

GREEN APPLE DAY OF SERVICE

101: Your Guide to Getting Started

Through Green Apple Day of Service, communities come together on a day of action to improve school environments and raise awareness about the central role that schools play in educating students and families about sustainability. As a project leader, you have an important role to play in making your Green Apple Day of Service a success— a success which will help drive change around the world. Once you get a handle on the basics, check out a full checklist with links to resources on greenapple.org.

What is a Green Apple Day of Service project?

Your project should make measurable change on one or more of the three pillars of a green school: environmental impact, health and wellness, and environmental and sustainability literacy. To be a Green Apple Day of Service project, it should make this impact at a school in a way that directly and positively affects the students. Our “99 Project Ideas” can help you think through what might work best for your school community.

Though organizing and leading a service project can seem like a daunting task, we are here to help! With some planning and preparation, your efforts will bring us all closer to green schools for all. This toolkit will guide you through getting started on your service project, and preparing for the big day.

Get your idea together

Choose a school

Green Apple Day of Service projects take place at schools. If you are a teacher or school leader, this is an incredible opportunity to work alongside your community in the place you know best – your school.

If you are not a teacher, school staff, or student, chances are you might need to spend some time selecting a school location. A good starting point is to reach out to a school near you, let them know about your interests and skills, and see if they have any green goals they’re already working towards or may want to work on. Many schools have projects they have put on the back burner because of lack of time or capacity, and some willing volunteers and support might be exactly what they are looking for. You can use the informational flyer from greenapple.org to help them understand what the Day of Service is and get them excited about joining in.

Choose a date

The first step to getting your project moving is choosing your project date. When selecting a date, keep in mind the following considerations:

- When is the best time in the school year for teachers and school staff to participate?

- When is the best time in the school year for students to participate?
- When does your school have planned sustainability or school improvement events? Often, successful Day of Service events are hosted in conjunction with existing programs, like Earth month or school beautification days.
- For outdoor projects, when will the weather be most cooperative?
- What are your general fundraising and volunteer recruitment goals? How much time do you expect will be needed to reach these goals?
- When is the best time to generate excitement and get publicity for your event?

Register your project

Once you have a date in mind, it is time to register your project! Registering your project on greenapple.org gives you access to customized support, which will keep you on track with your planning and provide resources along the way. It also is a great way to get the word out about your project, especially through our online project gallery and social media channels.

Establish project goals

Green Apple Day of Service projects make an impact on one or more of the three pillars of a green school: (i.) reduced environmental impact, (ii.) improved health and wellness, and (iii.) environmental and sustainability literacy. Preparing for your project will be much easier and more successful if you have a clearly defined outcome. How many participants are you aiming for? Exactly what do you want to be accomplished or produced by the end of the project? Whom in the school, district, and community do you hope hears about your project and how? The more specific and detailed your metrics for success are, the easier it will be for you to determine exactly what you need to prepare beforehand.

Choose the project type

There are so many different types of projects that you can do to benefit schools, and choosing the right one for your school and community is critical. Consider your project goals and what type of action will have the greatest impact on the goal. We have provided some suggestions on our website, but you and your team can and should figure out what is best for your school.

Get support for your project

Volunteer support

Green Apple Day of Service is an opportunity for you to engage your community in the green schools movement, and the extra help can make your project even more successful. When planning to recruit volunteer support, consider the following questions:

- What are the tasks or assignments that need volunteer support?
- What skills or background experience, if any, is needed to fulfill the roles? Consider the full age spectrum from students to retirees, as well as potential specialized skill sets.
- How many volunteers do you need for each role? Do you need one volunteer with lots of time to give? What if you end up with several volunteers with limited time?
- How do volunteers fit into the timeline? Do you need them engaged the whole time or do you have different points of engagement?

To recruit volunteers, it is good to start with your immediate community— co-workers, parents, engaged school volunteers, friends, and family. Then get in touch with parent groups around the school, and reach out to your local USGBC community. You may even want to hold an informational meeting or get-to-know-you party before the event date to generate interest within the community, get volunteers excited, and bring new faces in to support you.

No matter who you reach out to for help, make sure you have regular communication with anyone who shows interest in volunteering. Get solid commitments from these people and clearly define their roles to ensure they don't forget to show up on the actual day of the project. You might also want to consider benefits you can offer to volunteers, like invitations to upcoming events or community service hours for students.

Funding support

Many projects require funds for materials, equipment, expertise, and professional support. Think about what is necessary to make your project a success, and whether or not there are funds available from your school, community, and/or local businesses to support your project. For materials and supplies, register your project on the crowd funding platform [DonorsChoose.org](https://www.donorschoose.org) and include "Green Apple" in the title to qualify for matching funds from some of the Center for Green Schools' partners.

Get organized

Get your team organized

You've got your project idea and goals, and you have people who are willing to help you accomplish those goals — now what? To make sure you're utilizing all the skills you have on your project team — and so you don't get burned out trying to do everything yourself — we recommend you create a structure for your team. Here are some roles you may want to consider filling:

- **Project captain** – identify one or more team leaders (this could be you!) who have strong project management skills, organizational knowledge, time to commit to the project, and enthusiasm.
- **School/campus coordinator** – the main point of contact at the school or campus at which your project is taking place.
- **Outreach and communications coordinator** – generate buzz around your event with press releases, press kits, blogs, and coordinating social media.
- **Fundraising and partnership coordinator** – this person can recruit and coordinate with partner organizations, track funding, and manage online crowd funding efforts.

Make a plan to make an impact

Getting all the pieces for your project together can be a lot to manage. Make sure that you have a clear plan to maximize the impact of your project. Think carefully about your sustainability goals as you plan the day-of logistics. Create a timeline that includes the activities, steps, and permissions you need leading up to your project execution date. Finalize your budget and list of ideas for securing funds to cover anticipated expenses. And make sure you communicate this plan with your team!

Promote your project

Everyone can help with this, but have your communications coordinator focus on spreading the word through every possible source of media. A few ideas to get you started:

- Make chalk advertisements on paths outside of your school buildings
- Use social media to engage others and inform local media of your project. Be sure to tag us with [#greenappleday](https://twitter.com/greenappleday) so that we can see and spread the word about your project!
- Use our PR toolkit for tips on writing a press release for your community or school newspaper

Get going

Now that you have the idea, the plan, the people, and the resources, you're ready to lead a successful and impactful event in your community. We know there are passionate, hardworking people driving the Green Apple Day of Service, and we look forward to celebrating all of your successes!

Follow up

Update your project details in your Green Apple account to record volunteer numbers, and tell us a little bit more about the impact of the project. We will also follow up with an additional survey where project leaders can give more general feedback. Send a thank you note to your volunteers, school administrators, sponsors, and everyone who made your event a success. You can also host a small party to toast your success!

Get in touch

For general questions about Green Apple Day of Service, starting a project, or finding a project near you, please contact the Center for Green Schools at schools@usgbc.org.

About the Center for Green Schools

The Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council works with school decision makers, community volunteers and thought leaders in the public and private sectors to drive progress at the intersection of sustainability, education, public health and the built environment. We believe that all students should have the opportunity to attend schools that sustain the world they live in; enhance their health and well-being; and prepare them for 21st century careers.