

EVALUATING *your* EXPERIENCE

Participants

A couple of weeks to a month after you return, you will want to ask participants to evaluate their experience to help you gain wisdom into what worked well and you might want to do differently on your next pilgrimage or mission experience. This is a time for their reflections only — work with your Leaders to gain their input separately.

This can be a paper and pencil survey, online survey, or a facilitated conversation with white paper.

Be sure to record both what worked and what didn't and why and use your judgment as to what caused a particular success or challenge. Note that some things don't work because of the dynamics of a particular group or site. That's ok and it doesn't mean you won't repeat that particular part of the experience.

If you are meeting as a group, guide the conversation to ensure it stays productive and doesn't overly focus on any individual or experience. Make intentional space for the quieter members of the group to participate by hanging white papers around the room and giving time for participants to write down their highs and lows.

Begin and end with prayer — a prayer or spiritual reflection from the trip will be especially meaningful.

Leaders

Depending on the will of the group, either meet with leaders as a group or ask for their reflections via online survey or email. The key is that you will want to make it as direct and simple as possible for this group of adults who have already given so much to your program.

You also want to help these individuals feel safe disclosing what they may feel is criticism. Reassure everyone involved that input is simply feedback that will be used to create an even better experience the next time.

That being said, if you had a particularly difficult or toxic adult on the trip, you may not want to create this outlet for criticism. Or, you may want to be careful in reading that evaluation to ensure it doesn't serve to undercut your ministry.

Families

Create an online survey for parents/guardians to use to give feedback on trip organization, communication, budgeting, etc. This can help you identify areas to improve in your planning process.

Wider Community

Even though they didn't participate in the experience, gaining feedback from the wider community can give you valuable insight into how to incorporate these important individuals more the next time around.

You won't get very good participation in an online survey or email but you might be able to sit down with a few key players — including your Senior Warden and Rector — to evaluate your success in incorporating the fuller community into the experience.

REPORTING BACK *to the* WIDER FAITH COMMUNITY

One of the most important things you can do when you return from your mission experience is to report back and thank the wider faith community for their support. In your report, include personal stories from both your group and the host community. You will want to do this in as many formats as possible. Here are some ideas:

- Keep a Mission Experience Blog – Post articles, videos, and photos as you travel and make sure the link to the blog is well-publicized. Assign this task by group so that everyone has a chance to blog.
- Newsletter Article – If your community still publishes a print newsletter, write an article that includes lots of photos and stories that capture the depth of the experience.
- Web Article – Web content features lots of photos and videos. Take advantage of this technology by capturing much of your experience visually.
- Video – If at all possible, plan to create a video following your experience. You can show this in adult forums, during

sermon time, or even at a special community “thank you” event.

- Sermon – Ask a few of the youth participants to preach about the experience. If your faith community has technical capacity, show your video or slideshow of photos from the experience.
- Adult Forum – Invite the community to join your Team at a forum focused on the experience.

As much as possible, allow the youth participants to plan and execute each of these. The community will want to see and hear about the impact this investment has made in the lives of their youth. This also gives youth an important opportunity to reflect on the experience and to practice their personal reflection, public speaking, and writing skills.

Of course, the great way to demonstrate the transformation that has occurred is by living your life in a newfound understanding of partnership, community, and God’s love for us all.