

VOCATIONAL COMMITTEE MANUAL

Youthline
creating lifetime humanitarians



Everything you need to know to run a successful committee

YOUTHLING VOCATIONAL COMMITTEE MANUAL

A complete guide for Mentors, Alum Leaders, and youth volunteers leading vocational projects abroad.

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PART 1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Purpose of the Vocational Committee

In many communities around the world, people work incredibly hard but still don't have steady incomes. Jobs can be seasonal, unpredictable, or just not available. This is where vocational training comes in. As part of the vocational committee, you'll help teach skills that people (typically the women of the community) can use to earn money, support their families, and become more financially stable.

This isn't about "fixing poverty" or "saving" anyone. Instead it's about:

- Sharing skills
- Learning together
- Helping build confidence and income
- Supporting independence, not dependence

Your committee's goals are to:

- Teach hands on skills the community actually wants
- Help people (usually women) create ways to earn money
- Work with the Business Committee on pricing, selling, and marketing
- Make everything you teach simple, doable, and sustainable

Your committee's job is to help people make cool things, and maybe sell those cool things, so they can build income long after your team returns home.

1.2 Philosophy of Vocational Committee

As a member of the vocational committee, you don't need to be a professional. You just need patience, kindness and a positive attitude. To have an awesome committee you'll need to remember:

Teaching Mindset: "We are learning together"

We aren't "bringing knowledge". We are building on the community's existing strengths. Think of it like this. They know the community. We are learning a skill. We can put our knowledge together to create together.

Participation is Better Than Observation

Vocational training is 80% doing and 20% talking. People learn best by:

- Trying
- Touching
- Experimenting
- Practicing

If you are talking more than a few minutes at a time, you're probably talking too much.

Show. Do. Repeat

Demonstrations cross language barriers better than verbal explanations. Your simple lesson plan can look something like this:

- Show the step
- Do the step slowly
- Have community members try
- Help them practice
- Celebrate progress

With this model, you can teach even if you don't speak the same language.

Honor Local Knowledge

Ask: How do people usually make this here? What materials are easily available?

Teach with Curiosity, not Judgement

Avoid suggesting that their way of doing things is "less advanced". Questions should invite collaboration, not comparison.

1.3 Sustainability

Sustainability means ensuring that community members can continue the skill long after the Youthlinc team leaves.

Your committee should always consider:

- Can supplies be sourced locally?
- What tools will need repair or replacement?
- Are we teaching skills that meet actual market demand?
- How will community members price, promote, and sell their products?

Avoid projects that require expensive materials, electricity, or specialized equipment that isn't available in country.

1.4 Understanding Community Needs

Before planning any projects, ask:

- What do locals already make, buy, and sell?
- What skills did the community request?
- What skills do people already have that could be expanded?
- What are existing economic challenges or opportunities?
- How much time will we have to teach?
- Will we be teaching adults, teenagers, or a mix of ages?

This information should come from:

- The In Country Coordinator
- Past Committee Reports
- Research from committee members

This ensures vocational projects meet real needs and can continue sustainably.

1.5 Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Mentor

- Guides overall planning and sustainability considerations
- Ensures all projects align with Youthlinc values
- Oversees safety, logistics, and lesson quality
- Supports business collaboration

Alum Leader

- Works closely with the Mentor
- Supports committee communication and deadlines
- Ensures all projects are fully prepared
- Helps train the committee

Committee Members

- Learn the vocational skill to be able to teach it to community members
- Create lesson plan to teach
- Gather, organize and pack supplies

- Practice vocational skills and lessons
- Support community members and the team respectfully in country
- Participate in meetings and project preparation

PART 2: TRAINING TO LEAD VOCATIONAL SKILLS

This section teaches committee members *how* to lead vocational skills in a way that is respectful and engaging.

2.1 How to Lead as a Youth Teacher

You do not need to be an expert. You just need to be:

- Prepared
- Patient
- Hands on
- Respectful
- Organized

Your role is to:

- Guide, not lecture
- Demonstrate clearly
- Encourage participation
- Create an environment of respect

Good teaching is simple, visual, engaging and culturally appropriate.

2.2 What Good Hands On Skill Instructions Looks Like

Effective vocational lessons include: .

Step by Step Instructions

Show each step in small repeatable actions slowly before others try it.

Short Explanations, Long Demonstrations

Avoid long explanations, especially through an interpreter. Instead use your time to demonstrate the skill.

Active Participation

Allow everyone a chance to participate so they can learn by doing, not just seeing.

Repetition

Allow those learning to practice the steps multiple times.

Check for Understanding Often

If needed, review steps again to help the learning process.

Encouragement

Celebrate effort, not perfection.

2.3 Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Being aware of common mistakes helps prevent them.

Pitfall 1: Teaching too fast

Avoid by: Breaking projects into small steps and demonstrate slowly

Pitfall 2: Lessons are too advanced or too simple

Avoid by: Breaking into smaller steps or do skill level breakout groups

Pitfall 3: Assuming people understand

Avoid by: Check for understanding by asking for a thumbs up or thumbs down

Pitfall 4: Using materials unavailable locally

Avoid by: Prioritizing local sourcing

Pitfall 5: Taking over the work.

Avoid by: Letting those learning practice each step.

2.4 Adapting Lessons for Different Skill Levels

Beginners

- Use slow demonstrations
- Assign simple starter tasks
- Avoid projects that require precision tools

Intermediate Learners

- Introduce techniques like patterns, measuring, or shaping

Advanced Learners

- Let them customize or build on basic project ideas
- Pair with beginning learners
- Invite them to demonstrate their skills to others in the group

For Non/Limited English Speakers

- Icons/pictures instead of written steps
- Sample products
- Color coded instructions
- Demonstrations before explanations
- Hands on matching or sequencing activities
- Avoid long written directions

2.5 Working With Interpreters

- Speak in short phrases
- Pause frequently
- Look at the group, not the interpreter
- Use gestures to reinforce concepts

2.6 Ensuring Safety

Safety is important in all aspects of the Youthlinc experience. Safety is important when teaching:

- Cutting tools
- Heat sources
- Chemicals
- Sharp objects

To ensure everyone's safety please:

- Model proper tool handling
- Secure all shared items
- Use protective equipment when appropriate

2.7 Monitoring Understanding Without Pressure

Instead of asking “Do you understand?”, use check ins that feel natural, such as:

- Thumbs up or sideways
- Watching body language
- Asking people to copy a motion
- Having volunteers demonstrate again
- Asking for a simple repeat after me moment

Avoid putting one student on the spot unless they want to participate.

PART 3: VOCATIONAL COMMITTEE PROJECTS

The Vocational Committee plans and prepares projects that help community members learn or enhance vocational skills.

This is where the fun begins!

3.1 Guiding Questions for Selecting Projects- Ask the Right Questions

- What problem does this skill help solve?
- Does the community already have experience with it?
- What skills have they requested?
- Will this make someone's life easier or give them a way to earn money?
- How much does it cost to make?
- Can they afford the materials after we leave?
- Can supplies be found locally?
- Where can it be sold and who will buy it?
- How will the skills learned continue after the team leaves?
- What is most realistic within 2-5 lessons?

If your committee can answer these questions, then you are on the right track!

3.2 Past Vocational Projects

- Sewing
- Reusable feminine pads
- Baking
- Soap making
- Screen printing
- Crocheting
- Knitting
- Macrame
- Jewelry making
- Hair cutting
- Food preservation
- Collaboration with the business committee

3.3 Sustainability and Sourcing Locally

- Avoid projects that require imported supplies
- Choose tools that can be repaired locally
- Teach skills that match local markets
- Encourage community members to identify where to buy materials locally

3.4 Collaborate with the Business Committee

Vocational Committee Projects often work well with the Business Committee. The Business Committee can help:

- Price the product
- Identify the target customer
- Basic marketing
- Sustainable sourcing

3.5 Lesson Planning Guide

Purpose

Every lesson must include:

- An Objective
- Step by step demonstration
- Time to practice
- Safety considerations
- Plan for replacing supplies

3.6 Practice, Practice, Practice

Your committee should practice so much that::

- You can explain the steps easily
- You can teach slowly

- You can troubleshoot challenges
- You can feel confident demonstrating the skill

If you can't *do* the thing, you can't *teach* the thing.

3.7 Plan Your Supplies

Some supplies might need to come from the US but many can be bought in country. Before you get too far down the road ask:

- Is this available locally?
- Is it cheaper there or here?
- Will the community be able to continue to purchase supplies later?

Tip: Teams often have team members who have connections to help with vocational supplies. Use these connections!

3.8 Vocational Project Library

Here are some suggestions of past teams vocational projects:

Sewing: [linked PDF](#)

Reusable Menstrual Pads: [linked PDF](#)

Screen Printing: [linked PDF](#)

Haircutting: [linked PDF](#)

Soap making: [linked PDF](#)

PART 4: COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND PREPARATION

Committee work does not happen all at once. It builds little by little throughout the year as you learn more about your site, gather supplies, and practice the skills you'll be teaching. This section explains how your committee should prepare, what your meetings should look like, and what you need to have ready before you get on the airplane.

The main goal is simple:

Make sure every vocational skill and every lesson plan is prepared for, practiced, and ready before you travel.

When you're prepared, you feel confident, you stress less in country, and the community gets the best experience possible.

4.1 Purpose of Committee Meetings

Committee meetings are where the real preparation happens. These meetings give you the chance to:

- Plan your vocational projects step by step
- Assign roles, responsibilities, and deadlines
- Practice skills before teaching them
- Review tips from previous teams
- Gather, test, and organize supplies
- Ask questions and get feedback
- Make changes before things become stressful
- Keep everyone on track

These meetings should be supportive, organized, and collaborative. Everyone plays a role in making the magic happen and everyone has a job to do.

4.2 What Committee Meetings Should Accomplish

Each meeting builds on the last. By the time you travel, your committee should have:

A clear plan on what vocational skills you are planning to teach.

Clear, well thought out project plan create less confusion and smoother teaching in country.

One completed vocational lesson plan for each committee member.

This includes:

- A written step by step lesson plan
- All supplies needed
- A “dry run” where you practice teaching
- A plan for teaching the lesson in small groups

A decision about whether or not you will help set up a Co-op Group

Read the “[Setting Up a Co-Op Group](#)” instructions and decide if this makes sense for your community and your selected vocational project.

These steps help your committee feel prepared and make sure that nothing important is left to figure out at the last minute.

4.3 Practicing as a Committee

To teach a skill well, you need to feel comfortable doing it yourself. You don't need to be perfect, you just need to understand it well enough to explain it to another person.

Practicing helps you:

- Test your lesson plans
- Identify confusing steps
- Practice teaching with an interpreter
- Build your confidence
- Make sure supplies work the way you expect

Testing Together

As a committee, you should practice:

- The full lesson from start to finish
- Specific steps that are tricky or technical
- How you will explain things clearly and slowly

This helps you catch problems before you begin teaching the community.

Committee Check In Moments

Quick check ins help everyone stay on track. You can ask:

- What's finished?
- What still needs work?
- What supplies are missing?
- Is everyone clear on their tasks?

Good communication = Smoother meetings

4.4 Common Challenges (and how to Prepare for them)

Things don't always go as planned in country, so your meetings should help you get ready for real life situations. Here are some common challenges and what to do:

Scenario 1: Vocational tools are limited

- Rotate who is using tools
- Break the group into stations
- Practice sharing and adapting

Scenario 2: Steps are confusing

- Practice simplifying steps
- Break into smaller steps
- Repeat demonstration again, slower

Scenario 3: Supplies run out or aren't available

- Work with the community to find local alternatives
- Teach a different skill that uses available materials

Scenario 4: Lesson plans are too simple

- Think of ways to challenge more advanced learners

- Divide into skill based groups
- Invite advanced students to help teach

4.5 How to Run an Effective Committee Meeting

Your Mentor or Alum Leader may help guide meetings, but your committee should be the ones leading.

A productive meeting includes:

1. **Agenda:** What we are focusing on today
2. **Quick updates:** Check in on assignments, what has been completed, review questions answered by ICC
3. **Focused work:** Practice lesson plans, vocational skills, review supply lists, problem solve challenges, make adjustments
4. **Team share:** Review what needs improvement, create a list of questions for ICC and share with Team Leader
5. **Assignments:** Assign tasks to complete before the next meeting. Assign who is doing what before the next meeting

Meetings work best when everyone participates and follows through with their tasks.

4.6 Final Preparation Before You Leave

By your final meeting, your committee should have:

- All lesson plans written, finalized, and practiced
- Any instructions printed and laminated
- Vocational project fully organized
- Supplies taking in country gathered
- Supply list completed and shared with Team Leader
- In Country responsibilities assigned

At this stage, your job is to double check everything and make sure everyone knows their role. When you're prepared, teaching in country becomes fun, meaningful, and way less stressful.

PART 5: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This section provides practical tools and ready to use templates your committee will rely on as you prepare for the international experience. These resources make your planning more organized, keep your team on the same page, and help ensure everything is fully ready *before* departure.

Use these throughout the year, and especially during your Committee Meetings and Preparation sessions.

5.1 Vocational Project Proposal Template

Use [this template](#) when brainstorming vocational projects. .

This template will include:

- Project Description
- Desired Outcome
- Problem addressed
- Skill taught
- Assignments to committee members
- Materials needed
- Other needs from the team

5.2 Lesson Plan Template

Use this [lesson plan template](#) to create your vocational lesson plan.

This should include:

- Goal of the lesson- what you are teaching
- Who you will be teaching
- Materials needed
- Demonstration steps
- Lesson plan breakdown

5.3 Teaching Checklist

Before you teach ask yourself:

- Did I practice my lesson?
- Do I know the steps well?
- Do I have a simple explanation?
- Do I have visuals or examples?
- Do I have a back up plan?

5.4 Committee Check In Sheet

Your committee will complete a [committee check in sheet](#) after each team meeting.

This check in will include:

- What you accomplished
- Tasks assigned to committee members
- What questions your committee has
- What you will work on during the next meeting

5.5 Monthly Planning Checklists

These checklists help your committee stay organized throughout the year.

January Checklist - Understand your committee

- Meet your committee and exchange phone numbers
 - Decide how you will communicate throughout the year
 - Listen to the presentation by last year's team leadership in your January Team Meeting
 - Review this manual and additional resources
 - Read last year's committee report
 - Using this information, as a committee talk about the vocational projects the community has requested
 - Begin brainstorming ideas
 - Collect Clothes for Big Brothers Big Sisters Clothing Drive- this is what will fund your project!
 - Assign tasks to committee members
 - Complete [committee check in sheet](#)
-

February Checklist - Understand your site and brainstorm

- Review ICC worksheet about vocational project requested

- Follow up on committee assignments
 - Brainstorm ideas of vocational projects based on your committee strengths
 - Delegate specific tasks to committee members
 - Brainstorm vocational lesson plans
 - Collect clothes for Big Brothers Big Sisters Clothing Drive
 - Compile questions for ICC about vocational projects
 - Complete [committee check in sheet](#)
 - Assign tasks to committee members
 - Complete first draft of your [Committee Project Proposal](#) and turn this into your Team Leader
-

March Checklist - Lesson assignments and drafts

- Review answers from ICC
 - Follow up on committee assignments
 - All team members are assigned an English lesson
 - All committee members assigned a vocational lesson
 - Complete Final [Committee Project Proposal](#)
 - Complete [committee check in sheet](#)
 - Begin compiling supply list
 - Begin any supply donation drives
 - Create a plan to ensure that everyone on the committee can learn how to create the vocational products you are teaching
 - Present any committee needs to the team
 - Send questions for ICC to Team Leader
 - Assign tasks to committee members
 - Start planning committee meetings outside of team meeting
-

April Checklist - Practice and evaluate lessons (adapt)

- Review answers from ICC
- Follow up on committee assignments
- English lesson draft completed
- [Vocational lesson](#) draft completed
- Continue compiling supply list
- Continue collecting supplies through donation drives
- Hold a separate committee meeting

- Practice creating the vocational product you are teaching
 - Complete [committee check in sheet](#)
 - Practice presenting your English lesson
 - Practice teaching your vocational lesson
 - Present any committee needs to the team
 - Send Team Leader any remaining questions for the ICC
-

May Checklist - Finalize and prepare all resources

- Check in with Team Leader about any updates from ICC
 - Follow up on committee assignments
 - Order supplies
 - Gather all remaining supplies taking in country
 - Double check all lesson plans are completed
 - Hold an additional committee meeting
 - Finalize your English lesson
 - Finalize your vocational lesson
 - Complete [committee check in sheet](#)
 - Tie up all loose ends
-

June Checklist - Depart/Packing Meeting

- Review any last minute updates
- Finalize supply list
- Finalize all project details
- Bring all supplies to packing meeting
- Final review with Mentor and Alum Leader
- Laminate any instructions

5.6 On Site Daily Checklist

Each day in country, the committee should review:

- Interpreter is briefed
- Committee members know who is teaching when

- Materials are gathered/organized
- Everyone knows their role
- Safety reminders
- End of day reflection is completed

5.7 Committee Reflection Questions

Use these during nightly team meetings or committee check ins.

- What went well today?
- What was confusing and how can we fix it?
- What did we learn today?
- What do we need to adjust?
- Did anything surprise us?
- What do we want to remember about this experience?