

NSPS YSN Guide

Community Outreach: SPREAD THE GOOD WORD!!!

Anecdotally, it's been gathered over years of speaking with other land surveyors, that unless you have a friend, family member, or family-friend already in the profession, **most people discover land surveying or geomatics far later than they should.** That's both a problem... *AND an opportunity.*

If you're a young surveying mind who's willing to talk to other youth about this **incredible, life-changing profession, PLEASE continue reading this article.** Outreach doesn't require perfection or any particular amount of experience; just the willingness to **get out there** and a passion for the profession to start the conversation with anyone willing to listen.

Don't be afraid to dip your toes in the water. Motto Motto likes you.



“Getting out in front of them” is the whole goal and mission. How you do that is by stepping outside the familiar circle of colleagues and projects and engaging with The People. Whether your typical citizen realizes it or not, **land surveying affects EVERYONE’S everyday lives in big and small ways.** Too often, the public’s only interaction with a surveyor comes during moments of tension, property disputes, construction delays, or regulatory confusion. Outreach allows us to reshape that narrative by showing up before problems arise, as educators, neighbors, and trusted professionals.

Engagement can happen organically at community events, local meetings, or volunteer efforts. When **surveyors explain what they do** (*why boundaries matter, how maps document communities, or how infrastructure depends on accurate measurements*) **in plain language,** it builds understanding and trust.

These conversations do not need to be technical or formal. In fact, the more relatable, simplified, and “human” one can talk about these complicated topics such as the math, history, and technological applications of our profession, the more impact they will have.

How to Get Started

Step 1: Say “Yes” to volunteering for an Event

Most surveyors don't enter the profession because they enjoy public speaking or outreach; they enter because they like problem-solving, fieldwork, and tangible results. Discomfort is not a sign you're doing it wrong; it's a sign you're doing something new.

Getting started with outreach does not require expertise, confidence, or a perfectly planned program. It requires willingness to tell your professional story. The first step is often the hardest: ***saying yes to that first opportunity.***

Step 2: Choose the type of Outreach that's right for you

The different types of Events can include Career Fairs, STEM Fairs, School Presentations, and some more “outside the box” ideas. However, we can inform the public about our existence.

If stepping directly into a classroom or public event feels like too much to embark alone, joining others through an Outreach, Communications, or Public Relations committee of your local or state surveying organization/society is an excellent entry point. Committees provide structure, shared responsibility, and mentorship. They allow you to contribute behind the scenes, planning, coordinating, writing, or promoting, while gradually building confidence to participate more visibly if and when you're ready.

Step 3: Contact who is in charge of allowing you to present

When you *are* ready to reach out directly, start with people who already know and trust you. Your alma mater is often one of the easiest places to begin. Teachers in math, history, art, or technical subjects are frequently looking for real-world connections to show students how classroom concepts translate into careers.

Guidance counselors are another strong starting point and are often more accessible than people expect. They play a critical role in shaping students' awareness of career options and are usually grateful for professionals willing to provide concrete examples beyond the most commonly promoted paths.

School-based clubs and programs also offer natural entry points for outreach. Organizations such as aviation or geospatial-adjacent clubs, scouting programs, STEM clubs, and Career & Technical Education programs are already aligned with practical skills. These groups tend to welcome professionals who can connect to real-world applications and career pathways.

Step 4: Do the Event

The most important thing to remember is outreach does not need to start big. One conversation, one event, or one classroom visit is enough to get the ball rolling and *change someone's life.* *Momentum comes from participation and engagement, not perfection.*

Types of Community Outreach Events

Typical/Traditional Outreach Opportunities

Traditional Career Fairs, and now STEM Fair Events

More traditional outreach like Career Fairs continue to play an important role in building the pipeline of future land surveyors. These settings provide opportunities to directly introduce surveying as a career option to students who may never have encountered it otherwise.

A newer happening is STEM Events. These have the same general “flavor” of a Career Fair, but they also have an interactive activity aspect to them. These are opportunities to display equipment with possibly a stakeout activities for the students to get a hands-on experience.

Although elaborate displays or expensive equipment can help “**tell the story**”, it is absolutely not needed. Genuine enthusiasm and real stories are what matters most in these environments. Presenting how surveying combines outdoor work, problem-solving, technology, and public service can resonate strongly when delivered by someone who is passionate about what they do. Remember, you’re just telling your story and showing them what you do.

Tips for Career Fairs and STEM Fair Events

Bring a wagon to transport the equipment / presentation materials you’ll have at your table or booth setup.

School Presentations

School presentations, at any level, allow for a longer-form of engagement. Surveying concepts scale well across age groups; from basic ideas about maps and measurements in early education, to discussions about technology, licensure, and career pathways in high school settings. Presentations should be tailored to the age group being presented to. They can be given to individual classrooms and repeated throughout the day to different sections of the same class type. Or they can be hosted in a central location (such as a library, auditorium, or gymnasium). Format should reflect the presenter’s comfort level and the needs of the school. A small, engaged classroom can be just as impactful as a large assembly. You’re just looking for that handful of light bulbs to go off.

It is also important to think beyond the traditional high school classroom. Middle schools, elementary schools, and community libraries are incredibly effective outreach venues. Libraries and community centers serve as neutral, accessible spaces where engaged families, students, and “curious career changers” naturally gather to learn about the working world. *Outreach in these settings can be informal, low-pressure, and surprisingly impactful.*

If you’re REALLY feeling adventurous and are able to establish a connection with the school/program, think about giving a presentation to 4K students. The conversation and how

you present everything needs to be very, VERY toned down for them, but it is possible to show them the job is out there; even though a good amount of them don't know what a job even is. This can be approached in the format of a 5-minute spiel about land surveying and how it's a job you can do both inside and outside, then have a "treasure hunt activity" where you "blindfold yourself" with "special glasses" that don't allow you to see the objective, and have a robot guide you to the prize. If you have it to your ability, an "Augmented Reality Sandbox" with a heat-map and contours is a GREAT way to open their malleable minds to a 3-dimensional world.

Virtual outreach has also become an increasingly valuable tool in recent years. They remove geographic barriers and make it easier for professionals with limited time to participate.

Types of Community Outreach Events Continued...

Much like "brick and mortar schools", reaching out to guidance counselors can open doors to multiple teachers with varying disciplines for classrooms across an entire state. Recorded presentations can extend that impact even further, allowing educators to reuse content and reach students long after the initial session.

"Outside the Box" Opportunities

Joint Events with Other Professional Organizations

Partnering with other professional organizations is another powerful way to extend beyond our own circles. Surveyors naturally interact with engineers, architects, planners, GIS professionals, and environmental groups, yet those connections are often underutilized outside of project work. Joint networking events, panel discussions, or shared volunteer initiatives help reinforce the collaborative nature of the built environment. They also introduce surveying to new audiences without placing the full burden of outreach on one group alone. Multiple professions showing up together help highlight how surveying fits into a broader ecosystem that serves the general public.

Community Service

Community Service offers a particularly approachable form of outreach because it shifts the focus from explanation to action. Activities such as park or beach cleanups, trail maintenance, or neighborhood beautification projects allow surveyors to contribute visibly to the places they work in every day. These efforts require no formal presentation and no technical background from participants. They simply show that surveyors care about the health, safety, and appearance of their communities. Often, the conversations that happen during these events naturally open the door to discussing the profession in a relaxed, authentic way.

Supporting students and families through community initiatives is another meaningful avenue for outreach. Partnering with local companies, schools, or civic organizations to host a backpack or school supply drive can have a lasting impact while reinforcing the profession's

commitment to education and access. These efforts may not look like traditional career outreach, but they quietly build goodwill and demonstrate that surveying is invested in future generations, even before students are thinking about career paths.

Types of Community Outreach Conclusion

Ultimately, community outreach can take many forms, and no single approach is more “correct” than another. The most important factor is choosing which one(s) fit your comfort level, availability, and audience. Whether it is a single classroom visit, a volunteer day, a joint event with another profession, or behind-the-scenes committee work, every effort contributes to making land surveying a more visible and better understood profession. There is no wrong entry point. *What matters most is showing up*, because presence, more than format, is what builds lasting connections between land surveyors and the communities they serve.

Why You Should Do It

To ensure everyone who SHOULD be a land surveyor, has the OPPORTUNITY to become one by knowing the profession is out there...

As mentioned in the preface, most people who eventually enter land surveying, *or one of the many professions directly adjacent to it*, don't discover it until they're already pursuing a different profession. Whether that's them being well into college or after they have already completed a degree, by that point, many have already invested years of time, tens of thousands of dollars in tuition already paid, and an exorbitant amount of energy in a direction that may not truly fit them. Land surveying is almost always an afterthought; *a late discovery rather than the intentional choice it should be.*

Finding the Prospective Surveyor Early (*Young Folks with malleable minds*)

The students who are most likely to thrive in surveying are those who enjoy problem-solving, working outdoors, understanding how systems fit together, and seeing tangible results from their work, and begin forming those interests much earlier. Middle school, high school, and early technical or vocational programs are where curiosity starts to solidify into direction and purpose. Placing surveying in front of students during this critical window, while they are still open to exploring what their future could look like, is essential for the viability of our profession.

Early exposure will give those SLIGHTLY interested a solid chance. Some students will immediately connect with the profession's unique blend of technology, law, math, history, art, and fieldwork. Others won't, and that's okay! The goal is not to make everyone a prospective geomatics specialist that day. The goal is to make sure they know the option exists, so students who *are* a good fit can recognize it when they see it.

Without outreach, surveying remains invisible.

People will always miss out on something they never knew existed.

Finding Those Unknowingly Searching! (*Folks already on another career trajectory*)

A significant percentage of surveyors did not begin their careers in geomatics at all. Many came from adjacent technical fields such as construction, engineering, GIS, environmental science, or architecture. Others arrived from entirely unrelated industries. Often, they discovered surveying only after years in roles that felt limiting, unstable, or disconnected from tangible outcomes.

Land Surveying or Geomatics often provides them exactly what they're looking for.

Why You Should Do It Continued...

Using non-traditional forms of outreach is critical for this group because “career changers” are not browsing university program catalogs. They are showing up at community events, professional meetups, job fairs, continuing education courses, trade shows, and networking spaces outside traditional academic pipelines. This could also just be by talking about relatable infrastructure (curb and gutter, sidewalk, storm/water/sanitary utility lines, foundation corners, etc.) and explaining how that ties to the land surveyor.

For many “career changers”, surveying offers precisely what feels missing: a clear and attainable path forward, work that balances physical and intellectual effort, a profession grounded in public trust, licensure that represents long-term stability rather than constant reinvention and it's a career that won't go by way of the Dodo by being taken over by artificial intelligence. But without you, *the young-ambitious surveying mind*, these qualities will remain hidden to most.

Many “career changers” have powerful psychological barriers and assume they are too late in life to pivot, believing technical professions are reserved for those who chose the right major at eighteen years of age. Seeing surveyors who entered the field later in life and transitioned from other disciplines, or who followed other non-linear paths sends a critical message: *Surveying is accessible, teachable, and welcoming to those willing to learn.* Introduction to these stories matters more than explaining the technical work itself.

Importantly, outreach aimed at “career changers” does not need to resemble traditional recruitment. It can take the form of conversations, panels, testimonials, or simply showing up in spaces where people are already questioning their next step. When surveying is present in moments of uncertainty, it becomes an answer to a question many people are already asking: *Is there something better aligned with how I want to work and live?*

Why You Should Do It Conclusion

By expanding exposure beyond students and into broader community and professional spaces, outreach ensures that surveying is not limited to those who discover it by familial connection or accident. It becomes a visible, credible option for people at multiple stages of life: those just beginning, those recalibrating, and those seeking a career with meaning, stability, and longevity.

How to Fund Outreach

Funding outreach is often perceived as a hurdle, but in reality, effective outreach does not need to be expensive. The most impactful efforts are usually simple, personal, and low-cost. A conversation, a short presentation, or a small community presence often matters far more than branded giveaways or elaborate displays.

One of the easiest places to start is with your employer. Many outreach efforts can be supported using resources that already exist. Printing a few handouts in-house, reusing company materials, or borrowing basic equipment for demonstrations can significantly reduce or eliminate out-of-pocket costs. These small contributions are often enough to make an outreach effort feel polished without adding financial strain.

It is also worth reviewing your employer's employee handbook or internal policies. Most firms explicitly allow volunteer or community service time, particularly when the activity aligns with professional development, public education, or workforce outreach. Even if outreach is not specifically mentioned, that does not mean it is prohibited.

If the policy is unclear, have a direct and honest conversation with your supervisor. Explain what the outreach involves, how much time it would require, and why it matters. In some cases, outreach can reasonably be logged under general time, professional development, or community engagement, especially when it supports the profession, builds public awareness, or enhances the firm's reputation. Always be sure to wear company apparel if they're supporting your outreach efforts.

Many employers are more supportive than people expect—especially when outreach reflects positively on the firm/company and demonstrates leadership, initiative, and community involvement. Often, all it takes is asking.

Reach out to your local and/or state surveying organization/society to request funds or “marketing materials” that help get prospective surveyors to resources they can use.

Helpful Tips for Outreach Success

Successful outreach doesn't require perfection or polish. It requires clarity, relatability, and a human connection. One of the most useful tools to have ready is simple elevator speech. A short, approachable opener helps break the ice and gives people a way to immediately understand whether surveying might interest them. One effective example is: **"If you like art, history, and math, or at least two of the three, land surveying might be for you."** From there, you can briefly explain how art shows up in map-making and visualization, how history plays a role in interpreting old maps, deeds, and records, and how math underpins measurement, geometry, and precision. For most people, once they connect with two of those ideas, the third usually follows naturally; or at minimum, the love for the two will outweigh dislike for the outlier.

Beyond quick explanations, stories are what truly make the profession stick in people's minds. People remember narratives far more than definitions. Walking someone through a real project helps transform surveying from an abstract concept into something tangible. You might describe how a construction project begins with a site or topographic survey, moves through boundary determination and stakeout, and concludes with as-built surveys. Alternatively, you can explain boundary work through the lens of property surveys, subdivision plats, or real-world problem-solving scenarios. These stories show how surveying fits into the bigger picture and why it matters long after the fieldwork is done.

It's also important to illuminate a path forward. Outreach is most effective when curiosity can turn into process. This can be as simple as sharing contact information for your State's Young Surveyors Network, handing out business cards, or offering stickers from your state surveying society or youth-focused programs like Get Kids Into Surveying. These small items act as reminders and make the profession feel accessible rather than distant.

Finally, help interested students turn curiosity into action by pointing them to clear, reliable resources. Directing them to websites such as howtobeasurveyor.com or **Get Kids Into Survey** gives them a place to explore career paths, licensure, and educational options on their own time. Outreach doesn't end when the conversation does. The goal is to make the next step obvious, easy, and inviting.

Resources Page (Reports & Examples)

These reports help document outreach efforts and make future events easier to replicate.

- STEM Fair Report - [Example](#)
- Career Fair (High School) Report – [Example](#)
- “Surveying Basics Poster” - [Graphic](#)
- Scouts Surveying Badge Event Report – [Example](#)
 - Merit Badge Series (Surveying) - [Manual](#)