



# MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** 

## Organize a FAFSA Training Event



### The Challenge



A college education is an increasingly expensive investment for students and their families. A completed FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) allows the U.S. Department of Education to determine a potential student's eligibility for federal student aid. Key studies have indicated that FAFSA completion correlates strongly with college enrollment, particularly among low-income populations. You can help members of your community identify resources for college by sharing information on completing a FAFSA.

This toolkit will help you to address this community need by:

- Explaining associated terms
- Highlighting helpful resources
- Sharing effective planning steps
- Outlining project management tips
- Providing ideas for communicating your message
- Sharing tips for reflection and reporting



### Prepare

#### *Learn Associated Terms*

Before you jump-start the planning phase of your project, be sure you know the terms associated with the work you are about to do.

- **FAFSA**: The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is the first step a student must take toward gaining federal aid for college, career school, or graduate school. Completing and submitting the FAFSA is free; it is the largest source of financial aid to pay for college,



providing more than \$150 billion toward grants, loans, and work-study funds each year.

- **Financial Need:**The difference between the cost of attendance (COA) at a school and your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). While COA varies from school to school, your EFC does not change based on the school of attendance.
- **Master Promissory Note (MPN):**A binding legal document that you must sign when you get a federal student loan. The MPN can be used to make one or more loans for one or more academic years (up to 10 years). It lists the terms and conditions under which you agree to repay the loan and explains your rights and responsibilities as a borrower.
- **For a complete set of terms, visit the [student.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov)**  
(<http://studentaid.ed.gov/glossary>) **glossary**

## Identify a Location

### Identify a Location

Reach out to the places where potential college students are located—high schools, after school centers offering SAT prep classes, GED centers, or churches.

Let these organizations know that you are interested in doing a FAFSA training event and determine if they are interested in partnering with you to host the training.

### *Browse Helpful Resources*

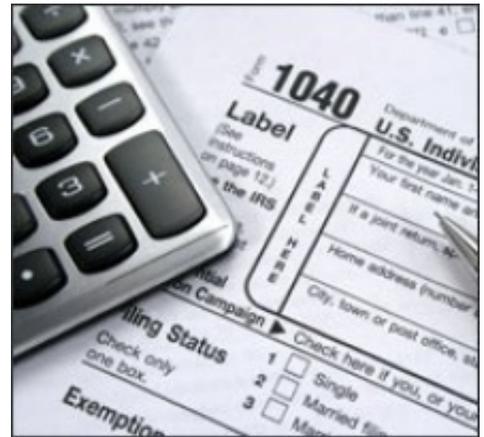
- [Federal Student Aid](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/) (<http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/>)
- [Federal Student Aid - FAFSA](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/) (<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>)
- [Federal Student Aid Information for Counselors](http://www.fsa4counselors.ed.gov/) (<http://www.fsa4counselors.ed.gov/>)
- [Federal Student Aid Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/FederalStudentAid) (<http://www.facebook.com/FederalStudentAid>)
- [Federal Student Aid Twitter](http://www.twitter.com/fafsa) (<http://www.twitter.com/fafsa>)



A successful group effort requires a motivated team whose members agree upon clearly defined tasks, set reachable goals, and act with inspiration and purpose.

### *Build a Team*

- Start off planning with folks you know, and ask them to tell others to join your efforts.
- Meet regularly, especially as MLK Day approaches.
- Assign concrete tasks to keep everyone motivated and on track.
- As you work, talk about the parallels between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s impact and your own.



### *Set Goals*

## **Build your planning team**

Whether you are a team of few or many, a planning team will help you execute all aspects of your project. Below are some roles your planning team can take on. If it's only you: reach out to volunteers past and present to fulfill these roles:

- Project Development
- Volunteer Recruitment and Management Team
- Communications Team
- VIP/Leadership Engagement Team
- Fundraising Team
- Event Team

- Set goals, such as number of people trained, items supplied, and folks pledging to pass along what they've learned to others.
- Record these goals and make sure you can meet them. Ensure you and your team choose goals you can all agree on.

### *Plan Your Project*

There are a number of ways that you can plan to promote the FAFSA in your community. Here are a few ideas for planning tasks to complete:

- Develop and distribute announcements about the event
- Gather alternative financial aid resources
- Invite local higher education institutions in your community, state or region to set up booths for students and their parents to visit before and after the planned activities at the event (if the location can accommodate this).
- Identify other activities planned in your community where your event can also be highlighted such as a college fair, college tour days for prospective students, or a GED graduation event.

- [Incorporate learning into any service you do \(node/292\)](#) by sharing information about the issues your project addresses and about Dr. King's work and teachings as it relates to the issue.

### *Raise Resources for Equipment and Supplies*

## **Involving and engaging kids**

Whether kids show up to volunteer or they unexpectedly arrive with parents who can benefit from your service, have activities that they can do such as:

- Carry light objects
- Decorate cards, lunch bags, or placemats
- Serve refreshments to the adults hard at work
- Organize or tidy the project spaces
- Watch a film about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

See [Engaging Kids in Service \(node/296\)](#) for more on kid-friendly service projects.

What supplies will you need to promote the FAFSA in your community?

- Seek financial and in-kind donations from businesses for the supplies you'll need to run your project
- Solicit funds from team members and/or others to purchase items you need for successful MLK Day
- Purchase the necessary supplies prior to the service day so they're ready to go on MLK Day.

### *Manage Your Project*

The following tips will assist you with managing a successful service project.

- Utilize to do lists for the days leading up to, day of and post event day.
- Make sure team leaders or coordinators are at the site early, the site is set up, and they are ready to greet volunteers or community members as they arrive.
- Even if some volunteers will be doing door-to-door distribution of materials, it is important that the group start off the day together and review what you are trying to accomplish.
- Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the event: promoting the FAFSA for the community in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Organize volunteers into different work teams. For example, have different people greeting participants, handing out refreshments, responding to questions, or distributing materials.

- Build moments of reflection into your planned activities. Share stories and words from Dr. King and about any insights you've gained so far [about the connection between your service and Dr. King's teachings \(node/292\)](#) .
- Document the day with pictures and videos and be sure to have participants sign a photo release form.
- Conduct your event, offering continuous encouragement to participants.

## **Communicate Your Message**

Communication is a key part of any service project. You will need to communicate about:

- Getting volunteers to help you plan or implement your service activity
- Building partnerships with potential collaborators and sponsors
- Raising funds or in-kind donations for your project
- Informing potential participants who might benefit from your service



Publicize your event using a combination of low-tech outreach, traditional, and social media.

### ***Low-tech Outreach***

- Post flyers in public places
- Use community bulletin boards
- Ask area businesses to spread the word (e.g. flyers at registers or posters in store windows)
- Make announcements at schools, churches, or civic groups

### ***Traditional Media***

- Invite the news media (print and broadcast) to report about your upcoming event or to attend and share information about accomplishments. Use a [press release \(node/252\)](#) or a [media advisory \(node/252\)](#) .
- Make follow-up phone calls to the news media
- Place free ads in the community affairs section of your local papers

### ***Digital and Social Media***

- Submit your event to local online calendars and LISTSERVs
- Promote your project, and document the day, through Facebook, Tweets, and pictures
- Reach out to a local blogger and ask if he/she might cover the event



## Share Impact

### *Assess and Reflect*

Host an official debriefing meeting for team members after the service day.

Ask the team to reflect on the following questions:

- Examine the goals you set for yourselves. Which ones did you meet? Which exceeded your expectations? And which goals did you not quite reach?
- What did you accomplish?
- Who did your work impact in your community?
- What went well and what could be improved for next time?
- What FAFSA resources or outreach methods would you use again in the future? Which ones would you forego?
- Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to your community.
- Go back to your initial investigation into the local problems you elected to help tackle and ask more questions. For example:
- If you distributed information about the FAFSA members of your community, what else could you provide to them, after they've submitted a FAFSA application that would help them to successfully enroll in college? What other organizations or programs in your community could you partner with to make this happen?

### *Share Your Story*

We know you might not like to brag, but please do! You may inspire others to organize a FAFSA event once they hear what you accomplished. Share your service accomplishments with:

- Volunteers, financial and in-kind supporters and constituents groups; the accomplishments could accompany a thank you letter
- The media; thank all media who reported on your planned activities or covered your service project along with sharing accomplishments from the project and any plans for the future
- The Corporation for National and Community Service; learn about multiple ways to [share your story](http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share>)

33 reads

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