



Service Project Information and Proposal Instructions

One of the unique features of this experiential learning (EXL) online section of SUST 350 Service is that you get to determine what your individual service project is for the semester. This is your chance to contribute to the sustainability efforts of an organization you care about that is advancing sustainability and/or enhancing resilience within in your home or neighboring community, in the city of Chicago, here at Roosevelt University, or even beyond the borders of the Chicago region. It also serves as an analog to the on-site service work at Eden Place Nature Center and Farm performed during the last several years by students in the F2F version of this course.

So what counts as a suitable project in this context? And what do we mean by community-based sustainability work? You will address these questions from the perspective of your own personal/academic knowledge and background, work and educational experience, personal interests, geographic range/limitations, and personal/family safety considerations here in the Covid-19 era. My own general answer as 350 instructor is that there are a wide variety of service projects you can undertake, whether in person or remotely, as long as they contribute in some form or fashion to the advancement of any one or combination of the Three Es of sustainability within a given community -- environment, economy, and/or equity -- which in turn impact the resilience of that community.

Here are some examples and resources:

- **Environmental organizations, institutions, museums, and governmental entities** utilize volunteers to advance local conservation, ecological restoration, and/or sustainability efforts. Examples include the Chicago-area Country Forest Preserves, the Chicago Park District, Openlands, the Lincoln Park Zoo, Friends of the Chicago River, and dozens more. See the Chicago Wilderness [listing of members](#) as well as this [Internships page on my faculty website](#) for links and more info.
- **Local community-based organizations** work throughout the city and suburbs to advance various aspects of sustainability and/or improve resilience at the neighborhood, town, or city level. These range from community gardens and urban farms, to waste and recycling operations, to environmental policy and justice advocates, to environmental education groups, to organizations dedicated to fighting hunger, violence, and social injustice. (Some orgs do several of these things!) Two examples include the [Southeast Environmental Task Force](#) (environmental justice) in Chicago and [SCARCE](#) (waste/recycling/education) in Glen Ellyn (see [this page again](#)). Both have supported RU student interns and volunteers in past semesters. Another volunteering resource that can match you with opportunities is [Chicago Cares](#).
- **Organizations or projects that may be based outside the Chicago Region**, but which volunteers could make contributions to from a distance. This might involve, for instance, conducting topic-based research, designing/updating a website, managing social media, analyzing and presenting data, directing online communications, and/or assisting with fundraising. Finding such an option will require some sleuthing on your part; one interesting new online resource connecting students with potential research/service projects is [Projects that Matter](#). I encourage you to seek out other opportunities for yourself as well as for others in future classes.
- **Roosevelt University** itself, as well as other educational institutions you may have a direct connection to or interest in, also provide many potential opportunities for productive service. In



RU's case, our [2015 Strategic Sustainability Plan](#), university-wide Environmental Sustainability Committee, student organization RU Green, and the [Sustainability Studies Program](#) provide many potential options for sustainability-focused service on which I can advise you.

Service and Safety: Covid-19 Considerations for your Community Service Project

Because SUST 350 is an online class, I've always given students the option of doing either an in-person community service project or a remote/online project for this required component of the course. That option is especially important during our current era of the Covid-19 pandemic. **First and foremost, I want everyone in our class to stay safe and prioritize their health and that of their loved ones.** Therefore, please know there is absolutely no pressure or expectation that you do an in-person service project to fulfill the requirements of the class.

- **You are free to choose an appropriate remote/online service option**, and I will provide whatever help I can in selecting and assessing these opportunities (and will be flexible about what counts as an appropriate project). We will also brainstorm and assess potential online service opportunities together as a class during Wks 1-3.
- **If you prefer to perform in-person service within your community, please make sure you can do so safely:** wearing a mask, maintaining proper social distance, being able to practice good hygiene, and accounting for whatever risks you undertake to travel to/from and work at that site. Any organization or government entity hosting volunteers should prioritize their safety and provide clear information on its Covid-19 mitigation practices. I strongly encourage you to keep both yourself and, if you live with and/or take care of others, your family/loved ones/roommates in mind as you consider the risks and benefits of any in-person service opportunity. If you choose an in-person service option, you will need to complete and sign RU's Travel Waiver form, which I will provide on our Bb site.

Proposal Instructions:

Once you select an option (or potentially a couple options) for your service project, you'll write up a brief proposal for my review. Your proposal should be a 1-page, single-spaced document (1-inch margins, 12-point font, space between headings and paragraphs) that addresses the following items (see page 2). Do your best to address each point as concretely as possible, even though you may have questions or uncertainties about the project's scope and focus at this early juncture. You will share these on the 350 Bb site's Discussion Board (DB) early in the semester in order to get feedback from me and your classmates on your potential project option(s).

Information to Address in your Proposal:

- Relevant interests, work/educational experience, and background knowledge -- What do you know/do? what would you like to learn / learn how to do? what type of sustainability and/or community service have you performed before?
- Organization details -- Basic info on the org, institution, company, school, government entity, etc. that you'd like to work with; contact person(s) and email/phone; physical location and website; scope/mission of the org. Make sure you determine it supports volunteers in some way.



- Project scope and details -- What kinds of volunteer opportunities exist at this organization? what in particular would you like to undertake? will it involve the equivalent of 2-3 hours/week? if not, can you combine it with another service project? how does the project contribute to the advancement of sustainability and/or resilience in the organization/community?
- Other options -- If this project doesn't pan out for whatever reason, what is your back-up option? You don't have to give full details here, but just have some idea of what a back-up plan could involve, so you can shift focus quickly if need be.
- Questions for Prof. B. -- How can I help you in the process of identifying and defining a service project? What specific questions do you have at this point?

You may informally email me early ideas for a service project during the summer before our class starts, and I will be happy to provide you with feedback on your ideas. Once the class has started, you can post follow-up questions/ideas to the Service Project discussion forum on our Bb site before posting your formal Proposal, just to ensure that you're headed in the right direction. Our sharing of these Proposals as well as my feedback will be public on the DB, so that we learn from how others define and map out our service project ideas.

Examples of Past SUST 350 Student Service Projects:

Students in SUST 350 online performed a wide variety of individual services projects in Chicago and its suburbs. Most were placed-based, but some have been virtual/online. Organizations and/or locations have included:

- [A.D.O.P.T.](#) animal shelter (Naperville, IL)
- [The Animal House Shelter](#) (Huntley, IL)
- [Chicago Cares](#) (useful online resource for finding volunteer opportunities in the Chicago region)
- [Economic Awareness Council](#) (African-American teen organization in Chicago)
- [Eden Place Nature Center](#) (nature center and [urban farm](#) in the Fuller Park neighborhood on Chicago's South Side; longtime service partner for SUST 350)
- [Feed My Starving Children](#) (a charity addressing hunger needs, multiple locations around Chicago)
- [Field Museum of Natural History](#) (science/conservation in Chicago)
- [Gingko Organic Garden](#) (a community garden in the Buena Park neighborhood in Chicago)
- [GSG Consultants](#) (environmental engineering and consulting in the Chicago region)
- [Institute of Cultural Affairs](#) (sustainable development organization in the Uptown neighborhood in Chicago)
- [Loaves & Fishes](#) (an anti-poverty, hunger relief agency serving food and leadership services to Naperville and DuPage County)
- [North Park Village Nature Center](#) (environmental restoration on Chicago's NW Side)
- [Northern Illinois Food Bank](#) (addresses hunger throughout northern IL communities)
- [Plant Chicago](#) (urban farm, closed-loop waste reduction site in Chicago)
- [Projects that Matter](#) (online)
- [The Puerto RICO Project](#) (community organization that provides direct aid/food to homeless in Chicago)
- [SCARCE](#) (environmental education, recycling, and waste reduction)



- [SGA Youth & Family Services](#) (Brighton Park neighborhood in Chicago)

Recent RU Student Internship Projects

Each year several SUST students pursue formal or informal internships at various organizations throughout Chicago and its suburbs. Some of these orgs also have regular or occasional volunteer opportunities.

- *2019-20 Academic Year:* Campus sustainability internships at RU; air quality internship at [Environmental Law & Policy Center](#)
- *2018-19 Academic Year:* Rooftop garden internship at RU; food/waste internship at [Seven Generations Ahead](#); air quality internship at Environmental Law & Policy Center
- *Spring 2018:* Environmental justice internship at the [Southeast Environmental Task Force](#); educational volunteer at [Plant Chicago](#) (SUST 395 internships)
- *Fall 2017:* [Centennial Volunteers](#) with Friends of the Chicago River; environmental restoration work at the [North Park Village Nature Center](#); social media work for RU Green student organization (SUST 350 service projects)