

Amsterdam University College - Community Project Final Report

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Community project completed for Taste Before You Waste,

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

**Overview of Community Project:**

Description of partner:

This semester, from start of September 2014, until near the end of December 2014, I completed my community project for the locally run non-for profit organization, Taste Before You Waste. Taste Before You Waste is a charitable organization with the dual aim of making people aware of the copious amount of good food that currently gets thrown out, as well as providing solutions for the prevention of this food waste. The organization was founded and is based locally in Amsterdam. The organization manages to save around 250 kilograms of food from being thrown out weekly. Volunteers for the organization collect food around the neighborhood that is otherwise going to be thrown out, 7 days a week. The food is then given to different charities and/or cooked into meals. The organization also holds markets every Friday, where individuals can receive food, in return for making a conscious effort not to

waste food at home. Therefore, the main aim of Taste Before You Waste is to save food, and additionally to educate individuals on sustainable living.

Brief and clear overview of your work activities and job role within the organization:

My role within Taste Before You Waste encompassed a few different areas. Firstly, it involved the traditional volunteer role. This included taking the bikes provided and going to local food shops to ask the owners whether they have any food, which they cannot sell. The shop owners may not be able to sell this food because it is past its best before date, because it is the end of the day and legally they cannot re-sell the food the next day, or because the food simply does not look good enough to sell in a highly competitive environment where the demands for food that doesn't have any irregularities in its physical appearance is high. I would then deliver the food back to Taste Before You Waste and be involved in the process of cooking the food and delivering it back to individuals in the community who are in need. Taste Before You Waste is currently settled in a negotiation with a community house called the Meervart, where the volunteers for Taste Before You Waste have the unique ability to go there and utilize their kitchen in order to cook meals. Whilst completing my community service, I often helped with the cooking process at the Meervart, and additionally would help doing extra pick-ups from the local shops on this day, as extra food would be needed to cook with. On these days after preparing the food and cooking the food which we gained from the

local shops, I would serve the food to the individuals who came to the Meervart and additionally would often engage with these individuals in discussions surrounding food waste and brainstorming ideas in order to achieve Taste Before You Waste's primary aim of eliminating food waste. Furthermore, I was involved in attending the Taste Before You Waste meetings every Wednesday from 10.00 - 13.00. My role within this meeting was to discuss any potential ideas and to listen to other volunteer's ideas and through brain storming, to further enhance others ideas.

Additionally, my role within Taste Before You Waste was also to help with the promotion and fundraising for the organization. This included organizing events such as bake sales. I was one of two primary people behind the bake sale, as I picked up the fruit from the local owners and cooked these ingredients into banana bread. Additionally, we sold the banana bread and thus gained a profit for Taste Before You Waste. This event served a dual purpose. It promoted the organization, as individuals heard about the event through mediums such as social media, and word of mouth technique. Additionally, the event raised funds for Taste Before You Waste, and therefore the organization can continue to grow and prosper. This bake sale was one way in which my community project led to concrete services, as we firstly raised money for the organization, but additionally we set up the system of having a bake

sale, and now the organization can continue to follow our lead and the blue print that we designed and further raise their own funds through further bake sales.

Explain how your activities have positively contributed to the organization's goals, or in case of a community project to the community:

My activities within Taste Before You Waste have positively contributed to both the organizations goals, as well as to the general community. Firstly, as Taste Before You Waste's dual aim is to increase awareness as to the copious amounts of edible food that is being thrown out each day, as well as providing solutions for the prevention of this food waste, my work within the organization positively benefited both of these goals. Firstly, I educated and promoted the organization's aim through my role in generally discussing the organization and its aims, as well as organizing events such as bake sales and promoting these through forums such as social media. Secondly, I positively contributed to the other goal of Taste Before You Waste as I did many roles, which helped to reduce food waste. These included, doing the weekly pick-ups from the local shop owners, as well as cooking this food, which I prevented from being thrown out, into edible meals for the community. This consequently also positively contributed to the community as individuals who do not have enough food to eat could come to the Meervart where I cooked and either have a free

meal, or pay as much as they could to get a meal. Therefore through my role in Taste Before You Waste, individuals in the community had access to food.

**Skills, insights and knowledge gained (grade weight 0.3):**

Explain what new skills, insights and knowledge were gained from the efforts associated with your internship:

Throughout my community project, I have gained a vast amount of new skills, insights and knowledge. Firstly, the new skills, insight and knowledge I have gained involves observing the organization what attributes to the smooth running of an organization. Through being involved with Taste Before You Waste's I gained an unprecedented ability to become really involved with an organization, and to observe and become involved in the running of the organization. Especially through attending their meetings weekly, I had the ability to understand what is involved in running an organization, and to judge some aspects of the organizations running's as to whether they are beneficial or negative. Additionally, I have gained further knowledge into the problem of food waste and how prevalent it is in many societies in the world. Through working with Taste Before You Waste, I had the ability to really see how much food is being thrown out each day. Furthermore, working with Taste Before You Waste allowed me to understand how to combat the prevalent issue of the food waste and to see how important this is, both at the grassroots level, such as observing

individuals gaining a meal as a result of Taste Before You Waste, but additionally at a contextual level on a macro scale to understand the tools needed to combat food waste and thus essentially minimize poverty.

Explain how these gains contributed to your personal and AUC learning outcomes:

Having completed a community project for Taste Before You Waste has profoundly furthered my involvement in Amsterdam University Colleges learning outcomes.

Firstly, completion of this community projects has furthered the AUC learning outcome Section 2.3.6, to engage at local and global levels. Volunteering for Taste Before You Waste has furthered my knowledge of current problems in society in both a local and global sense.

Firstly, it has given me the opportunity to really get out into the local community here in Amsterdam and to really see how people live, and how people who are in need of food live and are aided by community organization, such as Taste Before You Waste. However, this has also broadened my knowledge of global problems, as prior to completing my community project with Taste Before You Waste, I already had a broad knowledge of the problems surrounding food waste and poverty faced in Australia, and particularly Melbourne where I live, so through my community project I was able to reflect and deeply compare cultural problems between Amsterdam and Australia, in an attempt to understand cultural difference

and explain where the differences arise. Furthermore, being involved in the organization Taste Before You Waste, allowed me to understand cultural differences, consequently I believe that I have become more open to how individuals live in another country to my home country, and to appreciate the social and cultural diversity and respect individual human rights and dignity, both in a local and global sense.

Additionally, my involvement with this community project has coincided with the AUC learning outcome, 2.3.7, personal and social responsibility. Through the completion my community project with the organization, Taste Before You Waste, my individual and social responsibility has been increased as I was in charge of some activities, such as bake sales, and had to work to complete these activities when challenges arise. As one of my roles in the organization was the organizing of promotional events and fundraisers solely by myself, at times I had to use my ability to think quickly and create solutions when problems arose. Additionally, my community project increased my organizational and time-planning skills as I have learnt that running events takes a lot of organization and preparation well in advance. Balancing the organization of these events and working for my other AUC courses also furthered my organizational skills. Furthermore, this community project has increased my leadership skills, as already mentioned I organized events by myself and thus I have found that I have needed paramount leadership skills for the events to run successfully.

Additionally, volunteering for Taste Before You Waste has furthered the AUC learning outcome 2.3.5, communication skills. Having a primary role in this organization has functioned to increase my communication skills, as I had lots of community with both other organizations and other individuals involved in Taste Before You Waste.

Firstly, I had to effectively communicate with shop owners when I picked up their old food. If my communication skills were not competent then the organization would miss out on the food they need, so therefore I really needed to work to increase my communication skills and build a rapport with the shop owners that highly benefited Taste Before You Waste. Furthermore, I needed very competent communication skills when organizing events to promote and fundraise for the organization. Through the use of social media, as well as personal face-to-face communication, the events were be a success, as they gained the participation needed to either promote the organization or raise funds.

Explain how the gains have complemented or built upon your AUC curriculum choices:

Although these gains may have complemented my AUC curriculum choices, as I am an exchange student and am only at AUC for one semester, I think it is more beneficial to examine how my community project has complemented my broader university academic

studies. As I am a social sciences and humanities double major, my interests lie in real world problems and understanding how to solve these problems. Therefore, through volunteering for Taste Before You Waste, I gained first hand experience within the community to examine the problems that are faced surrounding food wastage, and thus could additionally examine how to solve these problems.

**Evaluation and reflection (grade weight 0.4):**

Evaluate your own work from your own perspective as well as the partner's:

I really think that my work within the Taste Before You Waste organization was truly valued and beneficial in every way. Firstly, whilst completing the pick-ups, I did not miss one and neither was I late to pick up the food from the local shops. Additionally, I feel as though I have built a rapport with the shop owners. This means that at the start of my community project, I would go to the shops and the owners wouldn't know me, and thus sometimes reluctant to give me their food waste. However, at the completion of my community project, I would go to the same shops and would engage with the owners, as we have built a rapport and they now know whom I was and what the organization was that I volunteered for. Additionally, I believe that the other aspect of my community project was also beneficial. Through brainstorming with others, as well as by myself, Taste Before You Waste created new initiatives, which will continue into the future, as a result of my completion of my

community project. For example I came up with the concept of a bake sale, and followed through with the practical side of it. Therefore, Taste Before You Waste now has a blue print to follow to continue the concepts of the bake sales and thus raises monetary funds. I really think that my supervision would rate my work within the organization very highly.

Reflect on the expectations you had, reverting to your CP/I application:

The part of the community project that I thought turned out better than expected for me was the rides to pick up food from the shop owners. I really enjoyed this aspect because firstly it really felt like I was making a change to the problem of food waste. Initially I thought this part of my community project would be the bleakest, however in reality it was one of my favourite aspects. Additionally, the other aspect that I really enjoyed was the cooking of food into dinner for anyone who came to the Meervart. Through doing this I also really felt like I was making a change, and to see people who did not have food come and get fed as a result of my hard work was very rewarding.

Elaborate on what lessons – outside the learning outcomes – you have learned from your experience:

Most profoundly, the greatest lesson that I have learned with from experience is about the problem of food waste within the Netherlands, but additionally throughout the world.

Furthermore, as a consequence of this, I have learnt the importance of education as a tool of prevention of food waste. Additionally, I have learnt a lot about the actual running of organizations, and what makes them work well and what really doesn't.

Reflect on how the community project may have contributed to your long term career goals:

The greatest effect that community project has on my long-term career goals are that I would potentially look into starting a similar project back home in Melbourne. Now that I have been involved in the organization, I understand what it takes to run such an organization, and thus I believe that I could very adequately bring the same concept and apply it to my home city.