TIPS CARD INDEX

The following TIPS Cards are a resource to help students tackle new tasks. They are written for students and can be used to help them maintain independence while doing projects.

These TIPS are color coded to match the Earth Force Learning Goals. There are 5 different categories of knowledge and skills, each corresponding to a color. The TIP Card heading will be in the corresponding color. Note that often one TIP falls under multiple categories. We chose the primary category to color code.

CREATIVE STUDENT ASSESSMENT | YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS | PROJECT MANAGEMENT | COURSE PLANNING | CIVIC/DEMOCRATIC INTEGRATION

Lastly, there is a **PORTFOLIO** thread woven throughout these TIPS. We suggest that educators ask students to save their work as a portfolio. Further information can be found on TIP Card 1.

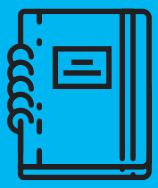
Project Organization
1. Keeping A Portfolio
2. Creating A Contact List
3. Staying Organized
4. Taking Notes

Working Together
5. Working Together & Hearing All Voices
6. Making The Most of Your Community Inventory
7. Decision Making
8. Finding the Root Cause of Concerns
9. Moving from Issues to Projects
10. Elements Of An Action Plan
11. Committee Structures & Peer Accountability

Conducting Research Independently & In the Community
12. Policy vs Practice
13. Finding & Evaluating Research Sources
14. Finding & Using Maps
15. Finding Government Information
16. Identifying Stakeholders & Beginning Questions
17. Outreach to Professionals: Formal Letters and Emails
18. Outreach to Professionals: Phone Etiquette
19. Guest Speakers & Expert Volunteers
20. Interviews
21. Surveys

Community Outreach, Reflection, & Beyond
22. Petitions
23. Public Speaking
24. Preparing for Meetings with Decision-Makers
25. General Process for Changing Local Legislation
26. Fundraising
27. Writing A Grant Proposal
28. Media Attention
29. Writing An Article
30. Telling Your Story
31. Writing Thank-You Notes
32. Building A Resume
33. Reflect On Your Work

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.



KEEPING A PORTFOLIO

Throughout the Process, record and document things you do and learn. This is important in order to write a project story and help with presentations toward the end of your project. Without a portfolio, it can be difficult to remember all of the small details over the course of the project.

You will want to keep track of:

- **Information** you are gathering, like interview and survey data
- **Actions** you are taking, including your successes and your setbacks
- **Skills** you are developing and your personal accomplishments
- What you are **learning** and how you are **feeling**, like a journal entry

There are lots of ways to keep track of these things. The three following recommendations provide an in-depth view into the work that you are doing.

We recommend doing all three! Some aspects can be done in groups, others are individual. Talk to your educator to discuss what types of portfolios you are keeping.

KEEP A JOURNAL

Write down what you learn and what you do. You can use different types of entries for different types of information (one for factual information, one for actions you've taken, one for personal reflections), or not. Up to you! You might use drawings or include mementos. Consider using a digital journal platform. Many are free!

RECORD YOUR WORK

Make a video of the "behind the scenes" work. Film your group meetings and your work in the community. Gather as much footage as you can. Then when your action project is finished, you can edit the video if you want. You can also take photographs as you go along. If you are photographing or recording others, make sure to ask permission. If you are on someone else's property, check to see if you need permission to record. For interviews, get written permission to film the person and to "air" the interview. This is something that can be done on behalf of the entire group, or in small groups. **Not everyone needs to be doing this individually.**

KEEP EXAMPLES OF YOUR WORK

If you make fliers or posters, save copies for yourself. Keep copies of letters you write, surveys you conduct, and speeches you make. Make recordings of interviews you conduct, and take minutes of the meetings you attend. Save your written work. These can be helpful as work samples, you never know when you may need it!

Throughout these TIPS Cards, you'll see notes on pages where **PORTFOLIO** additions can be made. Keep that in mind as you're working through the Process!

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

CREATING A CONTACT LIST

A contact list will help you keep track of all the people you talk to, meet, or even hear about during the course of your project! Try to keep track of as much information as you can, such as:

- Name
- Where they work
- Address
- Phone number
- E-mail address
- Dates you contacted them

OTHER INFORMATION TO INCLUDE might be the type of work they do or their area of expertise. You could also note suggestions they make about whom else to talk to, some of their words of wisdom, or the best time to contact them.

USING A SHARED PLATFORM for your contact list is a good way to make sure that everyone can work independently. This way an individual can pull up the information they need, when they need it, without asking someone else. This makes everyone's lives a little easier!

Consider the following options:

- Google Classroom or Google Drive (shared access)
- Dropbox (shared access)
- Create email contact lists
- Create a spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel
- Use your email contacts list

Or try something totally different. Be creative!

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

STAYING ORGANIZED

A calendar can help you organize and schedule your work throughout the Process.

CHOOSE AN EDITABLE AND SHAREABLE FORMAT

As you work through the Process, dates and deadlines might change, different groups might be assigned different bodies of work, etc. It's helpful to choose a platform that everyone has access to (shareable), and is easy to change around as dates move (editable). Online calendar tools work great for this! There are plenty of free options to choose from.

- What's also great about digital versions is that many come with phone apps that you can download to get reminders and set updates!

Digital not an option? There are plenty of other ways to create calendars.

- Make a **group calendar** in your classroom, but make sure to coordinate with your educator!
- Use a **hanging calendar** at home
- Make a **calendar in your notebook or journal**

KEEP TRACK OF IMPORTANT DATES ON IT

These might include:

- **Deadlines** for completing tasks
- **Appointments** with stakeholders or volunteers
- **Meetings** with your group

INCLUDE GOALS

For example, you might write: May 6th — rough draft of speech due.

PLAY IT SAFE

When you're setting deadlines, leave more time than you think will be necessary. You never know when unexpected delays will happen. It's better to have a little wiggle room than not enough time to get something done.

HAVE FUN!

If you'd like, use bright colors for activities you're really excited about. Put stickers on items after you complete them. Keep inspirational quotes in your calendar. Draw your own pictures, and highlight big deadlines so you pay close attention to them.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

TAKING NOTES

Taking notes is an important way to hold on to information you are gathering. It's important to take notes because you might need this information later on and may not be able to remember!

You might take notes when you:

- Listen to speakers
- Interview someone
- Attend a meeting
- Do research

Here are some recommendations for taking good notes. Your educator may have additional ideas, too:

STAY ORGANIZED

If possible, make an outline in advance. For an interview, write the questions ahead of time, leaving space between for the answers (see TIP Card 20 Interviews). Using index cards for notes can help you organize by topic. If you're on a computer, set up the document ahead of time and give access to any of your partners so they can collaborate as well (Google Docs is great for this!).

LABEL YOUR NOTES

Include the date, time, and source you are using. Number index cards to keep them in order. You will come back to your notes later, and this information will be very helpful.

SHORT PHRASES OK

Often, you must work quickly. Don't need full sentences. Don't worry 'bout grammar or spelling. Use symbols or abbrev. for speed.

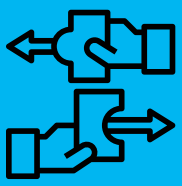
REREAD YOUR NOTES

Make sure you understand what you wrote. It might help to rewrite them, or organize them into categories. Store your notes in a well labeled file that you'll be able to find later.

PORTFOLIO

These notes can be kept as part of your portfolio! Use a notebook (or computer document) that will last the entire project and that you can refer back to. This way you have all of your work in the same place!

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.



WORKING TOGETHER & HEARING ALL VOICES

Working together as a team takes practice. It is so important to make sure this project has input from everyone, and that all voices are heard. That can be tricky, nobody wants their feelings to get hurt, and it may be hard to speak up.

Keep the following guidelines in mind to make sure everyone's voices are heard to work together towards a common goal:

MAKE GROUND RULES

Before you start a group activity, make sure everyone agrees on the same rules. Rules that we suggest include listening fully to everyone speak before interrupting and speaking calmly and respectfully towards one another. What else would you add?

WRITE AN AGENDA

Before meetings, make a list of what you want to cover. Decide how long you will meet and stick to that schedule.

HAVE DIFFERENT ROLES FOR PEOPLE

Let one person be in charge of leading the discussion. Have someone else take meeting notes, often called minutes. Have someone else be a timekeeper, making sure you stick to your schedule. Have someone else … Have someone else … Rotate these roles to give everyone a chance.

LET ALL VOICES BE HEARD

Create space in these discussions and debates for all voices to be heard. All sides to a decision should be listened to and considered before a decision is made. There are many different ways to structure these conversations. If assistance is needed in structuring a conversation like this, **consider a "Fishbowl Discussion"** or **"Traverse Talk"**, both easily found online.

KEEP RECORDS OF GROUP WORK

Take meeting minutes and keep meeting documents. Write down decisions your group makes and collaborate on building agendas. Save these pieces in a shared file online so everyone can access and contribute. This group work is great for the **PORTFOLIO**! A group Google Drive file works well, or you can have a shared space in your classroom to keep your group work.

CHECK IN

Have individuals keep records of their own participation and feelings during these discussions, and make time at meetings to reflect on these experiences with one another. Sometimes sharing this way can be uncomfortable, but that's ok!

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR COMMUNITY INVENTORY

A COMMUNITY INVENTORY is the beginning piece to the Process, and is a survey of your community's strengths and environmental concerns. There are many different ways to do inventories, but all have a few things to keep in mind to make sure you're getting the most out of your experience!

Consider the following while conducting inventories:

BE SAFE! NEVER GO OUT BY YOURSELF

If your inventory involves small groups or after school activities, let adults know exactly where you plan on going. Have the phone number of someone to call in an emergency, and make sure someone in your group has a cell phone (and that it's charged!).

BRING TOOLS TO RECORD WHAT YOU FIND

Bring a sketchbook to draw and take notes of what you see, or use your phone notes app and camera to record information.

OBSERVE

Take time to really observe and look around. Who are the people you see? What are they doing? What are the buildings like? What are the major businesses in town? What natural features do you see? Remember to look for environmental strengths and concerns. For example, do you notice litter in one part of town, but not in another? Why do you think that is? What other questions can you ask about your community's environment?

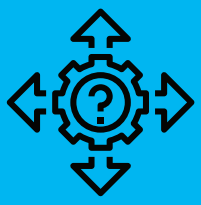
WHAT ELSE WOULD BE HELPFUL?

Did your inventory make you think of more questions to investigate? Would going on another inventory in a separate area be helpful, or maybe doing a different inventory? During your debrief discussion, mention your questions to see if you can investigate further!

PORTFOLIO

Your sketches, thoughts, questions, and conclusions from your inventory are great additions to your portfolio! Did you collect data and record it somewhere? Keep it! You may need to reference it later in the project.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.



DECISION MAKING

Throughout your project, you'll be faced with making decisions as a group. They could vary from big decisions, like which issue to tackle, to smaller ones, like who will take notes. Reflect on how making decisions felt in your journal and keep it in your PORTFOLIO!

It's important to make these decisions together, democratically. This way everyone gets to contribute! (See TIP Card 5 Working Together & Hearing All Voices).

Here are a few guidelines and different ways that you can make decisions as a group:

SET TIME LIMITS

It's important to make a wise decision, but after a while it's important just to make a decision. Decide when the decision must be made, put it in your calendar (See TIP Card 3 Staying Organized) and stick to your schedule.

SET CRITERIA

What are you looking for? What requirements should there be? If you were buying a bicycle, your criteria might be:

1) under $500;
2) sturdy enough to take on trails;
3) can fit on the family car's bike rack

CHOOSE A METHOD FOR MAKING THE DECISION

Will each person share their opinions one at a time with the group? Will you start in small groups? Will you apply criteria as a whole group? Will you take a majority vote? Look to the Step 2 Resource, Democratic Voting Process at earthforceresources.org/decide-step-2-issue-selection for more information!

Here are a few methods to make a democratic group decision using criteria. More information can be found at the above webpage.

- **Dot Voting**: A group voting method using a set of criteria.
- **Criteria-Based Decision Making**: Similar to Dot Voting, individuals vote using the same criteria and then individual scores are added together.
- **Discussion & Majority Rules**: Discuss all sides of the issue, then submit an anonymous vote. Majority rules. If the vote is close, do another round of discussion and vote again.

Regardless of method, ensure:

- **That you get the facts first**. Don't be too quick to choose or eliminate something if you're not sure of all the information. It's okay to circle back to another quick round of research.
- **Make sure everyone shares their opinions**. Try to think about the opposing view. Remember, you can't always have your way. Group decisions are tough. Try to understand why the final decision was made and support the group even if you disagreed with the decision.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

FINDING THE ROOT CAUSE OF CONCERNS

A good way to narrow an issue is to look more deeply into the root causes. Once you've completed your inventories, you have a list of community environmental concerns. These concerns may not be community-wide issues, but the effects of those root issues.

You'll want your action project to tackle a root cause to make sure your project is sustainable, meaningful, and impactful to your community.

1. Based on what you already know about your concerns, brainstorm their potential causes in your community. Doing this as a group may be helpful.
2. Looking at the causes you identified for your initial list of issues, are any of them the same, or really similar? Group those together.
3. Take a few moments to discuss the causes of those concerns. (You may need to do a little research or talk to an expert to find out.) How big are these root causes? Do they go beyond your community, or still within the boundaries you're investigating (ask your educator if you're unsure!).
    a. If they are still within your community, use this new list as your root causes.
    b. If they are beyond your community, it's great to discuss the big picture, but they're probably not good to move forward with for projects. Go back to the previous round (list from line 2) and use those as your root causes.

Now you have a list of your root causes within your community! Use this list to move forward into the voting process to choose one to work on (Step 2 of the Process, Criteria-based Decision-Making, see TIP Card 7 Decision Making).

Need additional help on Root Cause Analysis? We have an activity using a tree diagram as a visual that may be of help. Look to the Earth Force resources site under Step 1 earthforceresources.org/discover-step-1-environmental-inventory

PORTFOLIO

Take a few moments and write in a journal or in your personal notes about how this process felt. What was it like making this group decision? Were you happy with the outcome? Do you think it'll move the Process forward in a good direction? Maybe draw what your classroom looked like while you were making these decisions to go along with your entry.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

MOVING FROM ISSUES TO PROJECTS

Right in the middle of this Process is a big transition. Your team switches from thinking about and narrowing down issues, to brainstorming and selecting projects. This transition can be difficult.

It's important not to begin working on projects too soon - you risk creating an action that isn't sustainable or impactful that way. On the flip side, if you linger on issues too long, you could lose some valuable time to work on your action planning.

Use this guideline to help strike the right balance! Remember, your educator and experts are also there to help keep things moving, so if you feel stuck ask for help.

1. You've chosen an issue, and done research focused on policies and practices (see TIP Card 12 Policy vs Practice). **MAKE A LIST** of the policies and practices keeping this issue in place. Doing this as a large group will keep everyone on the same page.
    a. It is helpful to keep the policies and practices separate from one another.

2. **ANALYZE THE LIST**. What is really keeping your issue in your community? Does one stand out as something you can tackle?
    a. Remember, you want to make a meaningful, impactful, and sustainable change!
    b. If one policy or practice naturally stands out to all of you, great! You know what your action **goal** is and can jump to #4. If not, move on to #3.

3. **DISCUSS & VOTE**. If more than one policy or practice seems like a good option to work to change, discuss the pros and cons to each (maybe in the form of a debate?) and then vote democratically.
    a. Look to TIP Card 5 Working Together & Hearing All Voices and TIP Card 7 Decision Making for additional info!
    b. After voting you should have a defined action **goal** to help you create the change you want to see.

4. You're now ready to start developing **STRATEGY IDEAS**. Look to TIP Card 10 Elements Of An Action Project for more information.
    a. Look to the Step 4 Resources webpage for added tools and guidance: earthforceresources.org/decide-step-4-strategy-selection
    b. You did it! You successfully transitioned from issues to projects. Way to go!

PORTFOLIO
Take a moment at the end of this transition from issue to projects to reflect in your journal about how you feel. Was this an easy process? Are you excited to move forward?

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

ELEMENTS OF AN ACTION PLAN

Your action plan is the blueprint for your project - the thing you will actually do in your community to address your issue. You can format your plan in lots of different ways. The nature of your project and your tasks will determine the length and style of your plan.

That being said, all good plans have the same core elements:

RECAP THE ISSUE

What was the root cause of your issue that you identified?

POLICY OR PRACTICE

You did a ton of research on that issue. You found regulatory policies (or lack thereof) and community practices during that research. Which policy or community practice do you want to focus your action project on changing? See TIP Card 12 Policy vs Practice for more information.

RESULTING IMPACT

What do you hope your project will result in? What's the community impact you hope to see? What is the outcome you are hoping for?

STRATEGIES

What do you plan to do to make this impact?

For each strategy, decide:

- **Tasks**. What tasks are required for each strategy?
- **Timeline**. What are the deadlines?
- **Assignment of tasks**. Who will do what?
- **Resources**. What money and materials are needed and available?
- **Allies**. Who will help you?
- **Obstacles**. What might stand in your way?

To organize your thoughts on these elements use the organizers on Step 4 Resources page earthforceresources.org/decide-step-4-strategy-selection. Particularly the Project Goal and Strategy Statement, and Defining a Course of Action.

Need help organizing Strategy ideas? Use the Step 5 Resources page earthforceresources.org/act-planning-and-taking-action, there are many organizers there to help!

PORTFOLIO

Keep your action plan ideas! Did you do this in writing or visually? Keep these pieces! Even if this plan isn't the action plan that gets voted on or chosen in the end, it's still a valuable piece of work that you put time and effort into.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURES & PEER ACCOUNTABILITY

You may have self-selected groups before, but have you been held accountable to other groups to get your work done, rather than just your educator? Have you created your own group work plan and figured out what needs to get done, and by when?

This may seem a little unusual, but this is how adults work in their daily jobs, and how projects work in committee structures.

CREATING COMMITTEES

Your educator may ask your input for your top 2 or 3 committees and then assign your groups from there, or you may totally self-select into your group(s). This just depends on your class size and how much work there is to divide up. No matter what, you'll have an important role to play!

If you're self-selecting, choose something that is interesting to you, but also plays to your strengths. If your top choice is already full, choose another committee that you think suits your skills.

EMPHASIZE PEOPLE'S STRENGTHS

Once you're in your committee, learn about one another's strengths. Get to know each other if you aren't already friends, and figure out who might play which roles within your group.

BALANCE THE WORKLOAD

If each of you sign up for three tasks, make sure that one person doesn't have three really big tasks while another has three small tasks.

WORK TOGETHER

For tasks that seem really hard or boring, make it more fun by doing it with a group of people. If there is a task that nobody wants to volunteer for, stop and think about your plans. Is this task necessary? Are you sure that you are on the right path?

INCLUDE EVERYBODY

No one should feel left out. Make sure everyone has a role to play and is enjoying their work.

Here's a list of helpful resources while working in your committee. Some are other TIPS Cards, and some are online resources. Don't forget, your educator can always help as well!

- TIP Card 3 Staying Organized
- TIP Card 5 Working Together & Hearing All Voices
- TIP Card 7 Decision Making
- TIP Card 17 Outreach to Professionals: Formal Letters and Emails
- TIP Card 18 Outreach to Professionals: Phone Etiquette
- This webpage has committee budget sheets, task sheets, and help on fine tuning action plans! earthforceresources.org/act-planning-and-taking-action

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

POLICY VS. PRACTICE

When researching, it is beneficial to focus efforts on the issue's policies and community practices.

A POLICY is a principle or plan of action established by a government, organization, or individual - essentially the overseeing decision-maker for that community. For example: The speed limit is 35 mph on Main St. You can think of a policy as *how things are supposed to be done*.

COMMUNITY PRACTICES are what people actually do in that community, or how they behave. For example: People tend to drive 45 mph on Main St. (You can think of a practice as what people actually do.)

Community members may or may not follow policies. That is something that should be investigated during the research process. See TIPS Cards 20 and 21 on Interviews and Surveys which may be helpful in finding out that information.

There are 2 types of policies. Both are important to research, but come from different sources of information.

PUBLIC POLICIES which are policies that are written by people in government; they are federal, state, and local policies (laws). To find information on public policies, turn to government websites. These can be tricky, but look to TIP Card 14 Finding Government Information to help. Government officials' offices can often help to explain a policy.

PRIVATE POLICIES are policies that businesses, organizations, or other groups (like your school) establish. These are still rules, even though they are not enforced by the government. To find out information about these private policies, you will likely need to go to the organization that has the policy in place. Check their website first, and then ask to set up an interview (See TIP Card 20 Interviews) or contact other stakeholders.

Do you need more information on Policies and Practices? We have more resources online under Step 3 Resources on this webpage: earthforceresources.org/discover-step-3-policy-and-practice-research

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

FINDING & EVALUATING RESEARCH SOURCES

There are many ways to research your community. Make sure you have your educator's permission whenever you're doing online research!

TO FIND SOURCES Try these places:

- Google your issue and community name to see what comes up.
- Check out local newspapers, TV stations, and magazines articles.
- Reach out to local stakeholders to interview or ask questions via email (see TIP Card 16 Identifying Stakeholders & Beginning Questions).
- Speak to your librarian or Media Specialist--they may be able to pull information for you!

MAKE SURE YOUR SOURCES ARE CREDIBLE

While researching, especially when using the internet, it's important to make sure that the resources you are using are reliable and relevant.

Keep the following guidelines in mind when considering a source:

- **Note the date**. Is this article recent or outdated? Your educator can give you a date to use as a reference if it is relevant or not.
- **Look for bias**. Does the article or story state facts or opinions? If it states facts, how do you know the facts are accurate? Does it say where the information came from? If it states opinions, whose opinions are they? Does it show a variety of opinions?
- **Compare sources**. How do different sources cover the same environmental story? Does one newspaper place the story on the front page, while other place it toward the back? What other similarities and differences between sources' coverage of the environment did you notice?

Need additional help on evaluating sources? We have an entire webpage dedicated to resources on this subject. Check out earthforceresources.org/media-literacy for more info!

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

FINDING & USING MAPS

Maps can give you a wide variety of information that can be very helpful throughout this Process!

Maps might show:

- **Physical features** such as lakes, mountains, or meadows
- **Public land** such as parks, state forests, or wildlife refuges
- **Businesses and industries** such as car dealerships, power plants, or malls
- **Demographic information** such as statistics about age, race, occupation, or income levels of people in your community
- **Political boundaries** of such areas as congressional districts, counties, or precincts

GOOGLE MAPS is the easiest place to find maps online. It is easy to use and has many features that can be helpful. There are satellite images as well.

If a quick internet search doesn't give you the information you need, here are a few additional map sources to check out:

- **The school media center** — Check out the reference section, or perhaps your library has a map room. They likely have historical maps of your community in the past.
- **Local government agencies** — The Parks Department will have maps of the parks in your area. The Public Works Dept. will have maps of the sewer system. The Police Dept. will have maps showing where different kinds of crimes have occurred.
- **Federal government agencies** — Any federal agency that manages land will have maps or photographs of the land under its management. (See TIP Card 15 Finding Government Information)
- **Local Watershed Coalitions** will have maps of the watershed that your community is in - These are usually posted directly to their websites!

Compare various maps; each of them might tell you something different about your community.

HELPFUL TYPES OF MAPS

Land Ownership Maps	Agricultural Maps	Natural Resource Maps	Maps of Businesses	Public Transportation	Congressional Districts
Emergency Information	Geologic Maps	Highway Maps	Wildlife Distributions	Weather Maps	Waterway maps
Tide & Current Maps	Census Maps	Aerial Photographs	School District Boundaries	Topographic Maps	Tourism Maps

Need help reading a map? Your classmates, educator, and school librarian are all great people to turn to if you need help understanding a map.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

FINDING GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

Federal, state, and local government representatives and agencies are helpful resources for research. These sites can be great sources for maps, data, and to find contacts to interview.

US GOVERNMENT

US Congressional committees conduct hearings and collect expert testimony and commission special studies on all kinds of issues. There are several websites to search for this information.

- Government Publishing Office: gpo.gov
- Office of Congressional Information and Publishing: loc.gov/crsinfo/about/ofc-cip.html
- Committee Reports of the Congress: congress.gov/congressional-reports/about
- Committee Reports of the Senate: senate.gov/reference/common/faq/how_to_committee_reports.htm

FEDERAL AGENCIES conduct scientific research on environmental topics:

- NOAA Research: research.noaa.gov
- Research/US EPA: epa.gov/research

STATE AGENCIES

- Health and Environmental Agencies of US States and Territories: epa.gov/home/health-and-environmental-agencies-us-states-and-territories
- EPA for State and Local Governments: www3.epa.gov/epahome/statelocal.htm

FEDERAL LEGISLATORS have offices in local communities as well as in Washington, DC. Email and phone communication is best.

- Find your US Senators: senate.gov/senators/contact
- Find your US Representatives: house.gov/representatives/find

STATE LEGISLATORS have local offices in your community and offices in their state's capital. Email and phone communication is best. The Library of Congress has two websites that will help you find your state legislator:

- State legislative information: congress.gov/state-legislature-websites
- State government resources: loc.gov/law/help/guide/states.php

If you're looking for additional stakeholders more broadly, see TIP Card 16 Identifying Stakeholders & Beginning Questions

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS & BEGINNING QUESTIONS

As you gather information about your issue, particularly when you are researching policy and practice information, you'll soon realize that there are people and organizations that care about this issue in some way. These people are called STAKEHOLDERS.

Stakeholders are important to identify because they can be an ally to your project, may already be working to resolve the issue, or may be playing a part to keep it in place. All types of stakeholders are important to hear from and try to understand their perspectives.

IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS

As you research policy and practice information, stakeholders will naturally arise. Consider the following common stakeholders:

- Local government agencies
- Small businesses
- Local environmental groups and nonprofits
- Schools
- Homeowners
- Large industry
- Agriculture
- *Any other ideas?*

If targeting a specific geographic area, use GOOGLE MAPS to target your search. See TIP Card 14 Finding & Using Maps for more information.

Once you have a list of stakeholders you'd like to request information from, a standard set of questions might be helpful to start the conversation. You can always make changes to your questions depending on stakeholder answers as you go.

ASKING QUESTIONS

These questions could help begin a conversation with any stakeholder to help gain further insight into their stance on your issue, their knowledge base, and how they might support or challenge you.

- What do you already know about this issue in our community?
- Do you know of anything already being done about this issue?
- Do you know of any possibilities for addressing this issue?
- Do you know if anyone else is working on this issue? Is interested in this issue? And/or affected by this issue?
- Do you have ideas on other stakeholders we should contact?

PORTFOLIO

Did you contact any stakeholders? Keep your notes or ask permission to record your conversations! These are great portfolio additions, and contacts to have in the future!

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

OUTREACH TO PROFESSIONALS: FORMAL LETTERS AND EMAILS

Writing to an official is different than writing to your friend. Whether communicating by email or letter, it is important to keep it polite and formal.

BE POLITE

If you disagree with this person's viewpoint on something, explain your arguments politely. Consider doing an empathy mapping activity before writing to them to understand their viewpoint better (See Empathy Mapping Activity under Step 3 Resources here: earthforceresources.org/discover-step-3-policy-and-practice-research)

PROPERLY OPEN AND CLOSE YOUR MESSAGE

At the beginning of your message, state the recipient's name, title, and business address. Then begin by writing "Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____," or if you are writing a general business account and you're not sure who exactly will be reading it, you can start by writing "To whom it may concern at (insert organization's name),". Close your letter with a pleasant salutation, your name, school/group, and contact information.

PLACE KEY INFORMATION UP FRONT

In the first paragraph explain the purpose for your message and the most important information you're trying to convey. Are you asking for something from this person? Do you want to bring a problem to this person's attention?

BE CLEAR

EXPLAIN WHERE YOU GOT YOUR INFORMATION

Show that you have thought about all sides of the issue, but state your opinion firmly. Back it up with facts.

KEEP IT SHORT AND SIMPLE

Keep the message under a page (if you're writing an email, keep it to 3 paragraphs).

PROOFREAD

Have a few people check your work for spelling and grammatical errors as well as clarity. **Before sending anything, make sure you have the final okay from your educator!**

HAVE A CLEAR ASK

Be very clear about what you are asking this person to do. Do you want them to give you information on a certain topic? Do you want them to attend an event? Do you want to know if there are ways that they can support your project? Have a very specific request for this person.

SAVE A COPY OF YOUR LETTER / EMAIL for your own records. This is great for your **PORTFOLIO**! Keep your notes or ask permission to record your conversations. These are great portfolio additions to be able to reflect on later in the project, but also amazing contacts to have in the future!

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

OUTREACH TO PROFESSIONALS: PHONE ETIQUETTE

Although most communication is done through email, it's likely you'll find yourself needing to speak on the phone with a stakeholder, volunteer, or media outlet at some point during this Process. Speaking with a professional is a little different than speaking with a friend or family member.

Here are a few guidelines to help:

PREPARE FOR THE CALL

Write down what information you want to find out. Make a list of questions you want answered. On the flip side, write down what information you need to provide this person if they are helping complete a set of tasks for you.

WORK IN PAIRS

With one person talking, and the other listening in and taking notes, you can be sure that you won't miss any important information.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF

First thing, introduce yourself and explain where you are from and why you're calling if it hasn't been established previously. Be proud of what you are doing!

BE POLITE

Find out if this is a good time for the person to speak with you. If not, explain who you are and ask when you can call back.

SPEAK CLEARLY AND SLOWLY

If you're a little nervous, you may be speaking a bit faster than normally. Try to slow down to make sure this person understands you.

ASK QUESTIONS

Make sure you understand the information the person is telling you. Don't be afraid to ask the person to repeat something or explain it more.

REMEMBER TO TAKE NOTES

See TIP Card 4 on Taking Notes. This is also a great **PORTFOLIO** addition! Keep your notes or ask permission to record your conversations.

ASK ABOUT OTHER RESOURCES

Maybe this person can refer you to someone else or send additional information that would be helpful to you.

THANKS!

Make sure you thank the person for taking the time to help you in an email or a note card in the mail. See TIP Card 31 on Writing Thank-You Notes.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

GUEST SPEAKERS AND EXPERT VOLUNTEERS

Inviting someone to speak to your group can be a great alternative to an interview or survey. If looking to include multiple perspectives at once, consider a panel or World Cafe set up. Need help finding perspectives? See TIP Card 16 Identifying Stakeholders & Beginning Questions.

Whenever you invite someone to visit your group, consider the following:

PLAN AHEAD

Book your speaker in advance. Choose several possible dates to propose to the speaker or expert volunteer. As you call potential guests and volunteers, explain the purpose for their visit and what you're hoping to learn from them. The more information they have ahead of time the better they can prepare.

CALL TO CONFIRM

Call a few days before the visit to confirm that the guest is coming. Find out if the speaker needs any special materials or equipment (AV hook-up is a big one!)

MAKE SURE YOUR GROUP IS PREPARED

Know what you want to learn from the guest. Prepare questions in advance. If there are any activities or project ideas you're wanting their advice on, make sure everything is good to go.

ASSIGN ROLES

Have someone greet the guest. Designate someone to introduce the speaker. (Make sure this person knows the speaker's background.) Someone also needs to moderate the discussion and thank the speaker at the end.

HAVE A VARIETY OF VIEWPOINTS REPRESENTED

If you are having a panel or World Cafe style discussion, different people usually speak on the same topic or issue. Find out the opinions and expertise of the guests ahead of time so you can make sure there are a variety of ideas presented. **Professionals are used to debating and discussing different points of view. This is a great opportunity to learn from them!**

SEND A THANK-YOU NOTE

Thank your guests for their time either with a written thank-you note or a thank-you email within a day or two of their visit. See TIP Card 31 on Writing Thank-You Notes for more information.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

INTERVIEWS

Conducting interviews are a great way to gather information (research!) your own community by collecting the knowledge and opinions of community members and stakeholders firsthand. Whenever you are interviewing anyone — family member, environmental expert, government official — remember to:

PLAN AHEAD

Call and ask for a good time to conduct an interview. Try to meet the person face-to-face if you can, or use a video chat platform if that's not possible. If meeting in person, make sure you choose a safe, public place like a coffee shop or library. Never conduct an interview at someone's home, including your own.

EXPLAIN

When you set up the date and time, explain the purpose for the interview. Tell the interviewee approximately how long the interview will last, and try to provide a few questions ahead of time so they can prepare.

BE ORGANIZED

Know what you want to talk about, and have a list of questions ready. Try to keep the questions focused on one topic. Leave space between your questions so you can write down their responses. This keeps your notes organized and easy to review later. If possible, have two people on the call so one can focus on note taking, while the other is in the conversation. You can always switch roles halfway through!

BE ON TIME FOR THE APPOINTMENT AND DRESS PROFESSIONALLY

TAKE NOTES

You won't be able to remember everything from the interview. Recording an interview might help, which is easy to do if on a video chat platform. Ask in advance for permission to record. For more information, refer to TIP Card 4: Taking Notes.

BE ACCURATE

If you're not sure what someone said in an interview, ask them to repeat it or explain it to you. It's also okay to ask them to pause while you record important information.

MAKE MORE CONNECTIONS

Ask for names and numbers of other people who also might be able to help you. Leave your contact information so the interviewee can contact you again.

BE POLITE

Keep it short. Try to stick to the time frame you set. Make sure you thank them and follow up by sending a thank-you note. (See TIP Card 31 on Writing Thank-You Notes)

PORTFOLIO

Keep your notes from your interviews or recording if they gave you permission. These are great portfolio additions, and contacts to have in the future! Interviewing is a great skill to have, and now you have proof that you can do it.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

SURVEYS

Surveys are especially useful as a type of Community Inventory (TIP Card 6 on Community Inventory)**, as well as a form of research on a specific issue.**

Surveys can help you find out:
- What others in your community think are environmental concerns
- What are potential causes of environmental concerns
- What they think could be done about certain issues
- How they feel about potential project ideas
- *Many other aspects of issues and projects as well, get creative!*

CREATING A SURVEY

Make sure the survey questions are worded so that your respondents clearly understand what you are asking. Think about how your survey will be taken. Does a digital platform make sense, or do you plan to interview folks using paper? Both are doable, but do affect the design.

Some guidelines for writing the survey questions:
- Make most of your questions multiple choice or on a likert scale (on a scale from 1-5…)
- Consider using checklists for respondents to rank their answers
- Remember the K.I.S.S. rule - Keep it simple and short
- Avoid embarrassing questions
- Test your survey first with friends or family and ask for feedback
- Time how long it takes to finish - Aim for under 5 minutes

SELECTING A SAMPLE

A survey is a way to get a representative sample of the different viewpoints in your community. You do not need to survey everyone, just a sample from each of the different groups in your community.

Think about including a representative sample of the following:
- Different age groups
- Homeowners or renters
- Business people
- Different ethnic and cultural groups
- *Any other ideas?*

CONDUCTING A SURVEY

If doing paper surveys and meeting people face-to-face, be sure to:
- Introduce yourself by name, your school/ group, and why you are conducting the survey
- Ask the person if they are willing to take the survey (It's okay if they say no)
- Be polite
- You may read the survey to the person and record their answers OR have them complete the survey themselves

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

PETITIONS

A petition is a letter with many signatures on it. It is a concise way to show that many people support your plan. Petitions can be helpful to bring to decision-makers when you ask for the change you're hoping to see in the community. Petitions show that you have support from the community behind you.

It's important to note that a petition on its own is not a civic action project. It is a helpful tool that can be used to be persuasive when speaking to decision-makers.

When writing a petition:

MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR PURPOSE What are you petitioning for? To whom are you writing this? What do you want?

BE CLEAR ABOUT WHO YOU ARE Include the name of your group or your school. Briefly state your overall goal.

BE BRIEF Keep the petition to a couple of paragraphs. You can also write a short list of statements or things that you want. Leave plenty of room for signatures.

CHOOSE A FORMAT You can create a digital petition and/or one on paper. If going the paper route, getting signatures will require you to approach people in your community, which should be done in a safe manner. Talk to your educator about taking proper safety measures.

When you gather signatures:

START WITH PEOPLE YOU KNOW Get your friends and family to sign. Other people will be more likely to sign if there are already signatures on it.

MAKE SURE PEOPLE READ THE WHOLE PETITION Let them make up their own minds. Be ready to explain in more detail if requested. Be polite and accepting of people who disagree with you and choose not to sign.

FOLLOW UP A petition will be a lot more effective if you use other strategies along with it. Make sure you know how the petition fits with your overall plan. See TIP Card 10 Elements of An Action Plan for more information.

PORTFOLIO
Make a copy of your signed petition for your portfolio! It's quite an accomplishment, and you should be proud! Write a journal entry to go along with it and reflect on how petitioning made you feel. What was it like to speak to people and ask them to sign it?

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

One of the most common fears, public speaking only gets easier with practice. Until you become an expert yourself, here are a few tips to help!

PLAN AHEAD

Know the overall purpose for your speech. Write out exactly what you are going to say. Or if you feel confident enough, just make an outline of your ideas. Practice your speech in front of friends and family that you trust and who could give you some pointers if you need it.

STICK TO THE POINT

Keep it brief. Some of the most powerful speeches have been as short as President Abraham Lincoln's two-minute Gettysburg Address.

CATCH PEOPLE'S ATTENTION

What is your message? Say it clearly and directly at the beginning of your speech. Say it again at the end of your speech, so people will remember it.

MAKE EYE CONTACT

Even if you write out your speech word for word, try not to appear like you are reading it. Be sincere. Think about what you are saying and pretend you are talking one-on-one with someone you know.

SPEAK SLOWLY AND CLEARLY

Nerves tend to make people speak faster than they normally do. Breathe slowly and intentionally take pauses during your talk. It may sound too slow in your head, but you're probably right on track.

VISUALS HELP

Having visuals to reference and point to can help pace your talk. If you can, consider using some sort of graphic or presentation.

AND OF COURSE, RELAX!

It's okay to be a little bit nervous. Just pretend you are having a conversation.

"The trick is not to rid your stomach of butterflies, but to make them fly in formation." UNKNOWN

PORTFOLIO

Ask a friend to take a video of you speaking. This will be a great way to show that you can speak publicly, and make notes on how to improve in the future! Make sure to save a copy of your written speech. It's a great memento!

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

PREPARING FOR MEETINGS WITH DECISION-MAKERS

An important part of this process is meeting with decision-makers and clearly asking them for a change in your community. This ask is part of the strategy that you developed to resolve the issue you identified.

The following people are examples of decision-makers:

- School Principals
- School Boards and/or Superintendents
- City Councils
- Mayor's Office
- State Legislators
- Governor's Office

When meeting with these people to ask them to make the change you would like to see, use the following guidelines to help prepare for and navigate the conversation.

KEEP IT SHORT

These people are happy to meet with you, but have very full schedules. If possible, try to book time during pre-arranged meetings like monthly school board or city council meetings where they are already planning on attending.

KNOW YOUR FACTS

Back up your request with facts and figures as to why they should agree with you. Your opinion matters too, but if there are science and budgetary reasons as well, that will matter even more.

SPEAK CLEARLY

When presenting your ideas, it is important to speak clearly. See Tip 23 Public Speaking for more information.

SHOW VISUALS

If the space allows, present visuals along with your ask. Pictures and graphs of your issue can be very powerful and add to your reasoning.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

GENERAL PROCESS FOR CHANGING LOCAL LEGISLATION

Earth Force projects often result in youth changing local legislation. While every community is structured a little differently, the general process is similar. If you are interested in creating new, or changing existing legislation, use the following outline to help get you started. Look to TIP Card 15 Finding Government Information for additional resources.

READ the current legislation governing your issue. How old is it? Who created it last time? Knowing this information will likely help you move forward.

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT

Who is responsible for this law? What level of government oversees this legislation? Is it a national law or a state law? Is it specific to your county or city? Depending on what level of government depends on who you need to speak to. If it is a national law, seek the help of your Congressperson or Senator. A state law would be your State House Representative or State Senator. And a local law might be your Mayor, City Councilperson, or County Executive.

RESEARCH YOUR COMMUNITY

How does your specific community go about making these changes? Can you go speak with whomever created the legislation the last time around and pitch your ideas? Can you go speak at the next city council meeting or the appropriate governing body convening? Make sure you have done research on the decision-makers' stance on relevant issues before you speak to them, you may be able to find helpful information ahead of time.

SPEAK to the decision-makers. You have a clear idea of what you'd like to change and how you'd like to do it. You have researched their policies and position on major issues, now is the time to get on their schedule and pitch them your solution.

WAIT & TRY AGAIN

The levers of democracy can take time. They may decide to vote immediately, or table the discussion for a later time. Be patient, and try again at a later date if your issue gets pushed. Persistence and patience is key.

ADAPTED FROM:
https://www.wikihow.com/Change-a-Law-Through-the-Democratic-Process
https://www.theclassroom.com/how-to-address-letters-to-state-senators-12082921.htmlhttps://classroom.synonym.com/how-to-change-a-law-through-the-democratic-process-12078184.html

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

FUNDRAISING

Not all action projects require money, but if yours does, you may need to do some fundraising. A great way to fundraise is to think of ways to raise money *and* raise awareness about your action project at the same time.

KNOW YOUR GOAL

How much money do you have to raise? Create an itemized budget to set a goal. Look to the Step 5 resources page for our Committee Budget Template (earthforceresources.org/act-planning-and-taking-action)!

TARGET YOUR AUDIENCE

Who will be most likely to contribute? Focus on getting their attention. Are you targeting individuals or community businesses or both?

ASK FOR OTHER DONATIONS IN ADDITION TO MONEY

Let people know that they can donate materials or services if they don't want to give money. Any time your project is publicized — in a newspaper article, if you hold an event — mention the materials and services that you need, and let people know how they can make a donation. Anything helps!

THANK EVERYONE

Keep a list of who has contributed, and send thank-you notes (See TIP Card 31 Writing Thank-You Notes). This also keeps donors posted on how their contributions have helped. Thank-you emails are also appropriate.

A few ideas:

- Use social media and crowdfunding sites to reach more potential donors
- DonorsChoose (donorschoose.org) and Green Apple Day of Service (greenapple.org) fund community projects like these
- Write letters to local businesses explaining your project and your needs (see TIP Card 17 on Formal Letters and Emails)
- Hold a walk-a-thon, bike-a-thon, dance-a-thon, serve-a-thon
- Sell T-shirts, bumper stickers, reusable water bottles, reusable grocery bags
- Sell raffle tickets
- Ask a business to sponsor your project

If the opportunity arises, there may be grants available as well. See TIP Card 27 on Writing A Grant Proposal if looking to receive funding that way.

PORTFOLIO

Did you write any promotional material like fliers or posters to help fundraise? Save one for yourself and add it to your portfolio!

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

WRITING A GRANT PROPOSAL

To raise money, you might ask an organization or business for a grant. Grants usually have applications that you need to fill out or proposals that you need to write.

The format for the proposal may be specified by the organization, but in general, grants usually include:

PROJECT SUMMARY This is a short overview of your action project and what you are asking for.

BACKGROUND/ RATIONALE This section is basically background information on why you are doing your project and the issue you are trying to fix. Let's say your project is to restore a pond near your school. Explain the history of that pond. What animals used to live there? How was their habitat destroyed? Why is it important to restore their habitat?

PROJECT PLAN What exactly does your group intend to do? What do you hope your plan will achieve? Why should this organization/ individual give you money? What's in it for them?

BUDGET What is your overall budget? How will the grant money be used? How does the money you're asking for fit into your overall budget?

DESCRIPTION OF YOUR GROUP Explain who you are and why you think you will be successful. Send along your resumes if you have them. (See TIP Card 32 Building A Resume)

HOW YOUR PROPOSAL FITS THEIR NEEDS Often times funding agencies are looking to fund specific types of projects, or projects that focus on certain topics. Make sure to mention how your projects fit within their goals/needs if they ask for it.

When writing your proposal, remember to:

WRITE CLEARLY

PROOFREAD Grant requests should look "official." Ask an outside reader to check over your work before you send it out. As always, do not send anything before getting permission from your educator!

TRY TO INCLUDE A LETTER OF SUPPORT from an adult. It's not a necessity, but it will give you more credibility. Have you been working with an expert in the community or an outside organization as a partner? They would be a great candidate for a Letter of Support.

PORTFOLIO
Did you help write a grant proposal? That's a BIG DEAL! Save a copy for yourself and add it to your portfolio.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

MEDIA ATTENTION

Regardless of what your action project is, you can use the media to get the word out. See TIP Card 29 Writing An Article for general writing guidelines. Some ways to contact the media are:

PRESS RELEASE

A press release briefly describes your action project or tells about a specific event. Newspapers, TV, or radio stations that receive a press release may send a reporter, or they might use your press release as is. After you send it, follow-up with the editor.

- Keep it short and simple, no more than a page
- Use an eye-catching headline
- Make it easy to read and put the most important information up front (who, what, where, when)
- Include your name and phone number
- Include a photo or link to a video if possible

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor usually voice an opinion about a specific current issue or proposal.

- Look in the editorial sections of your local papers to find out where to send letters
- Check to see if your paper has an environmental editor
- Be brief - usually 500 words max.
- Send your letter to different newspapers in your area
- For more help, see TIP Card 17 Writing Formal Letters and Emails

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms each have their strengths when trying to draw attention to your action project. Advertising specific events? Try Facebook. Trying to connect with stakeholders and bring general awareness to your project? Twitter would be great! Instagram and Tumblr are also platforms that can be useful.

PSA

Try recording a Public Service Announcement (PSA) instead of writing.

- Time your PSA to last 10, 20, or 30 seconds. (10 seconds spots are played the most often)
- Include the name of your group and the contact information for how to get ahold of your group leader (an adult).
- Decide who your target audience is, and write the PSA with them in mind
- Contact your local stations and channels for specific requirements

FIND THE NAME OF A REPORTER WHO COVERS YOUR TOPIC

Your letter or press release has a better chance of being printed if it is sent to a specific person.

MAKE YOUR STORY STAND OUT

What is different about what you are doing that makes it newsworthy?

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

WRITING AN ARTICLE

An article is a great way to spread the word about the issue you've identified and gather support for your action project. There are many different points during this Process where you may be writing, but generally speaking, these guidelines should help you create a great article.

KNOW YOUR PURPOSE

Why are you writing this article? Keeping the main goal in mind will help you stay focused. What are you hoping readers will do or learn from reading this piece?

MAKE AN OUTLINE FIRST

List the most important points you want to cover. You might want to divide your outline into Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How to help you organize your thoughts.

CATCH PEOPLE'S ATTENTION

State your most important point in the first paragraph. State it again in the last paragraph. Try to write a title that is both eye-catching and informative.

DISTINGUISH BETWEEN FACT AND OPINION

Is your article a fact article or an editorial? Make sure your information is accurate. If it is an editorial, back up each opinion with facts. Make sure to include citations so your readers know where you are getting your information.

BE CONCISE

As a general rule, keep the article to three or four paragraphs. Depending on where this article will be published, a different length guideline may be appropriate.

INCLUDE PHOTOGRAPHS

Make sure to get permission to use them before sending them in, but visuals are always a great addition to any written piece if possible!

Look to TIP Card 28 Media Attention to consider the type of publication your article may be submitted to.

PORTFOLIO

Did you help write an article? That's amazing! Save a copy for yourself and add it to your portfolio.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

TELLING YOUR STORY

Share your work! You can help inspire other young people to get involved in resolving local environmental issues by telling your story.

Include identifying information:
- Name of school or organization
- City and state
- Who to contact for more information (name, phone number, e-mail)

REVIEW YOUR PORTFOLIO

Go back to the very beginning of your project experience. This is why we created a portfolio, to help you remember and reflect.

Answer these questions:
- How did you learn about your community in order to select your issue?
- Which issue did you choose and why? How did you choose that issue?
- What policies or practices did you research?
- What course of action (goals and strategies) did you choose?
- Did you reach your goal(s)? Why or why not?
- What still needs to be done? What did you learn for next time?

KEEP YOUR STORY SHORT

Try to write your story in one page.

SUBMIT YOUR STORY TO YOUR EDUCATOR

SEND A COLOR PHOTO OF YOUR GROUP with your story. Your photo can only be used if there is a completed permission form for every student in the picture.

REPORT PROGRESS

Let people that helped you with your action project know how your group has done. Stakeholders that you've contacted will be happy to hear from you.

Make sure your educator submits your story to Earth Force! They can email us at earthforce@earthforce.org or use the Project Submission Form on our website: earthforceresources.org/project-story-form

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

WRITING THANK-YOU NOTES

These projects involve community stakeholders, volunteers, and many others along the way. You'll need to send a thank-you note to show them that you took their work seriously and appreciated their efforts. This can be done as a letter in the mail or over email. Both are totally acceptable.

When writing thank-you notes, remember to:

BE PROMPT

If you wait more than a day or two, you might forget, but a late thank-you note is better than no thank-you note.

TELL THEM WHAT YOU LEARNED OR ENJOYED

Did a guest speaker help you narrow down your research? Show you the other side of an issue? Give you the name of an organization that helped you more? People will appreciate hearing something specific.

PROOFREAD

Thank-you notes can be less formal than business letters — they can be handwritten or typed. But they should still be neat, free of mistakes, and easy to read. **As always, before sending anything out to the community, make sure you have your educator's permission.**

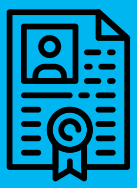
REMEMBER TO SEND THANK-YOU NOTES TO

- Guest speakers
- People you interviewed
- People who volunteered their time
- People who gave you money or materials to your project
- Others you interacted with along the way

GET CREATIVE!

Feel free to draw a picture, record a short video or song (with your educator's permission), or use another method to thank these people who helped you along the way. They would love to see that you cared about their contribution to your work.

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.



BUILDING A RESUME

A resume lets you document the skills you have developed and the accomplishments you have made. It can help you get a future job, apply for college, and network with others!

Making a resume may seem daunting. Looking through your **PORTFOLIO** will help make it a little easier.

MAKE A LIST OF YOUR SKILLS

Review everything you've done in this project, and beyond.

This might include:

- Writing
- Poster making
- Researching
- Debating
- Public Speaking
- Fundraising
- Problem Solving

MAKE A LIST OF YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

List the specific achievements of your group and the role that you played in each — were you an organizer of an assembly, a spokesperson at a city council meeting, the treasurer for your group? These don't need to be specific to this project. Are you the captain of a sports team? President of a club? All of these are great additions!

PICK A FORMAT

There are lots of different styles for resumes. Microsoft Word has many to choose from. You can also download one you like online.

OR TRY A DIGITAL FORMAT

Linkedin.com is a great social media tool to connect with people and show off your resume. By starting a page for yourself now, you can continue to build as you learn and accomplish more in the future.

KEEP IT SHORT

Keep your resume to one page.

KEEP IT UPDATED

Remember to add new skills and accomplishments as you grow!

KEEP YOUR PORTFOLIO

We've been keeping a portfolio for this project, but many professionals keep portfolios of their work as well. Writing samples, graphics, use of different software or platforms, etc. are all items that people use and showcase. Keep your work sample portfolio going! Store them in a big folder or box that is easily accessible should you need to grab something!

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.

REFLECT ON YOUR WORK

Reflection means asking yourself questions that help you understand what you've learned and what you need to do next. It also means to think about how you've grown as a person and how you may have changed.

We often spend time reflecting without realizing it. For example, we do it right before bed and think about the day, or on New Year's Eve and reflect on the year.

When reflecting on this project experience, pull out your **PORTFOLIO**. While revisiting this entire collection, ask yourself the following types of questions:

WHAT YOU'VE DONE

Did I accomplish my goals? How did I accomplish my goals? What could I do differently next time?

THE INFORMATION YOU LEARNED

What new things did I learn? How is this related to stuff I already know? How did my group work together? What was difficult about working together? What was easy? How did we make group decisions? What could we as a group have done differently?

YOURSELF

What did I enjoy the most? What strengths did I find I had that I didn't know of before? How am I different now compared to when we started?

You can answer these questions:

- Alone, in writing. Like a journal entry (or poem/song!)
- In pairs or small groups as a discussions
- Visually like drawing a picture of what you learned or how you're feeling
- As a whole class discussion moderated by a fellow student
- *Can you think of any other reflection ideas?*

If reflecting individually, try to have a debrief discussion with a partner or small group. Discussion is always a nice part of reflections to see what others learned and felt about the project. You may realize you all have a lot more in common than you realized!

However you decide to reflect, the creation should be added to your portfolio. Do not throw these away! Keep your portfolio and continue adding to it even though the project is complete. Professionals often have and update a portfolio that showcases their skills. Now you have one started, too!

© 2020 Earth Force, Inc.