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General Tips for a Successful Tour

Encourage energy and strong communication between the Core

A successful trip relies on the communication, energy, support, and trust of the Core. Get together weekly (or more often!) as a Core and come up with themes and takeaways that you want to emphasize throughout the trip. Suggestions for the tour:

- Core meetings throughout the trip (at the end of each night, on the bus, etc.) to plan, debrief, comment, and organize.
- Don't be afraid to constructively criticize one another.
- Remember, if someone is upset, he/she is not upset with you as an individual, instead the person is probably upset with the situation.



Create an open and fun community on the Tour

Always encourage people to sit with new people the bus. Lead by example! Spread out and get to know new participants every time you are on the bus. Encourage the participants to do the same. Have people introduce themselves in the beginning of the trip, during discussions, and when sharing about projects. Always use encouraging, positive language ("I challenge" or "What works for me") and refrain from using any language that wrongfully singles out a group of people and misrepresents that group. Make sure everyone is on the bus before you depart. Never leave anyone behind. A good way to do this is to use some form of the buddy system (Accountability Partners)

Leave a positive lasting impression with contacts

Tours are possible because of the organizations and facilities that host our group. Remember that the purpose of the trip is to Pay It Forward. Leave every service destination better, cleaner, and nicer than when you found it. Also, remember that you are guests in the places that you stay. Respect the rules, it would be great to utilize these connections again in the future.

PIF Tour Deliverables

Send PIF Tour deliverables to National and Celebration City

Hi group. It's about a week before the Tour and the time is quickly approaching! The next couple of days are going to fly by in a blur. You'll be shopping for materials, confirming your cities' housing/service activities, meeting with your Core to finish planning, and starting to pack yourself. Whew!

Below is a list of Tour deliverables. There are specific deliverables that you need to send to National and specific deliverables that you need to send to the Celebration City. With all of the stuff you have going on right now it is easy for things to slip under the rug. So take a second right now to look over the deliverables that you will be expected to turn in for the Tour. Keep these in mind over the next couple of weeks and check them off as you complete each one.

Turn in logistical items and Celebration City deliverables during the Tour

- Turn in all of your slideshow pictures to Regional Core (RC) at the CC (e-mail them in jpeg format).
 - 2 pictures of your Tour's t-shirt (one of the front, one of the back)
 - 2-4 pictures of your entire Tour group
 - 1-2 pictures of your bus' Core
 - 3-5 pictures of participants being goofy/hanging out
 - 4-7 pictures of small groups during the Tour
 - 10+ pictures of service events or activities

Turn in logistical items at the end of the Tour

- Submit finances to chapter core.

Bus in a Box: Materials to Have On-Hand

Here is a checklist of some items for you to think about. Exact purchases will depend on your buses activities and donations. Review the following and go shopping! Use your budgeted funds to shop.

Cleanliness/Safety:

- Hand sanitizer/wipes
- Kleenex
- First Aid kit
 - Medicine listed on Health Forms
 - Band-Aids/bandages
 - Thermometer
- Feminine products
- Designated backpack for Health Forms
- Toilet paper (better safe than sorry!)
- Lysol Wipes
- Paper Towels

Office/School Supplies:

- Markers/crayons
- Permanent markers
- Writing utensils
- Scissors
- Notebook (for Bus Quote Book)
- Paper (construction, lined, blank, etc.)
- Business envelopes (for Letter to Self)
- Sticky name labels (Accountability Partners)
- Tape (painters, scotch, duct, etc.)

Food Supplies:

- Cups
- Plates
- Eating utensils
- Garbage bags

Entertainment:

- DVDs
- "Would you rather" question books
- Games (for bus downtime and night time)
- Playing Cards

Tour Essentials:

- "Thank you" cards
- Yarn (and scissors!)
- Candles
- Dixie cups (to catch candle wax)
- Lighter/matches
- Music (on the bus, in the morning, etc.)
- Speakers or CD/MP3 player
- Febreze (for the bus)
- Flashlight
- Batteries for flashlight
- Power strip (extra outlets)
- Plastic baggies (for 40 Things activity)
- Camera (& film, if necessary!)

Core Must-Haves

- Tour t-shirts
- Participant Binders
- This guidebook!
- Printed directions
- Core members cell phone numbers
- Regional Core's cell phone numbers
- National's cell phone numbers
- Participant list and health safety forms
- Backpack for health safety forms
- Hotel confirmation
 - Photocopy of credit card used
 - Photocopy of I.D. booked under
- Contact information for city contacts
- Risk Management Form (appendix)
- Information about housing arrangements
- Bus driver's telephone number
- Participant contact list (update this during check-in for the tour)
- Props for any activities you have planned

Pre-Departure Information & Checklist

Ensure you fulfill logistics before departing on the bus

It is the day you are leaving, and the time is quickly approaching the hour of your departure. You are loading the bus, packing food, and making sure everyone is arriving on time. There are a few items to take care of/keep in mind at this point:

Verify information with Tour participants

- Confirm that everybody has turned in his/her Health Form.
- Update your contact list. Cell phone numbers are essential in case you lose somebody in a city!
- Have everyone sign-in before you depart—initial next to name on bus roster

Instructions for Core members

- Assign one Core member to be the point of contact for the bus driver, and help navigate into cities. Be sure to exchange phone numbers and make sure he/she has all the hotel information he/she needs, along with a photocopy of the confirmation receipt and credit card it's booked under.
- Assign one Core member to be holder of health forms and first aid kit.
- Assign one Core member to make sure all contacts receive a thank you.
- Assign one Core member to be the packing coordinator to make sure bus is packed well each day.

Other things to consider

- Check to make sure you have your Tour's t-shirts.
- Check to make sure you packed games and DVDs for bus downtime.
- Create a plan of action for how you will get people to help you with things.
 - Delegate as much as you can by asking for volunteers. Consider the following
 - Do you have a food distribution method?
 - How will you unload/load bags?

First time on the bus

Once you get rolling on the bus, use the bus microphone to get everyone excited! Do you remember your first bus Tour? It's all about the **energy** on the bus, so lead by example.

- Remember to do introductions! Introduce the Bus Core, the bus driver, and have people introduce themselves one-by-one.
 - Note: In general, always have people introduce themselves at the beginning of an activity (when discussing, on bus, at night, etc.). This will help to avoid awkward moments and open gates for discussion.
- Encourage everybody to sit with someone they don't know.
- Discuss bus rules with the driver.
- Communicate the bus rules with the Tour participants.
- Start a quote book right away! It will create great memories.

The Flow of the Tour

Remember that four general components comprise the Tour

Each day on the trip can be broken up into four basic areas (that happen to work chronologically):



Each component is described in detail below.

Count off before bus departure and then start activities



Chronological activities

- Count off! Please don't lose anyone (insurance doesn't cover it).
- Give directions to the bus driver.
 - Make sure to talk with the bus driver to get their expectations and ask permission for certain activities. Examples:
 - Are they ok with you playing bus twister and climbing all over the seats?
 - Some bus drivers ask that you watch your language while on the bus, also applies to movie choices.
 - Are they ok with you hanging things on the windows/using tape on them?
- Leave the city.
- Use the bus microphone to explain to the group what you are doing, where you are going, etc. Keep your participants in the loop.
- Call your contact person as you get close to your arrival city.
- Tell the participants the action plan. Where should they put their stuff? Is the group meeting up right away or at a certain time? Is there free time? Exploration time? **Communicate** what is going to happen at the next city.

Other things to consider

- Start bus activities right away. Consider doing them right after everyone loads so you know everyone is awake. Check out the activity section for a list of possible activities.
- Work out the details with the bus driver and the group whenever you are stopping.
- Check to make sure there is enough food in the bus (it doesn't do you any good underneath!)

Ensure smooth city arrival by communicating with participants



Chronological activities

- Call your housing contact person as you approach the city to work out final logistics and details. Discuss where this person will meet you.
 - Have one or two members of the core get off the bus to meet the contact to get instructions before everyone gets off the bus
 - Crucial questions to ask your housing contact upon arrival:
 - Where are the showers?
 - Can we use the kitchen (if there is one)?
 - What rooms are/aren't allowed to use?
 - Any specifics before we leave in the morning?
- Use the bus microphone to communicate **exactly** what is going to happen upon city arrival.
 - First, layout the itinerary for the night.
 - Next, discuss logistics with the group; make sure people know where to shower, where to sleep, when the group is going to meet, etc.
- Unload bags and food.
- Talk to your contact person.
- Talk to the bus driver; organize tomorrow's pick-up time and briefly review the itinerary.
- Meet/leave for dinner/free time/etc.
 - If you have free time, make sure logistics are clear. Discuss the time to meet again, places to explore, transportation, contact information, etc.

Other things to consider

- Find out if people are hungry. If you didn't stop for food on the road, a great way to incorporate seeing the city without a lot of time is to stop somewhere in the downtown area for a quick bite to eat.
- Depending on the length of your drive, be sure to take a bathroom break to avoid filling the bus bathroom. A good rule of thumb is 1.5-2 hours after eating.

Utilize nighttime reflection to promote group bonding



Chronological activities

- Set up a nightly activity plan with your core—fake it til you make it while doing activities if you need to, but always be prepared with which activities you will do to achieve your desired outcome for each night. Remember...activities each night build off one another.
- Bring the whole group together for some activities. The activities will vary night to night, but nighttime reflection is **a must!**
- Think about evening programming as a four course meal!
 - Start out with a lighter activity (an appetizer)
 - Add in a transition to the more serious activities (salad)
 - Move onto reflection and personal leadership development (entrée)
 - Always end the night with affirmation/feel good activities (dessert).

Things to consider

- Remember—space, lighting, tone, and music are all ways to change the energy of a room
- Plan activities according to how the day went. You cannot always plan out activities beforehand because this depends a lot on how the day went, how your participants are feeling emotionally, and how you want to direct the Tour experience.
- Make sure logistics have been covered (what time to wake up and leave) and that you are respectful of those who want to sleep. Please allow plenty of time for rest!

Remember that service is a means to revealing leadership!



Chronological activities

- Play music to wake everybody up. It's a nice start to the morning and a great way to get everybody up and moving on time.
- Gather group picture, thank you cards, and t-shirt (optional) for contact person. Make sure that these things are easily accessible on the bus.
- Load bus.
- Depart to service site. Think **energy!** Again, consider using pump-up music on the bus on the way there to get people excited.
- Call service contact person.

- Serve!
- Eat lunch.
 - Highlight/describe the organization
 - Have a bus participant give the thank you card and t-shirt to your contact person
 - Take pictures!
 - Please note: Take **tons** of pictures! Not only **fun** ones, but also during **service projects** and **activities**. Think of the deliverables for the Celebration City.
- Leave for next city

****Repeat from beginning with Bus Departure****

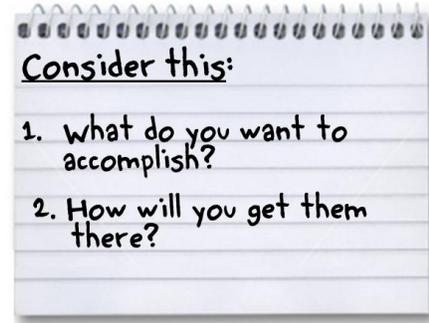
Other things to consider

- Have the group come up with expectations during the first night's reflection time. Write down these expectations and revisit these expectations during the Tour.
- Consider the ebb and flow of the day and the Tour in general when deciding on nighttime activities. What does the group need? The Tour progression tends to go from "easier" activities to "deeper" activities.
- Have everybody, including the Core, on the same level during large group activities.
 - Ex. If you sit in chairs, have everybody sit in chairs. If you sit on the floor, have everybody sit on the floor.
- Climax the activities chronologically during the Tour. The last night that your group is together before the Celebration City should be the biggest, most climatic night of the Tour.
- Consider the amount of space that you have to work with for the activities. Tailor group activities according to any space limitations you may encounter.

Facilitation Tips: How to Run a Successful Tour

You are a facilitator for the entire trip

Please keep in mind that you are **all** facilitators the **entire** bus trip—whether you are leading the actual activity or not, participants will be looking to you as an example. You are facilitating the entire time, so be intentional! Whether it is the 10-minute bus ride or a few moments after your project, be conscious of your actions.



Consider four guidelines when trying to effectively facilitate

There are four basic guidelines that transfer through all types of facilitation:

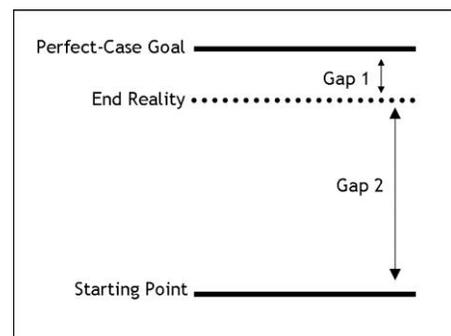
1. **Engineer reflectively:** Know what result you want. Understand and define exactly what you are trying to accomplish.
2. **Be open to new ideas:** Everything goes, so go with it! Get into a mindset that says, “No idea is bad.” Create an open environment and **be confident!**
3. **Do yourself what you desire them to do:** Your actions, energy, pace, and tone must exude what you are trying to evoke. If you want high energy before an active activity, then you, as a facilitator, should be excited! If you want them to go deeper, then speak slowly, use pauses, and change your tone/attitude. Exude the type of emotions that will get you the response you’re looking for.
4. **Lead, don’t just do:** Be up front and give the participants opportunities to respond. Remember that you are providing opportunities for people to participate. An invitation to be part of the experience is key. All participation is voluntary; don’t ‘force’ somebody to volunteer. Instead, make people **want** to volunteer.

Consider these general tips for leading a successful Tour

- Explain rules/directions clearly **before** the activity. Ask for understanding before you begin. Confusion can hurt the activity.
- Pay attention to the energy level of the group. Leave them wanting more. Wrap up before they tune out.
- Don’t over-process/debrief every activity. This is only necessary if you want the group to take something specific away from the activity or if something came up that is worth discussing.
- Employ the 15-second rule. In practice, it’s more of a 7-second rule. At any rate, count to a certain number in your head before moving on to a new topic to give the group time to digest and respond. The more serious/deep/personal the discussion, the more time needed.

Explain activities completely. Always assume it is someone’s first time.

- Scan the entire group when you're talking. Make eye contact with each person.
- Stay neutral and objective when you're leading a discussion. Tone matters!
- Allow that discussion to go where it may! Perfect questions are not set in stone. Plan, but don't be afraid to let the conversation go wherever the group takes it (within reason, of course).
- Remember that not every activity will be perfect. If a group doesn't respond well, it does not mean you did anything wrong. **Stay positive!**
- Lead by example. People will reflect the energy and mood that you show them.
- Engage in meaningful discussion where appropriate. It can be difficult to have effective/meaningful discussion on the bus. So think about what you are asking the group to do and whether or not the environment is conducive to the activity.
- Have Core meetings during the Tour. Discuss what is working well/poorly and how you'd like the Tour to proceed.
 - Communication throughout the week is necessary. Be upfront with your core if there is something that is bothering you or something you disagree with.
- Encourage/allow participants to lead activities.
- Allow enough time for rest/sleep! You don't want a bus full of crabby people.
- Remember, people are different. Just because someone is not responding to the Tour, an activity, or a project the way that you want them to does not mean that they are not having a good time.
- Your job is not to guarantee a perfect Tour or a certain experience; your job is to provide participants with opportunities to share, experience, grow, etc.
- Consider dynamic factors. There are several types of barriers (cliques, age, background, nationality, etc.). These are all factors that will change the Tour's dynamic. It is good to be aware of these aspects, although don't feel like you must change them all. If you are really intentional and provide good programming, the opportunities for people to mix up and participate are great means to offset these barriers.
- Consider the Gap Principle. Look positively on the huge gap that you have traveled, not the tiny gap that you may have fallen short. If an activity or anything doesn't go as planned it's ok (trust us, this **will** happen); remember the gap.



Fake confidence 'till you make it

This is just like it sounds. People don't know what you are thinking or feeling, but people **never** question confidence. After all, what is confidence anyway? Fake confidence until you actually feel confident; nobody will know the difference!

Use intangibles to set the mood

Think about retreats, camps, conferences, etc. you've experienced. What did you enjoy? Music, silence, darkness, candles, closed eyes, small discussion groups, etc are all ways to influence the energy of the room. How can you create the mood and reception that you're hoping to get?

Night-by-Night Schedule Suggestions

Please note: The following schedule is **not** set in stone, but merely here as a resource for you to tap. Feel free to stray from the following agenda according to your individual bus' needs.

Spend night one getting to know the other participants

Okay, it's the first night. You've all been sitting on a bus for a while, you don't know the other participants very well, and you are probably a little bit antsy. So, what are you going to want to do this first night? Well, you'll need to set some ground rules first. After that, it's up to you! How about spending some time making introductions and breaking the ice? The faster you can get past that initial awkward/timid state, the better!

- Set expectations. This is **so** important; this cannot be stressed enough. Have the participants discuss rules and guidelines that the bus will implement. Talk about things such as conflict resolution, respectful practices, etc. Clarify the expectations that your participants discussed on the bus and **remember to reiterate STLF's zero tolerance policy.**
- Communicate the schedule with the participants. Tell them what you know so far like when showers will be available, how meals will work, what time you have to be up and heading out in the morning, etc. Communication up front will clear up a lot of potential confusion later on.
- Designate Accountability Partners. While the method that you decide on to designate partners is up to you, make sure that you have Accountability Partners on your bus. (Check out the activity section for possible activities to designate partners.)
- Lead group activities. Look at the following types of recommended activities:
 - Getting acquainted activities
 - Low-risk activities
 - YEAH BUDDIES (Don't forget to explain what they are the first night)
- Lead large group discussion. Get the entire group involved and working together the first night. Remember, people are still getting acquainted with one another. Encourage networking and meeting new people.
- Set aside time for the participants to journal. Encourage the participants to jot down their expectations for the upcoming week and what they are feeling this first night.
 - Play music each night during journaling time.

Facilitate energetic activities on night two to boost group dynamic

It's night two. And while you still may not know everybody on your Tour, you've at least had the chance to get acquainted with people. You've just experienced your first day serving with the group. What do you want to do next?

- **Lead group activities.** Look at the following types of recommended activities:
 - Active competitions
 - Low-risk activities
 - Trust building activity (Walk to the Core?)

- Allow time for group reflection. What did the group think about the service project? Did they experience anything they hadn't expected? Are they surprised? Overwhelmed? Untouched? Give them a chance to speak their minds.
- Leave time for journaling. Give the participants a couple of questions to consider based on the events of the day; ultimately, though, this is their time to write about what is on their minds.
- Clarify logistics for the remainder of the night and morning of the following day.

Plan night three activities to promote bonding and communication

It's night three. You're probably starting to know people better, starting to talk to more people. Tap into this group dynamic. It might be a good night for some communication activities.

- Allocate time for group activities. Look at the following types of recommended activities:
 - Trust building activity (Yarn?)
 - Feel-good activities
- Allow time for group discussion/reflection. Again, this is time to reflect over the activities of the day. Some days will be prone to deeper group discussion while others will seem relatively light. Balance the amount/depth of the discussion according to the group.
- Leave time for journaling. Again, they'll know the drill.
- Clarify logistics for the remainder of the night and the morning of the following day.

Design night four activities to reflect the group dynamic

It's the second-to-last night that your bus will be alone before the Celebration City. Having said this, what is the group dynamic? Where are you emotionally? You can really tailor the night's activities according to group dynamics. You'll likely have a number of suggested activities that you haven't yet had time for; otherwise, be creative and try your own!

- Allocate time for group activities. Tailor the night's activities according to group dynamic.
- Allow time for group discussion/reflection. Maybe have a participant lead the discussion tonight?
- Leave time for journaling.
- Clarify logistics for the remainder of the night and the morning of the following day.

Make night five the climax night for your bus

Wow. So this is it; it's your last night on the Tour as you know it. The following days/nights will be spent in the Celebration City. Thus, make this night the climax of the entire trip! There are a few STLF cornerstone activities that should be saved for the last night, most notably the "Who Knew" reading and candle activity. Other than this, tailor this night to your group. How can you finish up this awesome Tour?

- Allocate time for group discussion. You're probably used to discussing after the group activity, but tonight's different. Encourage open and honest reflection first tonight. Then start with last night activities.

- Lead group activities. The last night activities should include (all described in detail in the activities section):
 - Candle activity
 - “Who Knew” activity
- Leave time for journaling.
- Clarify logistics for the remainder of the night and the morning of the following day.

Relax a bit on day six, and enjoy the Celebration City

Breathe out, ladies and gentlemen, you’ve made it! It’s Celebration City (CC) time! This is great. All of the tours are reunited. And for some of you, the pressure’s off! Well, actually it’s not, your role just changes a bit.

Once in the CC, the Bus Core role changes to being a **liaison** from Regional Core (RC) to your bus’ participants. As the Bus Core, you are asked to transfer information to the participants on your bus. Regional Cores are primarily responsible for setting up logistics making sure that the Celebration City goes smoothly. Make sense? Here is a run through of what to expect while in the CC:

Communicate with RC and participants as you approach the CC

- Call the RC. This is the responsibility of the Bus Core Point Person on your bus.
- Read the letter from National to the bus. This explains a little bit about the Celebration City and gives more instruction to the participants.
- Tell the participants their room assignments.

Give clear directions and turn in deliverables upon arrival

- Stay on your bus; a Regional Core member will come meet you. When the RC member is on your bus, make sure that you:
 - Broadcast the orientation time to your bus’ participants.
 - Get keys and pass them out to your bus’ participants.
 - Unload the bus with the RC’s help.
- Park the bus in designated parking area.
- Organize an orientation meeting for the entire bus. Talk about some logistics and give them heads-up on what will be going on in the next couple of hours. Make sure that everybody has a pretty good idea about what will be going on and what he/she is supposed to do.
- Allow a little bit of free time for participants to unload and relax.
- Organize a Bus Core meeting with the RC and **turn in deliverables** (page 3).
 - Spend some time hanging out and swapping bus stories with the RCs.
 - Communicate logistics for the rest of the Tour.
 - Turn in pictures via CD or flash drive. Please submit the following:
 - 2 pictures of your Tour’s t-shirt (one of the front, one of the back)
 - 2–4 pictures of your entire Tour group
 - 1-2 pictures of your bus’ Core

- 3-5 pictures of participants being goofy/hanging out
- 4-7 pictures of small groups during the Tour
- 10+ pictures of service events or activities
- Discuss and implement a sign-in process for each night.

Coordination and punctuality are key on day seven

- Plan departure for CC service project accordingly
- Leave the hotel quickly, perhaps in waves.
- Communicate logistics to all Tour participants while on respective buses.

Keep your bus together and on schedule throughout the day

- Lunch is taken care of by the RC and National staff
- Each bus will go back to the hotel after the large group lunch program
- Listen to RC for plans to go downtown for tourism and dinner
- Remind participants of celebration time on the bus BEFORE they get back to the hotel.
- Knock on doors to get everyone to the celebration on time.



Select two participants for the final celebration/closing ceremony

- Ask **two participants** to talk at the closing ceremony.
 - **Make sure to emphasize that the participants discuss stories, not merely facts.**
 - Encourage the participants to get personal!
- Remind everybody to wear dress up clothes for the closing ceremony.

Follow specific Tour activities for night eight closing

This is the actual last night of the entire Tour. All of the Tours have reunited in the Celebration City. It's undoubtedly a lot of fun, but probably a bit overwhelming too. It's important to organize and plan this night beforehand. With so many people, make sure you keep the surroundings/environment in mind when you are planning activities. You want the night's activities to be reflective, reaffirming, and goal-oriented. Thus, it's so important that you have open communication with your Celebration City Core, Core, and participants!

While the general schedule of this night will be similar to past nights, you can really tailor the night's activities to meet the needs/wants of your group. Don't be scripted. We've included some suggestions for activities, but don't let these limit your group!

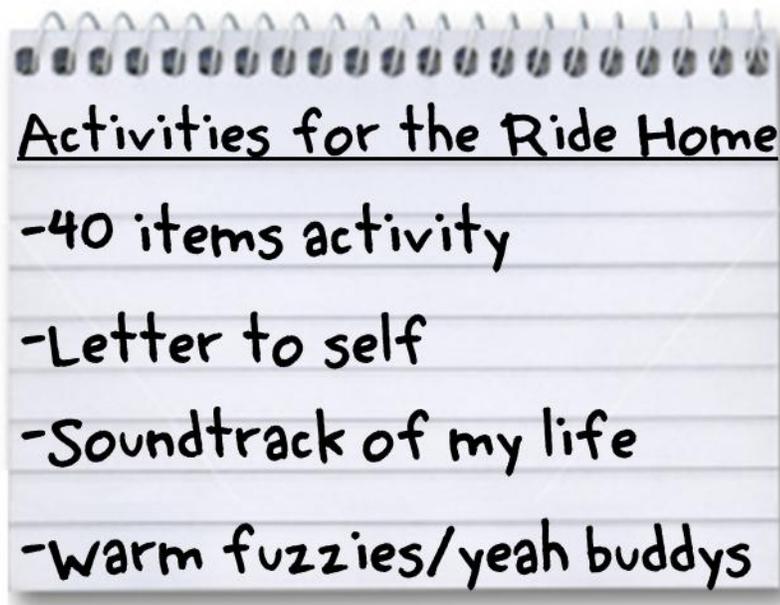
- Lead group activities. Look at the following recommended activities:
 - Celebration-city activities

- Allocate time for group discussion. But instead of facilitating this as a large group, consider breaking it down into smaller groups. You can always bring it back to a large-group discussion near the end of the night. Some questions that you may want to pose include:
 - How has the Tour affected you as a person?
 - What will you do differently when you get back to school?
 - How will you stay active and involved in the community and/or STLF?
- Leave time for journaling.
- Clarify logistics for the remainder of the night and the morning of the following day.

Finally day nine, relax on the road trip home

It's the end of an exciting, exhausting, challenging week. You have hours that you'll be spending on the bus as you drive back home. We've addressed some activities to do on this bus ride home in the activities section.

Bottom line: this is the final stretch of the trip! Allow time for sleep, but finish on a strong note.



Letter from National to Bus Participants

Below is a letter from National. Read this to your bus as you approach your Celebration City. All highlighted parts are meant for you to customize to your particular Tour.

Hello _____ **[insert bus theme]** _____ Tour!

We are *so happy and proud* to have you here! You all are amazing, and we hope you experienced a unique, incredible few days so far. You will soon join with hundreds of other people who have been touring and serving the Nation, just like you. Think about what an awesome concept that is and how you have changed lives.

We are all here to serve, to learn, to Pay It Forward. **[insert Celebration City]** is a celebration of **[insert number, call if you aren't sure or... make it up, haha]** buses and the unity we all share with each other—please remember why you came on the Tour, why you are here, and the purpose of the Pay It Forward Tour.

Please listen up! Specific instructions are below:

- STLF has taken over **[insert Celebration City]**! This is going to be a great time, but also a little chaotic. Please stay sitting on the bus until your bus leaders give you the “go” to get up and start unloading. We have people helping down there, tossing bags onto the sidewalk. Please **grab your own bag** for these next couple of days.
- Hotel room keys will be dispersed **on the bus** to prevent extreme congestion and confusion in the lobby. After this letter, your Core will read off the room list, so you should all know with whom you are rooming. This is important because upon arrival at your Celebration City, we will greet your leaders and give them a packet of keys.
- **Orientation sessions** will be held once you arrive. Each bus will have an assigned session. You also get to attend an information session tonight! A Regional Core representative will let you know when.

With that, please understand that we will be enforcing **all** of the Safety Policies and STLF Pay It Forward Tour Guidelines that you have signed.

Thanks so much and again, we are excited to get the next few days underway. Please feel free to ask questions or approach us whenever you would like to. We look forward to meeting you!

Keep changing the world,

STLF National

Activities Overview and Categories

You know from your own experience on the PIF Tour how important activities are. First, you'll have a lot of downtime on the bus; activities are a great way to get people involved and talking. Second, activities play a huge part of the evening agendas. While the activities themselves can range from calm, introspective activities to energetic, competitive activities, the bottom line is that you are providing a little bit of structure to the night. Aside from some STLF cornerstone activities that you will perform the final night before Celebration City, you pretty much have free-range over the activities that your bus chooses to do. So have fun!

Use the appropriate activity for the group's energy level

There are so many different types of activities that you can choose to facilitate. Consider the mood of the night. Consider the group dynamic. Consider what you are trying to accomplish through an activity. Ultimately, choose activities that fit with the day and purpose. Don't be afraid to do something that will push them out of their comfort zone. The earlier in the trip you do this, the closer the participants will be come and make ever lasting relationships.

We've grouped suggested activities into different categories for your ease and consideration. Again, these are not set in stone, but merely meant to stimulate your imagination. The groups are as follows:

- Getting acquainted activities
- Bus-time activities
- Low-risk activities
- Competitive activities
- Communication activities
- Feel-good activities
- Trust-building activities
- Last-night activities
- Closing activities

Consider the following when planning/leading an activity

When you're thinking about leading an activity, here are a couple of things to consider:

- **Size:** large groups, small groups, Accountability Partners, sitting alone, etc.
- **Location:** physical environment, size of the room, number of chairs, etc.
- **Sound:** loud, silent, music (and type of song!), voice level, etc.
- **Lighting:** dim, bright, soft, candles, etc.

Each of these elements can significantly alter the mood in the room and the reception of an activity. Take some time to plan how to make the setting conducive to the activity.

Look below for example activities, listed by category

Here is a compiled list of possible activities broken down into categories. This list is **not** comprehensive! It's merely a way to get you thinking. Ultimately, it's up to you! Full 60 page Activities Guidebook on STLF Core Resources page.

Getting acquainted activities—perfect for day 1 and early tour bus rides

- Accountability Partners
 - Get nametags and put pairs on them (same gender!), like Ricky on one sticker and Todd on another sticker, give the stickers out and they have to find the pair. Some examples include peanut butter & jelly; spoon & fork; PIF Tour & fun; Irene & hotness; ketchup & mustard. You get the drift. You use this form of the buddy system to quickly check to make sure everyone is accounted for.
- Name game
 - Name with adjective of same letter
 - Name and “something unique about me is...”
- Channel Surfing
 - Four people in front of room, only one person may speak at a time
 - Have participants say name, hometown, + 2 other statements before sitting down and someone jumps up to replace them.
 - Variations: Have one statement be a mystery with questions or singing challenges. Can have person sitting down tagging their replacement.
- Two truths and a lie
 - Do it personally first, then act it out in front of the whole group for kicks. You can score people on the number they get correct to up the ante.

Bus-time activities—good for passing time and utilizing bus rides

- Discussion with partners (aka Speed Dating)
- Have the insider circle rotate while you play:
 - “Would you rather...”
 - “Something you don’t know about me is...”
- Telephone
- MASH
- Watch movies
- Mafia (an STLF staple)
- Have one person take the microphone and talk about their experience that day. This may become a more emotional activity.
- Bus Idol

Low-risk activities—good for team building “appetizers”

- Human knot game
 - Have participants get into a cluster in the middle of the room and randomly hook hands so that you have a ‘knot’. Now, without breaking their hand-locks, instruct the participants that they need to figure out how to ‘unlock’ the knot and end up in a group circle with everybody still holding the hands of the people they originally locked hands with.
 - Limit groups to about 8 – 10 people.
- Electricity
 - Find a partner and face each other, while forming two lines.
 - Hold hands to your side and so actually, your ‘partner’ is on the other team.
 - Facilitator is on one end with a coin.
 - The two people by the facilitator have their eyes open, everyone else’s are closed.
 - The facilitator will flip the coin continuously until it lands on ‘heads’.
 - In silence, the person at the end must squeeze the hands of the person next to him/her. This generates an ‘electric current’ of sorts all the way through to the end of the line. The people at the end then race to an object (like water bottle) to gain a point.
 - In the event of a faulty squeeze (they do happen), team loses a point.
 - This is a quick enough game that you can have everyone filter through and can play both roles.

Competitive activities—good way to break the ice, and facilitate some energetic interaction

- The Hovda (we played this at the winter retreat)
 - Each number between 2 and 6 corresponds with a different activity (described below). Have one facilitator call out the numbers. After each round, eliminate the last person/people to complete the activity or get into the correct formation. Emphasize that people must get into different groups each time.
 - 2=birdie on a perch
 - 3=teeter totter, one person in the middle with the others teeter tottering on each side going up and down
 - 4=train, person in front must CHOO CHOO with caboose bending over
 - 5=merry go round, one in the middle hands up, four others circling like a merry go round
 - 6=mini van, this is complicated. Driver and navigator (with map) in the front. Two annoying kids fighting in the middle. The last two are sleeping on the road trip.
- Song wars
- Musical chairs
 - Make sure that while they are going around the circle you have music playing and they must dance the entire time. It makes for great laughs!

Feel-good activities

- Yeah-buddies
 - Go around in a circle and have everybody give a “yeah-buddy” shout-out to somebody that made an impact on him/her that day.
- Shoulder Tap
 - Choose seven people to stand up. Have the rest of the group form a circle and sit down with their eyes closed. Facilitator will then say a sentence, and the people standing will go around and touch the sitting people on the back or shoulder if they feel the sentence is true about that person. The people will then sit down and pick other people for another round; make sure at least one Core member is chosen in each round. Core leaders, make sure that everybody gets touched at least once. The last thing you want is for people to feel bad.
 - Examples of sentences might include
 - “I enjoy this person’s smile”
 - “I have gotten to know this person on the trip”
 - “This person is a good leader”
 - “This is a person I admire”
 - “This person makes me laugh”
 - “I appreciate this person”
 - “This person is inspiring”
 - “This person has strong values”
 - “I hope to continue the friendship I have made with this person”
 - “This is a person I would go on a road trip with”
 - “This person has changed my outlook during this trip”

Trust-building activities

- Create a circle of chairs facing inwards. Have everybody sit in chairs sideways. Next, instruct participants to lean into the person’s lap behind them. Facilitators remove chairs and the circle is self sufficient, supported by everyone being connected.
- Concentrate and get in groups of 5. Have someone volunteer to sit in a chair. The four others have to carry the person in the middle only using two fingers. They may get frustrated and laugh, but there is a trick. Put your hands together in the form of a gun, and carry under each armpit and kneecap—it works!
- Walk to the core (use facilitation guide in Activities Guidebook)
- Yarn spider-web for the big group:
 - Say “something I struggle with” then toss.
 - Have a goofier Core member start, and have it be serious. The activity will go as deep as the person who begins.
 - When web is created, facilitator should ask about the significance. People should answer about the web that is made (support, connection, etc.).
 - Say “something I am proud of” then let go.
 - Can make it one word so it is more uplifting; run with it.
 - Instruct to keep yarn **as is** on the ground—after all activities you can make bracelets with the yarn.

Night 5 activities

- Candle activity
 - Sit in a circle, dim/turn off lights or use candles.
 - Pass out candles.
 - Read “Who Knew” on the next page.
 - Read through this and add some paragraphs that have inside jokes to **your specific bus**—dancing with the mayor, any phrases that have started, etc. Also, re-do the numbers so that they specifically apply to **your bus**. Again, think about alternating between **silence** and **volume**. Also read this slowly to allow all of the ideas to sink in.
 - Explain what is going to happen. Facilitator starts by lighting his/her own candle. There are 3 steps:
 1. Talk about **something that has changed/impacted you** on the trip.
 2. Talk about what **you are going to change or do** when you get back, how you are going to **live** Pay It Forward. (The Tour is not just about the service for the week, but it is about ingraining the ideals of PIFT in our everyday lives.)
 3. Then “Pay It Forward” by passing the light on and lighting another person’s candle. Next person will do the same.
 - The room will light up one by one. Once everybody is done, wrap up the activity. Focus on how each person is a part of something **bigger**. Talk about how the room has lit up.
 - Activity ends with each person blowing out candle. Have a Core member start.
 - Sit in the darkness. Allow silence. Give hugs.

“Who Knew” Activity Script

Fill in the highlighted sections to make this activity unique to your bus. Read it aloud to your bus on the last day.

“Who knew? Who knew that we’d all be so close? That a week of spring break could mean so much? That the mere presence of amazing people could change and mold our lives like no other? Who knew?”

“From the desire to serve, to the need for time away, to the simple faith in Students Today Leaders Forever, we are all here for something. For some significant purpose, whether it is said aloud or kept quietly in the hearts of those we touch. We are the 43 here, and we are here for a reason.

*“Who knew that seven short days could seem like a lifetime??
Different people, different lives, different backgrounds... a variety of experiences, elements, and outlooks that make each of us unique.*

“This is what makes this trip a success. This is what makes Students Today Leaders Forever a success.

“Who knew that 43 people could join together for a common cause? Starting in the Midwest, moving across the nation and throughout the world... who knew that one person could make a difference? That there is an important and irreplaceable role for each person here? That each individual possesses personal and priceless gifts to share with the rest of the world?”

“Who knew that you could throw 43 people on a bus, with the hopes of changing the world, and actually change the world?”

“Who knew that in 168 hours, we’d experience different communities and lifestyles? Who knew that making flower vases was so hard and that a business expo could be fun?”

“From long bus rides, to late night heart to hearts, to playing MASH again for the first time in years... we’ve not only shared a bond, but we’ve experienced friendship in its purity. Joined by the mere goodness in our hearts and trust in those around us, we’ve energized a community and fed those in need.

“Who knew that the best community service is making others feel good?”

“Passing out cards, serving homeless, crazy icebreakers... who knew that a governor could be that cool?”

“Who knew that in 10,080 minutes, we could have so much fun? Building friendships of love and support while spreading the message of Paying It Forward... this trip has changed us. Spiritually, mentally, physically... we’ve served others and learned about ourselves. Who knew that our stomachs could consume so much?”

“Whether directly or indirectly, we have infected goodness in all we have met. But at the same time, we’ve challenged our beliefs, re-evaluated our lives, and pushed our limits.

“Who knew that in 604,800 seconds, we could change so much?”

“This trip proves that if we believe and put effort... we can do whatever we want. So let’s get after it and follow our dreams.

“We are Students Today Leaders Forever.

So... who knows?”

Tour Reflection activities (Connection City and Bus Ride home)

- Letter to Self
 - Have participants self-address these letters. Participants can write about anything they want. Content may address the participant's experience on the Tour, his/her emotions, how the Tour had affected him/her, etc.
 - You can mail them out in the summer or even over winter break. Summer can get people involved in STLF on campus, while winter break is a good PIFT recruitment tool.
- Self-portrait
 - Sit in a circle and have everyone draw a self-portrait. Pass it around and have everyone write a comment. This can be serious or not, depending on how you facilitate (allowing people to talk, not allowing, the introduction, music, etc).
- Personal description
 - Similar idea as the self-portrait, except tape paper onto each person's back. Walk around and write comments on each so that they are anonymous.
- Small-group discussion
 - What will you do back at school?
 - How will you stay involved
 - "I commit" statements to the group
- Forty-items
 - Before the Tour, instruct each participant to bring 40 (or the number of people on your bus) items of the same thing, something that he/she thinks represents him/her. In the past, this has ranged from food to rubber bands to _____. Ultimately, each person will have the opportunity to go around and pass out his/her item to the rest of the group. He/she will have to explain how the item represents himself/herself.
 - Although it is not really 40, that is what we call them. There has been up to 48 and as little as 20, so no worries! Utilize bus time on the way home and have everyone explain his/her object. Tell a fun story, you know the drill.
 - Think about the first one to go. As always, the first person sets the tone!
 - Remember to give everyone baggies to hold their items!
 - You may want to consider having one person record all of the items and emailing that out to the entire bus afterwards.
- Play/sing songs
 - Play/sing some cheesy songs as you approach home. Think "Time of Your Life" type of music.