



Institute of Community  
and Civic Engagement

Community Service Learning Handbook  
**Community Service Learning Handbook**



Adapted from ServeMinnesota! Partner Power and Service Learning

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# 10 THINGS EVERY COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATION (CBO) NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT SERVICE LEARNING

## *What Is Service Learning?*

Service learning is a form of experiential education in which students apply knowledge, critical thinking and good judgment to address genuine community needs.

**1. Service learning differs from community service.** It includes preparation, reflection, and accountability for learning.

**2. Personal relationships are key to success.** Get to know faculty partners. Discuss goals, resources, and challenges early. Then check in regularly. If a student calls at the last minute wanting volunteer hours, politely say “no,” and suggest he or she call ahead next time. Call the assigning teacher and ask to sit down to plan.

**3. When partners state what they really need, everyone benefits.**

- Ask for longer service commitments (such as 40 hours or more). You get more for your investment, *and* students learn more.
- Insist that students get proper training. Their service will improve, *and* they gain lifelong skills.
- Ask students to serve during the day. Teachers may be able to work service into a class or arrange credit.

**4. CBOs must see student service as important to the organization.**

Students, organizations, and schools *all* must get something they truly value out of the service learning partnership.

**5. There must be clear goals for service to be accomplished *and* for student learning.**

- Ask, “What would my organization like to do that we cannot do now?” (Or “What items never get off our ‘to do’ lists?”) Based on the answers, explore specific ways students can contribute.
- Identify what you have to offer. What can students learn from your organization and the people you serve?
- Find out what faculty wants students to get out of service experiences.

**6. Students, faculty, and site supervisors must each understand their roles and responsibilities.**

- Set clear criteria to match students with projects.
- As with any volunteer, spell out responsibilities and measures of accountability.

**7. Service learning changes the way school operates.** Service learning demands a facilitative style of teaching and learning which may be new to your teacher/partners. Learn how it works and what part you will play.

**8. Getting started is often the hardest part.** Begin with one or two simple projects. Then build on your experiences. Keep it fun.

**9. You are not alone.** Tap the many local, state, and national resources behind service learning.

**10. Everyone learns, not just students.**

Keep an open mind. Service learning requires new ways of thinking and operating.

## WHY SHOULD MY ORGANIZATION CONSIDER SERVICE LEARNING?

*Each year, millions of youth interact with isolated seniors, help people with disabilities to meet basic needs, teach toddlers, mobilize citizens to reduce environmental impact, tutor, cook and serve food at soup kitchens, speak out for social causes, help peers resist drugs, organize blood drives and health fairs...*

*How does your organization tap this energy?*

Community-based organizations typically engage student volunteers for one of three main reasons:

- 1) Students provide valuable service to those being served or to the organization itself.
- 2) Education of young people may itself be an important organizational goal. Most organizations benefit from increased awareness of their mission and vision.
- 3) Partnerships with schools, colleges and universities can garner goodwill, adult volunteers, and other resources from help with planning or evaluation, to funding or use of facilities.  
(Batenburg, 1995)

It is essential to determine your organization's motivation for participating in service learning. The stronger the motivation, the more effective the program is likely to be.

### *Why Now?*

Student involvement in community is a growing national trend and resource. Employers and educators alike recognize the critical need to prepare students to work and learn in new ways.

At the same time, many organizations want to expand their base of pool of volunteers and donors. Student service engages a large and highly diverse group of young people. Involving them energizes the next generation of volunteers.

### *What Are Students' Capabilities?*

The most compelling reason to work with students is if they can *meet a real and significant need*. It may require creative thinking to find such essential service learning opportunities.





## **BENEFITS OF SERVICE LEARNING**

### ***Community-Based Organizations Can Gain:***

- Real service accomplished by enthusiastic and creative volunteers.
- Strong partnerships with schools, colleges and universities.
- Access to resources of education institutions.
- Creative ways to expand capacity.
- Input on how to target services to youth, young adults, and their communities.
- Education of students (and families) about the mission and work of the organization.
- Positive exposure in the community.
- Future lifelong volunteers and contributors.

### ***Students Can Gain:***

- Knowledge, skills and practical experience.
- Opportunities to apply classroom learning in real-world settings.
- Exposure to career choices.
- On-the-job training.
- Friendships with staff, people served, and fellow volunteers.
- A chance to make a difference.

### ***Schools, Colleges and Universities Can Gain:***

- Motivated students.
- Expanded learning opportunities.
- Strong partnerships with community-based organizations.
- Access to community resources.
- Positive exposure in the community.

## A Sampling of Service-Learning Projects by Age How Can Students Serve In Your Organization?

Issue area	Primary	Intermediate	Junior high	High school	College
Advocate for any issue	Raise money Make educational posters Create artwork for educational materials Offer benefit performance	Raise money Design and screen T-shirts Organize a school fair Paint a mural Write letters to policy makers	Research, write and publish articles Speak to young students Put information on a web page Hold a film festival	Research, write and publish articles Produce a newspaper Start a campus chapter of an organization Speak to civic groups Testify to legislature Organize a conference Add a web page	Research, write and publish articles Produce a newspaper Start a campus chapter of an organization Organize speakers forum Organize a public hearing Design a web page
Health	Assemble soap, Tooth brush ,etc bags for homeless Tape public service Announcements Make charts on hand washing and other basic activities for preschoolers	Make posters Assemble bags with toiletries for homeless people Present educational Skits	Promote blood drive Present health/prevention information to peers Organize exercise classes	Promote blood drive Organize health fair Comfort hospital patients Present health information to children and community Organize exercise classes Coach youth sports	Organize health fair Organize blood drive Comfort hospital Patients Present health information to peers and community Provide basic health care(with training) Coach youth sports
Environment	Plant flowers Clean up trash Make posters Collect recyclables Decorate shopping bags with educational messages	Plant native trees or grasses Set up compost bins Stencil storm drains And leaflet the neighboring houses	Landscape using native plants Set up recycling and composting Stencil storm drains Organize a trash clean-up	Monitor habitat Design native habitat restoration Monitor and analyze water/air/habitat quality Conduct energy/resource use audits	Monitor habitat Monitor and analyze water/air/habitat quality Conduct energy/resource audits Assist research
Public safety	Publicize fire prevention measures Publicize McGruff safe houses	Receive training to be peer mediators Help organize a school disaster drill	Organize bicycle safety rodeo for young children Organize anti-violence campaign	Train for emergency preparedness Hold a home safety fair Organize safe drinking/bicycling/walking to school campaigns Organize peer mediation training	Organize training for emergency preparedness Organize home safety audits Organize anti-violence campaign Staff hot lines
Education	Participate in reading circles Present activities to pre-schoolers	Tutor Make books for smaller children	Organize an orientation to junior high Make displays	Develops curriculum Teach lessons to younger students	Tutor Train tutors Serve as teacher 's aides Organize forums
Economics	Collect and deliver food or other items Market hand-made craft goods	Collect and deliver food, blankets, clothing, toys, etc.	Provide child care Build furniture Do yard work	Organize child care Build furniture Help build a house Do home chores Cook at soup kitchen Collect planning data	Offer child care Cook at soup kitchen Conduct research for Economic planning Staff shelters, work, training centers, etc. Hold tax training
Immigrants	Make welcome gifts appropriate to the culture Hold a welcome ceremony	Organize an opportunity to share food and music between cultures	Hold an educational forum for the public	Organize a soccer tournament Tutor ESL students Teach language classes to elementary students	Organize opportunities to share culture Teach citizenship classes Teach ESL classes
Intergenerational	Make and deliver cards/placemats Play games Look at family photos to stimulate memory	Share songs, games, other activities Garden together	Do home chores Collect oral history Organize a public issues forum	Do home chores Organize a "senior prom" Co write community history Write/read letters Teach enrichment classes	Organize volunteers Organize outings to museums, shopping, etc Teach classes Write/read letters

## WHAT ARE THE FIRST STEPS?

### *Service Learning, Step-by-Step*

1. Explore needs of your organization
2. Identify education partners
3. Set goals for service *and* for learning
4. Spell out roles for everyone
5. Match students to needs
6. Evaluate progress and adapt

1. Find ways service learning can meet your organization's mission and goals. Convene a group representing all parts of your organization. It can be fruitful to start by asking, "What would we like to do that we can't now?" (Or "What never gets off our 'to do' lists?") Then explore specific ways students could contribute. Speak to your staff and board. Find champions for service learning within your organization.

2. Identify your education partners. Tips for Working with Schools," in this manual offers contact ideas. Do you seek to engage with a particular geographic or ethnic community? Do you have a history with particular partners? Do you have personal contacts that could open doors for you? Decide whether you want one or two strong collaborations, or a more basic level of coordination with many partners. Identify what students can learn from your organization.

3. Sit down with your partners, and set goals for service *and* for learning. Be straightforward about what you need. And insist that educators do the same. For example:

- Ask for service commitments of 30+ hours. You will improve your return on investment in

placement and training, *and* students will learn more.

- Insist that students receive proper training. They will be better qualified to serve, and they will develop lifelong skills.
- Ask for students to come when you need them most. Helping teachers to link service learning to their curriculum may enable students to serve during the school day.
- Develop regular monthly, weekly, or yearly projects to gain economies of scale in organizing time. Teachers may find such projects easier to fit into their curricula.

4. Spell out the roles of site supervisors, instructors and students. Sit down with the teachers to work out and document the details of transportation, supervision, and reporting.

5. Match students to needs. Review program goals as you set clear criteria to match students with projects. Ask teachers to have students list interests, skills, and experiences.

6. Monitor progress, evaluate and adapt. Determine how you will measure success according to your program goals. Keep evaluation measures simple. Seek outside help if you need it. Keep track of what is accomplished from Day One.

- Schedule regular contact with partners.
- Give regular, written feedback to students and instructors on the quality of students' service. (See "Assessing Student Performance.")
- Ask students and the people served what is working and what is not.

# ASSESSING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

## *What Is the CBO's Role?*

Community-based organizations have an important role in assessing student performance in an academic program. Site supervisors need to feel comfortable giving input that will affect grades.

Certainly, academic work will be graded by qualified teachers. (The division between academic and fieldwork is typically sharper for undergraduate and postgraduate levels.) On occasion, this may also include some input from a site supervisor. For fieldwork, however, no one is better qualified to assess the quality of student work than the site supervisor.

Ultimately, it is still the instructor's responsibility to relate service site feedback to educational objectives. With group projects, a teacher can help students think about how their individual contributions may have helped the group effort.

## *Why Assess Student Service?*

Timely feedback can help students to improve the quality of their service, particularly if given along the way as well as at the end of a project or placement.

Students also work harder—and learn more—when they see the direct value of their service. Feedback provides a chance to explain the impact a student is making. Feedback sessions also offer a chance to recruit students to volunteer after their class assignment ends.

Cumulative assessments of individual student performance should help shape overall program evaluation and efforts to

improve. Schools, colleges, and universities are increasingly requiring “authentic” assessment of student learning. That is, students must apply academic knowledge and skills on problems that are as close as possible to the complex real world. To accomplish this, educators need the help of community professionals.

## *Why Assess Formally?*

Most service site supervisors already give students informal verbal feedback. Yet formal feedback has several advantages. Ideally a site supervisor will sit down with a student to review written feedback.

Students perform better when they know expectations in advance. They take written feedback more seriously. Written feedback also reduces chances for confusion or misinterpretation. Written feedback can be shared with instructors, and in some cases with parents or other stakeholders. Students can also review feedback later to check progress over time.

Feedback that occurs along the way as well as at the end of service helps students adjust and improve their performance. Obviously, the drawback of formal feedback is that it takes time. Organizations may rightly insist that they will only give formal feedback to those students who contribute a significant number of hours.

## *Where Do We Begin?*

Once again, the place to start is to review your goals—and the teacher's and student's goals—for service learning. Assessment should include feedback both on the quality of student work and on student learning. Assessment plans must be worked out between the service site supervisor and the instructor. When possible, students should also be involved.

# STUDENT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FORM

(To be completed by the site supervisor and e-mailed to De Anza instructor)

NAME OF STUDENT \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

AGENCY \_\_\_\_\_

HAVE YOU GONE OVER THE EVALUATION WITH THE STUDENT?    Yes or No

Interview questions: Please consider the impact this student's presence/service has had on the population served at your site.

a. What things were done that couldn't have been done otherwise?

b. What things were done better than could have been done otherwise?

c. How has your site been improved by the CSL service? Please

d. Additional comments.



## TEMPLATE

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for your interest in providing volunteer opportunities for De Anza students taking (COURSE). In coordination with the Institute of Community and Civic Engagement, (COURSE) develops (COURSE GOAL/PURPOSE).

The (PROJECT NAME) is an opportunity to provide a service to a community organization and/ or program that serve children and families, youth, and student populations. It aims to give students hands on experience on how to contribute to their community, on or off campus.

Community Service Learning is an academic study linked to community service through structured reflection so that each reinforces each other. The community service may be direct service to people in need, community outreach and education, research or policy analysis. It is also considered a form of experiential education in which students apply knowledge, skills, critical thinning and good judgment to address genuine community needs.

For (QUARTER & YEAR), students who choose to do their volunteer work at NAME ORGANIZATION must complete 12 hours of community service learning, between weeks 3 and 11. Students are also asked to maintain a time sheet that requires a supervisor's signature.

To give you more information about the project, I have attached the assignment guidelines. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (408) 864-0000 (OR YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS).

Sincerely,

Instructor's Name  
Department  
De Anza College

Community-Based Learning – Student Survey

Student’s name: \_\_\_\_\_

Course: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

We would like to better understand the impact that community based learning has on students. We particularly want to know how this experience has influenced your perspective on learning, your view of service, your choice of career, and your perspectives on working the diverse communities. Please take 5-10 minutes to complete this survey, and return it before you leave class today.

**I. First we would like some information about you.**

1 What is your ethnic background?

- Caucasian/White       African American       Asian /Asian American       Hispanic
- Native American       Other

2 What is your age group?

- Under 25       25-34       35-44       45-54       over 55

3 What is your gender?       Male       Female

4 What is your class level?       Freshman       Sophomore       Junior       Senior       Graduate  
 Student       Other

5 I have a job that requires me to work       1-10 hrs/wk       11-20 hrs/wk       21-30hrs/wk  
 31-40hrs/wk       41+hrs/wk       I do not have a job

6 Name of the agency/community organization with which you worked during this class:

**II. Next we would like to gain your perspective about this course. Please mark your level of agreement with each statement.**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7 The community participation aspect of this course helped me to see how the subject matter I learned can be used in everyday life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 The community work I did helped me to better Understand the lectures and readings in this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 The idea of combining work in the community with university course work should be practiced in more courses at this university.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**III. The next set of questions relates to your attitude toward community involvement. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10 I was already volunteering in the community before taking this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 I feel that the community work I did through This course benefited the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12 I was able to work directly with a community partner through this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 I felt a personal responsibility to meet the needs of the community partner of this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14 I probably won't volunteer or participate in the community after this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 My interactions with the community partner enhanced my learning in this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**IV. Next we would like to know about the influence of your service on your choice of major and profession. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements.**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16 Doing work in the community helped me to become aware of my personal strengths and weaknesses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17 The community work in this course assisted me in clarifying my career plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18 The community work I performed in this class enhanced my relationship with the faculty member.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19 The community work involved in this course made me more aware of my own biases and the prejudices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20 The work I performed in the community enhanced my ability to communicate in a "real world" setting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 The community aspect of this course helped me to develop my problem-solving skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**V. Finally, we would like some of your personal reflections on this experience.**

22 The syllabus provided for this course outlined the objectives of the community work in relation to the course objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23 The other students in this class played an important role in my learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24 I had the opportunity in this course to periodically discuss my community work and its relationship to the course content.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Thank you for your comments. Please return the completed form to [personalize information].*