



PLANNING GUIDE FOR A

REVOLVING TEAM PROJECT

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FOREWORD

Following the devastating hurricanes of 2005, the leaders of the NOMADS organization saw the need to expand our responsibility to respond to certain situations with a new and innovative team project structure. Whereas, traditionally projects were set up far in advance and scheduled for a set three-week period, the need now was to get on the scene faster, and for a longer period of time. This resulted in the birth of what has become known as the Revolving Team Project (RTP).

This guide is intended as a supplement to the regular *Handbook for NOMADS Project Team Leaders*. It is desired that the RTP experience be as similar to a regular project as possible, including workdays, hours worked, team structure, and activities provided, such as devotions and social events. This guide will be used to point out various differences between a regular project and an RTP, and to provide guidance to leaders. The regular handbook is to be the guiding document for all matters not specifically covered herein. As always, there is no substitute for good old-fashioned common sense.

The RTP concept presents tremendous opportunities for NOMADS to broaden the scope of our work, while at the same time challenges us to rethink some of our established ideas of project structure and management. As with any project, flexibility is one of the primary keys to the success of a project.

HISTORY

Shortly after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, God led a small group of NOMADS to the Caswell Springs United Methodist Church near Pascagoula, MS. The people of this church had never heard of NOMADS, but were immediately inspired to install the necessary utilities to host the group. There was never a doubt that God was the leader of this project.

The NOMADS who participated in this impromptu project immediately recognized the need for future NOMADS involvement in the area. The time had long passed for setting up regular projects for the winter/spring 2006 season, but at its November meeting, the Board authorized the formation of a Disaster Response Committee (DRC), and gave them the charge to set up and run an experimental RTP project at Caswell Springs.

Announcement of the new project was made to the membership in mid-December, and the response was so heavy that soon another RTP was scheduled for the same time period in Bay St. Louis. In all, 114 individual NOMADS worked on those two projects during the 12-week duration. Many survivors were able to move back into their homes at an earlier date due to the work of these NOMADS. And the viability of the RTP concept was verified beyond any shadow of doubt. God is good. Praise God.

WHAT EXACTLY IS AN RTP?

The Revolving Team Project concept was designed with two particular goals in mind: first, to provide a means for staffing a project on a longer-term basis in one location, and secondly to allow individual NOMADS the flexibility of setting their own schedule as far as timing of their work and number of weeks worked.

Once the time period of the project has been determined and announced, any member of NOMADS can sign up to work at the project for any number of weeks they choose, with the only requirement being that their work period be in one-week increments, starting on Monday. This format has made it possible for some to work as little as one week on a project, and others as much as 8 – 12 weeks in the same location.

To date, all RTPs have been scheduled in 12-week blocks. That is certainly not a requirement, and future projects may be of differing lengths to fit the circumstances. Also, to date, all RTPs have been held in locations as a response to major disaster recovery. It is possible, however, that the concept may be expanded in the future to other types of projects.

And finally, to date, all RTP projects have been sponsored and organized by the new Disaster Response Committee, because the format has been such a good method of getting on location faster, and for a longer period of time. In the future, however, the Agency Committee may also choose to use this format in other situations.

SCHEDULING AN RTP

Several preliminary steps are necessary before an RTP can be scheduled and offered to the membership. As with any project, the first step is for the sponsoring agency to file a completed application form with our NOMADS Administrator. The agency requirements are the same as with any project, including a United Methodist relationship.

Especially in the case of disaster-related projects, the agencies may likely be new to NOMADS, and may come about either by their initiation or by our encouragement. The DRC does have a budget available to assist financially in installing the necessary utilities to support us, if such help is required. We will also try to include such projects in requests for “Materials Funds.”

Once either the Disaster Response Committee or the Agency Committee has determined that the agency qualifies for a project, it may then set a tentative time schedule for it. The Board, however, has requested that leaders for all RTPs be recruited and in place prior to offering the project to the general membership. Therefore, the committee recommending and sponsoring an RTP will be responsible for recruiting the necessary leaders.

LEADERSHIP NEEDS OF AN RTP PROJECT

From our limited experience to date, we have discovered some leadership needs unique to an RTP. Generally, being an RTP leader will entail a longer time commitment than for a regular project. It is required that any time there is a change of leaders during the course of the project, there will be an overlapping period where the new leaders come in and work under the existing leaders. This allows the new leaders to become oriented both to the work sites and to the team members before taking over as leaders. Typically, a leader may be asked for a five-week commitment – one week of project orientation followed by four weeks as leader – although this can vary by project.

For larger projects, it may be determined that co-leaders (two or more leader-units) are necessary to cover multiple work sites. Particularly in the case of disaster-related projects, the team will likely be divided into smaller groups to work on several homes at one time. This can be accomplished in one of two ways – with the entire leadership team chosen in advance, or with the primary leader chosen in advance and then given the opportunity to choose and recruit their own co-leaders.

SPECIAL TIPS FOR LEADERS

1. First on Site. The first leaders on an RTP with multiple leaders, will be given the responsibility to contact the agency well in advance of arrival to discuss the project needs and requirements, and to schedule the time for their arrival at the site. If it is a disaster-related project likely to have several workgroups at different locations concurrently, it is recommended that this first leader arrive several days in advance to have time to visit the various work sites and become familiar with the agency process for assigning work and acquiring materials. The initial leaders will then communicate this information to the subsequent leaders on the project.

2. Letters to Team Members. One inherent difference with an RTP is that leaders and team members will not always be arriving and leaving at the same time. To avoid confusion of contact by multiple leaders, it will be the responsibility of each leader to send team packets of information to all team members who begin their stay during that leader's time in charge. The information in the team packet to be sent to each team member in advance, should, at a minimum, include: a letter of welcome, project information, copy of specific agency information, maps and directions to site, address for mail forwarding, hook-up details, and a copy of the staff chart for the project showing the leaders and workers for the entire project. This last item will be furnished to you by the NOMADS Administrator, and will generally be a "work-in-process" at the time you send out your letter.

3. Arrival on Site. The first leaders of the project should arrive on site sufficiently in advance to become familiar with the work locations and agency personnel. Subsequent leaders on an RTP should plan to arrive one week in advance of their term as leaders. The goal of this plan is simply continuity – both for the team members and for the work locations. They will work as team members for one week prior to assuming the duties of team leaders.

4. Team Meetings. Since you will likely have team members leaving and new ones coming each weekend, it is necessary to have plans to get the new arrivals oriented and assimilated into the team as smoothly as possible. After trying several methods, we found the most successful was to meet individually, or as a small group, with the new arrivals as they come in, giving them the orientation to the site, a tour of the church or agency, and introductions to other team members. Then on Sunday afternoon or evening, we would have a full team meeting each and every week to get the new members of the team acquainted with the continuing members. This can be at least partially a social affair. You can also use this meeting to get sign-ups for devotions for the coming week, and to discuss other items or social events that are scheduled for the week. This is an important team-building time, and all team members should be encouraged to attend every week.

5. Blending of New and Old Team Members. In general, we recommend mixing new arrivals with continuing team members at work sites to aid in continuity of work, and to get new members better acquainted with continuing members on the team. Also, when possible, it is nice to vary team assignments from week to week.

6. Work Schedules. It is the intent of the RTP to adhere as closely as possible to the normal schedule of NOMADS projects, with a four-day (M-Th) workweek, and normal NOMADS hours. However, due to the commuting distances often involved in disaster-related projects, we found it worked best to begin our morning devotions at 7:30 a.m., leave the church/agency by 8 a.m., and get to the worksite by about 8:30 a.m. We then quit at the worksite about 4 p.m. Having said that, due to the urgency of work needed at disaster sites, some members have felt personally compelled to work longer days or more days per week. **Such extra work is to be strictly voluntary, and the leader must be sure that no one feels required to work extra hours, or that they feel “left out” for not working extra.**

7. Arrivals and Departures. In all of your communications with team members, you should stress the importance of proper arrival and departure times: New team members may arrive on site after noon on Saturday or on Sunday, immediately prior to the Monday they are scheduled to start work. They are required to leave the site by noon on Saturday immediately following their last Thursday scheduled to work.

FLOWCHART FOR A TYPICAL RTP

<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</u>
<p>1. Initiation of Project. An RTP may be initiated by the Disaster Response Committee (DRC) or the Agency Committee (AC), or may come about as an inquiry from a potential agency.</p>	<p>The Administrator will refer all inquiries to the appropriate Board Committee for action.</p>
<p>2. Research the Potential Project. Must determine the appropriateness and feasibility of a potential project, as well as whether the necessary support and utilities can be made available. Also schedule the time period for the project.</p>	<p>DRC or AC</p>
<p>3. Leader Recruitment. Once a committee has determined to sponsor a particular RTP, they must next recruit the necessary leaders.</p>	<p>DRC or AC</p>
<p>4. Distribute Copy of RTP Planning Guide to all leaders who will be assigned to this project after being advised by the DRC or AC.</p>	<p>Administrator</p>
<p>5. Announce Project to Membership. Communicate via email, newsletter, or special mailing the details of the project and the sign-up procedure.</p>	<p>Administrator, with help and information from DRC or AC</p>
<p>6. Sign-up Participants on First-Come-First Served Basis.</p>	<p>Administrator</p>
<p>7. Send out Leader Packets to all Leaders, including a staffing chart. Continue to regularly update leaders of changes to the staffing chart.</p>	<p>Administrator</p>
<p>8. Send out Team Letters to All Participants.</p>	<p>Leaders (each leader will send letter to all team members who <u>first start</u> to work on project during your watch)</p>
<p>9. Contact Agency to make arrangements for team arrival and to finalize any details not covered in previous materials</p>	<p>Leaders (this is to be done by the initial team leader on the project who will then advise later leaders as necessary)</p>