** On-the-ground scouting is a critical step in assessing the proposed project as well as the overall safety of the site.

- ▶ **Key Takeaways:**
 - ▶ **Know your organization's capabilities** and resources before selecting a project. These include sufficient funds, available tools and materials, and safety equipment.
 - ▶ **Form strategic partnerships** with other organizations to extend the reach of your own organization, to help raise public awareness for volunteer stewardship, and accomplish more boots-on-the-ground work.
 - ▶ **Make a plan** that lays out your organizations mission, how you want to accomplish that mission through certain types of projects, and how you are going to expand your outreach through different partnerships.

Introduction

Successful outdoor stewardship volunteer projects take many forms – from short tasks intended to engage groups of young people with nature, to multi-day, highly technical trail construction projects for the hardy in remote wilderness areas. This guide will provide your organization with information and tips about how to select the most appropriate volunteer stewardship projects and determine whether to take on a proposed project.

Additionally, the guide highlights the significant benefits your organization can derive from intentional planning and project selection, and shares methodologies, examples and other tools to help you undertake this critical step with confidence.

This guide will benefit field staff, project managers and volunteers who plan volunteer work and land managers who rely on volunteer stewards to undertake priority construction, maintenance and restoration projects.

Please Note:

- This guide contains information to help your organization select successful volunteer stewardship projects. Some of the content is covered in greater depth in other guides, as noted throughout this one.

- All of the Stepping Up Stewardship guides are intended to be complementary and not mutually exclusive. You may need to evaluate all the various resources to determine which offer the most appropriate fit for your specific program or project.

VOC recommends using this guide in tandem with the additional guide found in the [Project Planning Module](#):

▶ [Project Management](#)



Recommended Steps

This guide is organized into six "steps" to help your organization develop and implement project management strategies.

These are not "linear" steps that must be followed in a specific order. Rather, think of them as sections of information that you can choose to implement based on their relevance.

Step 1:

Provides guidance for setting goals and objectives for the project selection process and factors to consider during that process.

Step 2:

Gives tips for determining the types of volunteer projects your organization wishes to offer and outlines different types of project models on which to base your decision.

Step 3:

Discusses the need to create a case statement that demonstrates a project's value to both your organization and land managers.

Step 4:

Offers guidance for developing the necessary partnerships.

Step 5:

Discusses creating an internal process for outreach and marketing for soliciting potential project ideas.

Step 6:

Outlines steps for the final project selection and notifying applicants about their project application status.



This Guide is accompanied by extra resources, called Supplemental Materials, that you can use in your efforts to select successful volunteer stewardship projects. They are mentioned throughout the guide and listed at the end, but provided separately.

Step 1: Setting Goals & Objectives

Your organization is already aware of the benefits of volunteer stewardship – ranging from cost-effectiveness and guaranteed, high-quality work, to an ability to meet programmatic or strategic goals related to engaging people in the outdoors. To leverage these benefits, you are offering stewardship volunteer opportunities to community members.

Before your group or organization undertakes significant volunteer project planning, it is important to determine whether the potential project is appropriate for volunteers. Making this decision depends on several factors, including whether your organization has the trained staff, volunteer leaders, equipment and other resources to ensure the opportunity will offer an enjoyable and safe volunteer experience.

The decision-making process begins by setting goals and objectives for volunteer stewardship projects for your specific organization. Whether you are a place-based, state-wide or regional group, or an agency serving a specific public land parcel, such as a park or wildlife area, use the tips below to maximize the benefits you seek in a volunteer stewardship initiative:

- ▶ **Develop criteria to help identify successful projects.** To increase the likelihood of success, a best practice is to develop criteria on which to evaluate projects. There is no magical set of criteria on which all projects should be evaluated; success will depend on many variables, such as your overall organizational goals and objectives, your capacity and your intended project scope (for example, just one project or many projects over a season). Below are a few criteria to consider:
 - ▶ **The volunteer experience.** There is no one project that will appeal to or is appropriate for everyone. Try to develop criteria that gauge the experience volunteers will have during a specific project by asking questions such as:
 - What is the level of the volunteer group’s technical knowledge and physical capability?
 - What conservation and/or stewardship issue is the project solving and are you able to make it an interesting and meaningful project to volunteers? What is the level of risk? Can the project be conducted safely by volunteers?
 - Are there additional perks that can increase interest in the project, such as a social hour at a bar or restaurant, a band, a storytelling night, a camping trip, an outdoor recreation experience, or an environmental education program?

Answers to these questions will help you:

- Determine the types of volunteers that will enjoy a specific project
 - Figure out best ways to market a project
 - Determine which projects NOT to pursue
 - Plan for a balanced portfolio of projects throughout the season and ensure that projects accommodate a variety of fitness levels and technical skills
- ▶ **Impact of the work.** As volunteer stewardship work gains support among land management agencies and many funders, it may become increasingly important to identify the critical, specific on-the-ground benefits or positive impacts the project will provide to land managers, outdoor recreationists, wildlife populations and the resource itself. Developing criteria that gauges impacts accomplishes the following outcomes:
 - Volunteers understand that there is a value attached to their time
 - Land managers know they will be getting a quality product
 - Funders understand how their financial contribution is creating positive outcomes

VOC Mini Spotlight

When VOC recruits volunteers for public projects, one effective strategy is to describe the importance of and impacts of the planned work. VOC focuses our work projects that can be sustained between 5 and 10 years. This tends to resonate with potential volunteers; as it turns out, doing work with long-term impact is important to them!

Step 1: Continued

- ▶ **Project diversity.** If your organization or agency is undertaking several stewardship projects in a season, you may wish to include criteria that help increase the diversity of your projects in multiple ways. Here are a few examples of criteria that can help you increase project diversity:
 - **Work Type:** Set targeted percentages for easy, moderate and difficult projects throughout the season to attract a broad variety of prospective volunteers. Please see the "VOC Project/Training Difficulty Rating Criteria" in [Supplemental Materials](#) for an example.
 - **Geography:** If you are a statewide or regional organization, set geographic targets annually, with certain percentages in a nearby metro area, within a two-hour drive and in different regions of the state.
 - **Project Size:** Consider featuring a variety of project sizes and work activities that can be completed by smaller and larger volunteer groups. Keep in mind that some volunteers may be more inclined to work on smaller, more intimate projects while others may prefer groups of dozens of people.
 - **Project Duration:** Plan and manage projects with a range of durations – for example, projects lasting two hours and projects covering a multi-day period.
 - **Volunteer Engagement:** Vary your project offerings in terms of who will participate – ranging from the broad public to specific populations such as youth, private companies, underserved populations or neighborhood residents living near a project site.

- ▶ **Identify available resource capabilities.** Prior to committing to a project, it will be important to conduct a realistic assessment of your organizational capabilities. Whether you are only undertaking one project or planning multiple projects over a season, the assessment step of the process is essential. Here are some considerations:
 - ▶ **How many projects or volunteers** can you manage over the year?
 - ▶ **If you identified a targeted number** of volunteers in your goals and objectives, do you have the resources to manage those numbers?
 - ▶ **What type of project work** is most needed in the area you are considering? Is there a special type of work you need to find (i.e. work appropriate for a youth group for example)?
 - ▶ **What types of project work** can your organization and trained volunteer leaders handle?
 - ▶ **What skills and training** do your paid staff and volunteer leaders have (or need) to effectively accomplish the work and manage others to do so?
 - ▶ **Can the targeted projects** be accomplished in a reasonable timeframe?
 - ▶ **Do you have a realistic budget** to cover costs related to planning, volunteer recruitment and appreciation, project materials, on-the-ground management and post-project expenses?
 - ▶ **Have you identified and secured** the cash and in-kind funding sources needed to support the projects?

- ▶ **Identify specific project dates.** When scheduling your projects, it is helpful to consider factors such as the following:
 - ▶ **Seasonal limitations:** If your organization is in a region that experiences the four

VOC Mini Spotlight

VOC began as a volunteer trail organization in 1984, responding to land manager needs at the time while also offering a social "club-like" experience for its volunteers.

After initial project successes, VOC instituted a technical training program to ensure that volunteers and volunteer leaders would be capable of planning and managing a range of trail construction and maintenance needs to meet ever increasing demand – and to do so in a safe, effective manner.

Over the years, VOC has expanded volunteer stewardship opportunities well beyond those related to working on trails. Today's projects include ecological restoration, non-trail park improvements, community gardening and other activities that meet the changing needs of land managers while providing a broader variety of opportunities for volunteers.

Step 1: Continued

seasons, opportunities to schedule reliable projects may generally fall at certain times of the year. For example, in Colorado, volunteer season generally occurs from April through October, although high-alpine projects do not start until the snow pack has melted and trails have dried out.

- ▶ **Likelihood of volunteer participation:** Determine what days of the week and times of day your volunteer projects are most likely to attract participants – for example, you might be able to maximize volunteer participation by scheduling projects during the weekends or on weeknights when most people have free time. Conversely, if your volunteers are mainly retired, scheduling time during a weekday may be most favorable to garnering participation.
- ▶ **Designated celebration days:** Consider hosting volunteer projects during designated public lands, family or environmental days such as Earth Day, National Arbor Day, Mother’s Day, National Trails Day, National Public Lands Day, National Get Outdoors Day, Father’s Day and other state specific days (i.e. in our state we have Colorado Public Lands Day and Colorado Day).
- ▶ **Avoiding conflicting dates:** It has been our experience at VOC that holiday weekends such as Memorial Day, 4th of July and Labor Day typically do not draw many volunteers. People tend to travel with family or friends or are engaged in parties and BBQs. For this reason, VOC does not schedule projects during holiday weekends.

Step 2: Determining the Kinds of Volunteer Projects to Offer

Determining the types of projects to offer is one of the most fundamental decisions your organization can make, whether you are a volunteer organization or a land management agency.

Questions you might find helpful to ask are:

- ▶ **What type of volunteer work do you want to offer?**
- ▶ **What type of work do you need help with as a land manager?**
- ▶ **What type of work is suitable for volunteers?**
- ▶ **What type of work is possible for you to provide or request based on risks to volunteers and technical training requirements of the leaders and volunteers?**
- ▶ **What type of work do you NOT want to offer either because there is another group with more expertise to do this type of work, it’s not a good volunteer experience or you do not have the capability to carry it out well?**

Many of the answers to these questions depend on your organization’s capabilities and resources, and your ability to plan and manage certain types of work.

- ▶ **Project Models.** Successful volunteer stewardship projects take on many different forms, and there is no standard "cookie cutter" way to deliver a project. For example, small, place-based groups may simply meet after work every Wednesday evening for light trail work. Larger organizations may have greater flexibility in the types of projects they are able to deploy

Step 2: Continued

based on available resources. Below are descriptions of project model types that may aid you in your decision making:

- ▶ **Traditional volunteer project model.** Traditional projects are those that are planned and scheduled in advance with the land manager for a specific date or set of dates, and a specific duration (number of hours). Volunteers must be able to participate at the scheduled time and place. This model can help simplify the project planning process. Conversely, projects using this model may not attract sufficient numbers of volunteers to meet the land manager's needs.

→ One factor that can vary in the traditional project model is the target audience: *Who will the participating volunteers be?* For instance, you might allow members of the broad public to participate in a project on a first-come, first-served basis. Alternatively, you may decide to set up a project for a specific group, such as a company looking for a team-building work day, or a group of school children.

- ▶ **Flexible volunteer project models.** As today's volunteer stewards' motivations, interests and availabilities change and evolve frequently, many organizations and agencies are looking for new, flexible project models to better meet those needs. Examples of flexible models include:

→ A project that is scheduled for a set date and time, but that remains very flexible regarding the type of work to be accomplished, the number of volunteers who will participate, and the timing and duration of the project.

→ An "Adopt" program through which land managers and dedicated user groups who are invested in a specific park, trail, wildlife population or other feature on a property can enter a formal relationship for ongoing stewardship work. In an Adopt program, the land manager often trains volunteers to undertake ongoing work at the property, then allows the volunteers to establish their own schedules for completing the work.

Additional factors to consider when planning projects using a flexible volunteer model include:

→ **Funding.** Have you identified and secured the cash and in-kind funding sources needed to support the projects?

→ **Timing.** Are there special requirements that dictate when the projects must be scheduled? For example:

- **Seasonal requirements**, such as best times of the year for planting and seeding
- **Dependencies on other work** needing to be completed before volunteers can come out for a specific project (ex. river bank restoration that involves contracted heavy machinery work before the planting and reseeded involving volunteer labor)
- **Funding requiring that a project be** scheduled on a specific date or during a specific range of dates
- **Limited availability and/or specific needs** of a critical project partner, such as the land manager or partner providing expertise

VOC Mini Spotlight

Most of VOC's volunteer projects follow the traditional model and are open to the broad public - but with a minimum age requirement.

Approximately 30 percent of VOC's total projects are "private", set up through a work-team model, which we call a SWAT (Stewardship with a Team) specifically targeted to engage corporate and youth groups.



Step 3: Creating a Case Statement that Demonstrates Value

Before your organization actively conducts marketing and outreach efforts among potential project partners spend time developing a convincing case for what you need from your project partners and, even more importantly, highlight what you can deliver to them. This step may at first seem unnecessary. However, clearly stating what you bring to the partnership and what you need in return will save time and resources for everyone in the end.

For example, questions to consider include:

- ▶ **What specific problem or issue are you addressing?**
Why is it important?
- ▶ **Given your organization's goals and objectives,** why would a partner want to work with you?
- ▶ **What value** will you and your group bring to partners?
- ▶ **In what ways does your organization work** to ensure positive and high-quality end results?

VOC Mini Spotlight

VOC uses a written case statement, modified annually, to outline the most important facts and reasons behind offering our boots on the ground projects. We highlight in this document, the many challenges facing Colorado's natural resources and how, through our volunteer projects, we can create a win-win for our volunteers and land management partners.

A "Project Services Outline" to guide you in conducting outreach to potential new partners is included in [Supplemental Materials](#).

Step 4: Developing Appropriate & Strategic Partnerships

Public lands increasingly rely on partnerships to accomplish stewardship and other needs in priority areas. Many organizations and land management agencies incorporate partner-related goals and objectives - enabling them to extend the reach of their organization, accomplish more on-the-ground work, and raise public awareness and support for volunteer stewardship and for specific public land areas.

Consider forming strategic partnerships with other organizations that provide benefits to your work and vice versa. Potential strategic partners may include other volunteer stewardship organizations, land managers, local governments, local businesses, funders, youth groups and outdoor user groups (hikers, hunters, mountain bikers, motorized users, horse-riders, trail runners, etc.)

Below are a few tips to keep in mind as you seek organizations with which to partner:

- ▶ **Cultivating partners.** Identify and meet with potential and existing strategic partners on an ongoing basis, rather than only during the project season. Consistent and regular contact leads to the best and most productive relationships, as well as greater potential for multi-year opportunities.
- ▶ **Understanding potential partners.** It is always a good practice to understand the challenges land managers face, and approach project partnerships with that understanding. Land managers (and funders) particularly like to see multiple groups, including local community

Step 4: Continued

groups, supporting projects. To that end, try to work with local OSOs and community groups, especially if your organization is coming from a different place. Additionally, ensure that the land agency approves and facilitates volunteer participation on their land, and that projects help address their needs and priorities.

- ▶ **Seeking multi-year partnerships whenever possible.** A multi-year strategy provides significant benefits to both the volunteer organization and the land manager. The organization can demonstrate increased impact from the considerable investment they are making as well as create a deeper connection between the land and the engaged volunteers. The land manager is able count on a committed labor force over a longer term and incorporate these resources into their planning process.

VOC Mini Spotlight

Project selection and development can be a time-consuming process. VOC typically spends up to 8 months in this effort from when we develop strategies and plans related to our annual volunteer and project goals, to conducting project solicitations and selections, to finally putting boots on the ground. Annually each August, we begin to outline our project selection criteria. Based on our contacts and previous year project partners, we undertake an electronic "call for project ideas" and include a project application form.

VOC sends these documents to land managers, existing partner organizations, funders and other potential sources of project ideas - as well as potential project applicants (these audiences are all segmented in VOC's internal database). Annually, VOC sends this information to many existing partners. VOC also advertises the "call for project ideas" via its online newsletters, website and social media channels.

Step 5: Determining Your Internal Process for Outreach & Marketing

At this point, you are ready to conduct outreach to generate potential projects for your offering. To conduct effective outreach, ensure that all your materials are in order and ready for distribution. These materials may include:

- ▶ **Your case statement.**
- ▶ **Marketing materials** describing your organization (such as fact sheets or backgrounders). Please see the [Marketing & Communications Module](#) for more information.
- ▶ **Application form**, interest form, or other fillable form for organizations and agencies to use to submit their project ideas. At a minimum you will want to secure the following through your application process:
 - ▶ **Contact information** for the person submitting the project so you can follow-up appropriately
 - ▶ **A short description of the project**, which includes:
 - *Why is the project important to the land and, as a result, what will be the impact?*
 - *What dependencies, if any, exist, such as pending required planning or a grant to fund the project?*
 - *Timing of the project*
 - *What project-related resources, such as materials, staffing, equipment, is the project applicant willing to provide?*
 - *What resources does the applicant intend for your organization and/or group to provide?*

Step 5: Continued

A sample "Call for Project Ideas" as well as VOC's "Project Application Template, Selection Criteria & Process" are included in [Supplemental Materials](#).

Step 6: Conducting the Final Project Selection & Notification Process

It will be important to have thought through a process for reviewing applications, responding to applicants quickly with follow-up questions and any additional information you may require, and setting up an on-site project scouting trip (unless you reject a project application for reasons such as funding, work not appropriate for volunteers or other factors based on your specific project goals). To help streamline final project selection, you may want to designate a specific staff person or other trusted individual to serve as an exclusive point of contact throughout the process.

- ▶ **Final project selection.** The project scouting trip is a trip to visit and assess the potential project site. On-the-ground scouting is a critically important step as it helps verify and clarify information provided in the written application. Ultimately, your organization will determine whether to follow through with a project based on the scouting trip.

- ▶ **Designated scouts.** Use a combination of staff (if applicable) and reliable, qualified volunteers to conduct the project scouting.

Qualified project scouts are individuals who have participated in multiple project teams; they typically have significant experience leading volunteers on projects, as well as solid on-the-ground technical stewardship skills in trail construction, ecological restoration and other skills related to the project under consideration. You may want to pair new volunteer scouts with an experienced scout mentor to help them familiarize themselves with the process.

- ▶ **Scheduling.** In coordination with key land management personnel and other relevant partners, schedule an on-the-ground scouting trip soon after you have received the application. Be sure to consider weather and seasonal limitations when planning scouting trips. If a scouting site is in the high country or at high altitude, you may wish to prioritize projects for early fall before snow arrives.

- ▶ **Scouting form.** Familiarize yourself with the project application and record additional information about the site by filling out a scouting form. Using the scouting form and on-the-ground observations, you will be able to capture and evaluate important information such as:

- Status of land manager planning
- Any required local, state or federal permits, for example, CWA 404 (Clean Water Act) or NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act)
- Other agencies, partners or user groups that



Step 6: Continued

- should be included in the project
- *Verification of or adjustment to the scope and size of the project based on the application submitted*
- *Funding availability, including clarification of land manager funding or other cash or in-kind donations for the project*
- *Campsite amenities, if the project will be multi-day*
- *Statement about why the is important*
- *Precise directions to the work and campsite*
- *Photos of the worksite and campsite, including good photos to use in showing the condition of the land/resource before your volunteers work on it*
- *Land manager expectations regarding technical design*
- *Special tools or skills needed for the work*
- *Details regarding on-site risk assessment (see additional details below)*

A scouting form is available in [Supplemental Materials](#).

- ▶ **Alternatives to on-the-ground scouting.** While it is good business practice to scout all projects that are submitted for consideration, it is not always feasible, or may not be necessary. As alternatives to on-the-ground scouting, you might decide to scout via phone, email or internet research. In these cases, review the application form in-depth and request or research additional supporting materials that will further inform your decision making, such as maps, photos and other background documents. Below are a few instances in which your organization may decide to skip an on-the-ground scouting trip or replace it with phone, email or internet research methods:
 - *Projects submitted by repeat partners in familiar locations*
 - *Projects about which your organization already has a sufficient understanding of the type of work and the scope - such as place-based projects or multi-year projects*
 - *Projects submitted by a trusted partner who has provided sufficient, detailed information and images in the application*
 - *Projects for which the type of work is very straightforward, such as some noxious weed removal*
 - *Projects for which your organization's staff, along with land management agency representatives and other key stakeholders, have already determined and confirmed feasibility. In these cases, ensure that the designated scout is provided with sufficient information to analyze the project's overall achievability or likelihood of success.*



If the scout has any concerns about the project's success or feasibility, he or she should use the scouting form to communicate this information as soon as possible. The scout may determine that the project is a good opportunity in general but is not beneficial for the organization. For example, if a project is designed to rely primarily on volunteers who have a certain skill set, but your volunteers don't have the needed skills, the scout may decide that the project is better suited for another organization.

- ▶ **Risk management and safety.** Above all else, volunteer stewardship projects must be safe. Although the potential for risk can never be eliminated when working in the outdoors, your organization will need to take steps to identify potential risks and mitigate them as much as possible. Below is a checklist of risk-assessment items to keep in mind during the project-scouting process:
 - *Describe in detail the scope of work of the project in terms of linear feet or miles covered, types of structures needed, number of plants required, and other*

Step 6: Continued

- scope factors.
- Identify special equipment or tools needed to complete the project and find out if the partnering agency can provide them
- Determine whether your organization will require the agency to provide an emergency medical technician (EMT) for the duration of the project, and whether it's feasible for the agency to arrange for an EMT
- Determine whether you have the necessary leadership and technical skills available for this project, and whether crew leaders will need any specialized training
- Determine whether volunteers are able to complete the project work
- Identify any seasonal conditions, physical hazards or other safety considerations on the project site
- Take into consideration whether the site is characterized by high altitude, difficult landscapes or other qualities that may impact volunteer safety
- Identify the nearest city or town with hospital or clinic facilities
- Identify the level of physical difficulty of the project, such as easy, moderate or difficult
- List any additional comments, opportunities, or concerns, and an overall recommendation

VOC Mini Spotlight

For many years, VOC has used a project selection matrix to help analyze each potential project. We use an Excel spreadsheet that organizes selection criteria by project, identifying factors arranged into the following categories:

- Basic project information
- Geographic information
- Project type
- Strategic fit for the organization
- Capacity (to determine number of volunteers and leaders needed)
- Project partners and funders
- Project desirability (from a volunteer perspective)
- Notes

We use a scale of 1-5 on many of the qualifying factors that help us obtain a "score" for a potential project. Scoring projects in our matrix is often useful when trying to decide which projects to undertake each year given financial, staffing and other considerations.



When selecting volunteer projects and assessing their risks, VOC recommends that your organization carefully consider your capabilities and limitations. Please refer to the [Policies & Procedures Guide](#) in the [Risk & Safety Management Module](#) for more information about overall risk mitigation.

- ▶ **Final decision.** Using all the of information you have gathered and evaluated, you will be in a good position to decide whether to undertake a project. At this point you will have determined whether the project meets your organizational or agency goals and objectives, whether potential risks can be mitigated effectively, whether you can meet land managers' expectations and ultimately, whether this is will be a good volunteer experience.
- ▶ **Notification process.** Once you have completed the project selection process, including either eliminating or accepting projects that have been submitted for consideration, it is very important that the assigned project manager or another organization representative follow-up with applicants.
 - ▶ **Accepted projects.** Respond to applicants to confirm preferred project dates; this will help in the scheduling process. Collectively, the accepted projects will make up your project "slate". Begin scheduling the selected projects and locking in all relevant stakeholders as soon as possible.
 - ▶ **Declined projects.** If you are not able to commit to a project, it is important to reach out to and inform the unsuccessful applicant, who is typically a land manager with whom you want to maintain a good relationship and potentially partner on another project in the future.
 - Provide the applicant with the reasons for the rejection, suggest ways to make the project a viable option moving forward, and offer ways your organization can

Step 6: Continued

help with the process in the future. You may encourage applicants to make certain adjustments to the project scope and re-apply at a future date.

→ If the decisions was based on a timing and/or resource issue, and the land manager is flexible about a project date, you may consider committing to the project at a later date if additional resources become available.

- ▶ **After your organization has made a decision to undertake a project,** the actual project management process begins. During the project management phase, conditions may change – such as the project’s physical environment, budgets, human resources or other issues – that can affect feasibility. When a key condition changes, ask the question: Does this change the feasibility? If the answer is "yes", address that change and see if you can alter something in the project plan to mitigate the challenge.



For more detailed information about the project management phase, see the [Project Management Guide](#) in the [Project Planning Module](#).



Conclusion

This guide provided practices and ideas to help your organization begin its project planning initiatives by focusing on the project selection process. It offered tips, outlined different types of project models and discussed the need for developing partnerships to help you determine which projects to undertake.

A list of [Supplemental Materials](#) is provided below.

- ▶ **Project Services Outline**
A sample outline to help your organization make the case for your value in partnering on potential outdoor stewardship projects.
- ▶ **Call for Project Ideas**
Examples of how VOC positions and promotes calls for project applications.
- ▶ **Project Application Form Template, Selection Criteria & Process**
VOC's project application form for land managers as well as an overview of VOC's project selection process and criteria.
- ▶ **Scouting Form**
A sample of the form VOC uses when scouting potential outdoor stewardship projects.
- ▶ **Project Selection Matrix Template**
VOC's template for comparing potential outdoor stewardship projects and determining which ones are best for your organization.
- ▶ **VOC Project/Training Difficulty Rating Criteria**
VOC's chart for deciding whether to rate a volunteer project as Easy, Medium, or Difficult depending on a variety of factors.

Check out the rest of the guides for
Project Planning

Project Selection

Project Management

