

The Jones Center Service Guidelines

At the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, we have a strong culture of serving others. Whether it's the Torchbearer Statue symbolizing shadowing yourself to give light to others or our university being known as the Tennessee Volunteers, service is a crucial part of your student experience.

In the Jones Center for Leadership and Service (JCLS), our mission is to engage students in transformational learning experiences that inspire a commitment to socially responsible leadership and service. These guidelines will help you identify service opportunities that can be tracked and verified as service hours in ServeUTK.

If you are unsure of whether your activity counts as service, please email the Jones Center at leadserve@utk.edu. We are always happy to discuss projects with students and/or organization representatives, but please note that the decision to either count or not count hours in ServeUTK ultimately rests with the Jones Center.

Important: All impacts should be logged in ServeUTK within 31 days of completing service in order to be verified.

Service Requirements

Activities must meet **all three** of the following to be verified in ServeUTK by the JCLS for scholarships, classes, campus organizations, or service medallions:

- ✓ *Meet a community need that directly benefits the larger public or external community beyond the UTK campus*
- ✓ *Through organizations such as a nonprofit, government agency, not for profit school, mutual aid organization, not for profit healthcare organization, or Jones Center approved projects, AND*
- ✓ *Be non-compensated*

Identifying Community Need

In the Jones Center, we rely on our community agencies to tell us what the community needs since they work most closely with community members. Examples of causes that typically align with community needs include:

- Animal care
- Arts & culture
- Children & youth
- Disaster relief
- Education
- Environment & sustainability
- Gender, race, LGBTQ+ issues
- Health
- Housing insecurity
- Immigration

Non-Compensated Activities

To qualify for service hours, your activity cannot be compensated. Receiving a free meal or t-shirt does not count as compensation. This includes payment or compensation through other means such as hourly payments or stipends.

Most Common Community Organizations

- **A Nonprofit or Mutual Aid Organization**
 - Generally, these agencies have 501(c)3 status
 - Not Approved: *Participating* in a community event (5K, fundraiser, etc.)
- **Government or Public Sector Agency such as government offices or city/county park**
- **Nonprofit Schools such as a public school, nonprofit daycare or PTA**
 - Not Approved: For-profit daycares or private schools
- **Campus-based Basic Needs Provider: such as Smokey's Closet, Big Orange Pantry, or The Free Store**
- **Public Health Organizations** (Ex: hospital, public health or nonprofit health clinic, or nursing home)
 - Not Approved: Volunteering at a private practice/for-profit health organization

Please note: *The JCLS cannot verify service hours logged with for profit businesses or organizations. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) defines volunteer as work done 1) for a public agency or 2) for a civic, charitable, or humanitarian reason or organization. For-profit companies are not legally allowed to utilize "volunteers" as a result of FLSA. Both the Supreme Court and Department of Labor have explicitly addressed the issue of individuals "volunteering" at a for-profit company. There can, and have been, significant legal ramifications for businesses that attempt to classify someone as a "volunteer" rather than an "employee" who receives benefits and payments. Basically, under FLSA regulations, an individual cannot volunteer services to a private, for-profit company under any circumstances.*

Types of Service

1. **Direct Service** - *Working directly for or with people who benefit from your service*
 - Examples: Serving food at a soup kitchen, tutoring at a K-12 school, mentoring or coaching youth
2. **Indirect Service**- *Service without being directly involved with those being served*
 - Examples: Designing flyers for a nonprofit organization, making dog toys for an animal shelter, sewing blankets for a nonprofit organization
 - **Important:** indirect service activities will only be verified for **up to 2.0 hours** in ServeUTK.

Examples of Qualifying Service

- ✓ A local animal shelter (*nonprofit organization*) needs crates cleaned to house new animals (*community need*) = **Direct Service**
- ✓ A food pantry (*nonprofit organization*) needs help sorting and inventorying their stock to better serve their clients (*community need*) = **Direct Service**
- ✓ A local nature preserve (*nonprofit organization*) needs help with invasive weed removal to help keep their walking paths clear (*community need*) = **Direct Service**
- ✓ A non-partisan voter registration organization (*nonprofit organization*) needs volunteers for a voter registration event (*community need*) = **Direct Service**

- ✓ A local animal shelter (*nonprofit organization*) shared a need for enrichment treats for dogs (*community need*). You contact the shelter to arrange for your student organization to make and deliver the treats. = **Indirect Service**
- ✓ A non-partisan advocacy group (*nonprofit organization*) is running a letter writing campaign about voter registration deadlines (*community need*). = **Indirect Service**
- ✓ A local free medical clinic (*nonprofit organization*) shared a need for volunteers to create marketing materials to promote upcoming events (*community need*) = **Indirect Service**

This list is not inclusive but may help as you begin identifying possible volunteer opportunities for service hours. For examples of activities that do NOT meet guidelines, refer to the final page of this document.

Impact Types in Serve UTK

In ServeUTK, the term *Impact* is used as an umbrella term to describe all potential forms of community engagement. While all Impact types can be tracked in ServeUTK, **only Time Impacts can be verified by the JCLS for scholarships, classes, campus organizations, or service medallions.**

1. **Time**- Time spent directly or indirectly serving with organizations that fall into one of the four categories listed above and meet a community need.
 - Tips:
 - Indirect service projects are only verified for **up to 2.0 hours** in ServeUTK.
 - When logging time for long shifts or multiple day events, only include time actively serving and should not include time spent eating, sleeping, or on breaks.
2. **Money**- Funds donated to organizations that fall into one of the four categories listed above and meet a community need (*i.e., \$10 donated to Habitat for Humanity*)
3. **Goods**- Items donated to organizations that fall into one of the four categories above that help meet a community need (*i.e., school supplies donated to Boys and Girls Club.*) Time spent shopping for items to donate should only be added to ServeUTK as goods donated, not as a Time Impact.
4. **Research**- Gathering and presenting information on an issue that directly benefits the community, not only yourself (*Work in a lab researching the effects of climate change*)
5. **Training** - Time spent being trained to work with an organization.
6. **Voted**- Track the elections in which you have voted (local, state, national).

Next Steps

- Now that you have reviewed the JCLS Service Guidelines, it's time to serve! Look for volunteer opportunities posted by nonprofit organizations on the [ServeUTK calendar](#) and register to serve.
- Did you find a qualifying opportunity that isn't listed on the ServeUTK calendar? Be sure to log your Impact. [Visit our website](#) for instructions about tracking your impact and sharing your hours.

This document was last updated on 8/1/2024. Activities that may have been approved in the past may no longer meet the JCLS Service Guidelines. The JCLS recommends reviewing guidelines annually before engaging in volunteer opportunities. Questions? We are here to help! Contact us at leadserve@utk.edu.

The Following Activities Do Not Meet Service Guidelines as Time Impacts

Activities for Internal Benefit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities that are a requirement of a position or that primarily benefit your organization or a UTK department do not meet community needs or serve our community beyond campus. Examples: <i>Tabling for your club, volunteering at a baseball team, serving as an ambassador to a department, directing parking on campus for a football game</i>
Donating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donating (cash or in-kind) can be tracked as Money or Goods but does not qualify as a Time Impact. Examples: <i>Donating canned goods or clothing cannot be tracked as a Time Impact.</i>
Fundraising or Philanthropy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundraising can be tracked in ServeUTK as a Money Impact, but it cannot be tracked as a Time Impact. Fundraising must involve increasing awareness and focus on an identifiable community need. Fundraising cannot be an activity for internal benefit. Examples: <i>Raising money to buy T-shirts for a club or organizing a fundraiser for a natural disaster without direction from a nonprofit organization.</i>
Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event participation is a great activity but does not meet a direct community need. Examples: <i>Participating in Relay for Life, VOLthon, or attending an educational workshop.</i> <i>What could make it a Time Impact?</i> Serving at a race by helping to set up tables or manage the registration table would count as a Time Impact.
Self-Directed Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These activities meet a community need, but they are not done through organizations such as a non-profit, government agency, public school, grassroots organization, healthcare organization, or Jones Center approved projects. Examples: <i>You and your roommates clean up your street, tutoring for free, helping elderly neighbors, babysitting for free for private individuals.</i>
Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in a research project as a participant or serving as a researcher can be tracked as a Research Impact but not as a Time Impact. Example: <i>Participating in a study with a department or campus focus group or being a lab assistant</i>
Internships, Clinicals, Practicums, or Field Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required internships, clinicals, practicums, or field experience work that is required for a certification cannot be added to ServeUTK. This includes time spent job shadowing and observing. If the work you are doing is required for a certification, you are being compensated in some way. Often, these experiences benefit you as a student more than the organization with whom you are working. Example: <i>A nursing student cannot add required clinicals to ServeUTK. An internship may meet a community need, but it cannot be counted as a Time Impact if you were compensated.</i>
Partisan Political Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partisan campaign activities do not meet the JCLS Service Guidelines as a Time Impact. <i>What could make it a Time Impact?</i> Non-partisan or bipartisan political activities such as voter registration drives do meet the JCLS Service Guidelines.