



Getting Organized

Tips and tools for organizing your Sullivan Renaissance project and your group!



Schedule your time effectively!

A well thought out schedule allows you to manage your volunteer commitments, while still leaving you time for the things that are important to you. It is therefore your most important tool for avoiding “volunteer burnout”. Minimize your stress by avoiding over-commitment of yourself and others by doing the following:

- Identify the time you have available to work on your project.
- Block in the essential tasks you must carry out to finish your project.
- Schedule “high priority” urgent tasks as well as ongoing maintenance activities.
- Block out contingency time to handle unpredictable delays like the weather.
- Don't forget to make time for yourself!!!



Don't Procrastinate!

Let's face it – everyone procrastinates to some degree, and most often we can boil it down to two main reasons: you find the task unpleasant; or you find the task overwhelming. (Can anyone say BINDER?)

Here is how to avoid procrastinating carrying out elements of your project and putting together your binder:

- Ask someone else to check up on you. Peer pressure works!
- Imagine the unpleasant consequences of NOT doing the task.
- Break the project into a set of smaller, more manageable tasks.
- Start with some quick, small tasks if you can, even if these aren't the logical first actions.
- Treat it as an ongoing process, rather than “cramming” at the last minute.



Make a Work Chart!

A work chart is a list of all of the tasks that you need to carry out to achieve an objective or finish your project. This helps you think about what you need to do, so that you can get help where you need it and monitor your progress. Think of it like a “to do” list on steroids!

To draw up a work chart, simply list the tasks that you need to carry out to achieve your goal, in the order that you need to complete them. Assign timeframes to each task and use color coding to delegate responsibility to individuals if necessary. This is very simple, but is still very useful!

Keep your work plan handy. As you carry out the work, check off completed tasks and add any additional activities that come up.

This is a sample work chart for a typical Sullivan Renaissance single-element project (Category A) involving installation of a sign with landscaping. Use this as an example to create a work chart for your project!

Description of task	April	May	June	July	August
Monthly project committee meetings	■	■	■	■	■
Approve sign design from sign-maker		■			
File paperwork for necessary sign permits		■	■		
Sign fabrication			■	■	
Site prep: prepare soil, install landscape fabric, etc.			■	■	
Install sign				■	
Install landscaping & mulch				■	
Prepare binder (assemble receipts, take photos)				■	
Prepare for judges					■
Renaissance Awards Ceremony!!!!					■

How to complete your work chart:

Break your project into smaller tasks and list them in the chart. Each box to the right of the task represents one week. Shade in the boxes that correspond to the time needed to accomplish each task. For multi-element projects, use a separate work chart for each element. Use colored highlighters and assign tasks to different people!

True delegation means giving up a little of what we would like to hold onto (some measure of control) while keeping what we might prefer to give up (accountability).



Don't Forget to Delegate!

Think about it. Everyone finds it hard to delegate. Sometimes it seems easier just to do it yourself. That way we can make sure things are done completely the way we want them done. Delegation means taking true responsibility and inevitably means giving up some control. Sound a bit scary? Here are some tips for how can you overcome your mindset and become a better delegator:

Realize that you just can't do it all. Everyone has limits. If you fail to acknowledge yours, you will burn out. Maybe not tomorrow and maybe not even next year, but the stress and pressure of trying to do it all will get you eventually.

Start small. Delegation is a skill and learning it requires patience, persistence, and practice. Start by giving away small, uncomplicated tasks. As your confidence grows so will your willingness to delegate more.

Realize that "Your Way" is not always the "Only Way." A big part of letting go is the fear that the task will not be done "right." The problem is that your "right" often fails to consider that there are other ways to achieve the same result.

Give someone else a chance to shine. You might be bored with organizing the group's annual fundraiser, but if another volunteer has never done it, the challenge can be exciting, invigorating, and motivating. The successful outcome is not just a well-organized event. It's the opportunity for someone to shine and get recognized for their achievements.

Organize yourself right out of a job! Delegate every project and every task to a different volunteer. Empower and train those volunteers – by picking up those who fail and giving those who succeed even more responsibility. Then sit back and watch it work magic!



Make the most of committees!

One of the easiest and most effective ways to organize a group of people is around a series of tasks or projects. If your group is large enough, break tasks down into sub-committees of three or four people each who will meet independently and make decisions on their own. If you have a small group, assign individuals to assume responsibility for specific tasks. For example, one person can be assigned the task of maintenance and watering, while another can assume responsibility for fundraising and keeping track of expenses. **Capitalize on individuals strengths and talents and match the right person to the right job.**



Inventory your local talent!

When you hold meeting, or reach out to potential volunteers in your community, instead of passing around a generic sign up sheet to get addresses and phone numbers, use an index card and ask them to list their “special skills and talents” on the back. You would be surprised at the depth of hidden talents that you never knew existed in your community! Work them into your project.



Run your meetings efficiently!

Meetings are notorious for eating up people's time. You can lose some good volunteers if your meetings are not run efficiently. Here are some ways of ensuring that time is not wasted in meetings:

- Make an agenda and start the meeting on time.
- Don't recap what you've covered if someone comes in late: doing so sends the message that it is OK to be late for meetings, and it wastes everyone else's valuable time.
- State a finish time for the meeting and don't over-run.
- To help stick to the stated finish time, arrange your agenda in order of importance so that if you have to omit or rush items at the end to make the finish time, you don't omit or skimp on important items.