

DUKE ALUMS ENGAGE

Choosing a Community Partner

Criteria for identifying a good partner

- Has expertise, solid organizational footing, positive reputation, and long-term relationship with the community you wish to serve
- Has a mission Duke will be proud to identify with, avoiding goals that are political, religious, or activist in nature so that all alumni will feel welcome
- Will allow local Duke alumni volunteers to fit into their framework for a single activity
- Can work with your volunteers, giving them a meaningful, effective role – If you are inviting family participation, your partner's project will need to span ages and skill levels
- Is cognizant of and will be responsive to the desires, needs, and limits of your volunteers (and families)

Approaches to choosing a partner

- Volunteers are invited to brainstorm initially on issues, existing relationships, alumni connections, and familiar organizations
- Regional leaders discuss options up front while continuing as a sounding board for project organizers before a final decision is made
- A committed leader decides, based on prior experience with an established organization

Advice gleaned from past projects

- Don't overreach – start with a simple project
- If there is a financial commitment, address up front: Is there a donor with significant resources to commit? Can all pitch in modestly? Is fundraising an option?
- Careful research, checking references, talking with other volunteer groups, and interviewing the potential partner will confirm a good match
- As you interview the prospective partner, advise them you are doing due diligence and that you are not the sole decision maker

Finally

- Identify a partner with whom your regional group can develop a successful project and a potentially sustainable relationship
- Remember: the partners are the experts; we are the visitors in their world