

# PARTNER POWER AND SERVICE-LEARNING

MANUAL FOR COMMUNITY-BASED  
ORGANIZATIONS  
TO WORK WITH SCHOOLS  
BY RICH CAIRN

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**PARTNER POWER AND SERVICE-LEARNING**

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# HOW DO I USE THIS MANUAL?

## Who Is This Manual For?

Our goal is to help community-based organizations that use—or hope to use—student volunteers from schools, colleges, or universities. Community-based organizations with their own service-learning programs (such as 4-H or Girl Scouts) should also find it useful.

Our primary audience includes volunteer directors, program staff, organization directors, boards and other volunteer leaders.

## How Do I Use It?

First browse “10 Things Every CBO Needs to Know about Service-Learning.” What questions does it raise?

“Why Should My Organization Consider Service-Learning?” can help you determine your organization’s potential benefits. Is your organization getting all it could from student volunteers?

For a primer on service-learning, scan “Service-Learning 101.”

“What Are the First Steps?” can help you plan a program.

Carefully consider the questions in “What Your Organization Must Decide As You Enter a Service-Learning Partnership.” If possible, discuss the questions with your education partners. Don’t worry if you can’t answer all the questions right away. Move on. Then return to the questions to check progress.

The survey, “How Do Students Volunteer in Our Organization?” can help you find out what is already happening. This approach acknowledges colleagues’ efforts and gleans ideas from their experiences.

The manual also includes worksheets and information to guide specific planning and program development tasks.

## Who Created It?

In 2000, ServeMinnesota! and the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning received a three-year grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service to help community-based organizations start or expand service-learning partnerships with educators.

Despite the importance of community partners in service-learning, nearly all existing service-learning materials speak mainly to educators. To fill this gap, grant resources allowed us to produce three resources targeted to community organizations:

1. this manual,
2. a PowerPoint presentation, and
3. a short introductory video.



## What if We Want to Go Deeper?

For those who want more, the Points of Light Foundation (POLF) sells, “A Practical Guide to Developing Agency-School Partnerships for Service-Learning.” The POLF guide is especially useful in support of an organization-wide approach to service-learning. It offers a framework and tools for planning, including guidance on strengthening the role of youth in program development.

This and other helpful materials are referenced in the “Resources” section at the end of this manual.

# 10 THINGS EVERY CBO NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT SERVICE-LEARNING

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 life-long skills.
- Ask students to serve during the day. Teachers may be able to work service into a class or arrange credit.
- Ask for a regular annual commitment. You may make it easier for teachers to place projects in the curriculum.

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.

## 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.**

- Minnesota Department of Education

- Identify what you have to offer. What can students learn from your organization and the people you serve?
- Find out what faculty want 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 Capable of?

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.

We hope the following real-life examples expand your conception of how you might involve students. (See further examples in "Matching Students with Placements," in this manual.)

How might students in these circumstances extend *your* organization's capacity?

## Imagine...

- Each student serves 40, 100—even 200 hours per year through a service-learning course, senior project, work study placement, or internship.
- Biology/ecology students collect and report water quality data countywide.
- Architecture students help design and build low-income housing.
- A school-wide campaign raises thousands of dollars to fight hunger.

- Students do something better than anyone else can:
  - Refugee children translate health and housing information for elders. (Provide unique access to a community.)
  - High school seniors—a town’s only available pool of daytime volunteers—staff a volunteer ambulance crew. (Be in the right place at the right time to meet a need—even to save a life.)
  - Young children spark the spirits and sharpen the memories of senior citizens.
  - College students organize an issue forum. (Take on controversial issues.)
- Teenagers speak against drug use to peers and to young children. (Mobilize positive peer pressure.)
- Students invent a new service: (Sometimes only students are sufficiently bold—or impatient—to act.)
  - Though a hospice policy bars youth from volunteering with patients, students instead organize a child care program for patients’ families.
  - College students start a soup kitchen, or a gun safety organization, or a battered women’s shelter, or a recycling program, or a voter registration drive, or a clinic, or...

## 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, and
- 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, and
- 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, and
- positive exposure in the community.

# 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. Use the PowerPoint and video from ServeMinnesota!, and invite staff, students, and teachers from successful programs to speak. 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 who 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. You may wish to use, "Questions for Organizations Entering a Service-Learning Partnership," in this manual.

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. (See "Matching Students with Projects or Placements," in this manual.)

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. Talk to your education partners, volunteer centers, County Extension, or the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse: [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org). Keep track of what is accomplished from Day One.

Schedule regular contact with partners. Find out whether teachers prefer phone or email. Ask how to leave messages for them.

Give regular, written feedback to students and instructors on the quality of students' service. (See "Assessing Student Performance," in this manual.)

Ask students and the people served what is working and what is not.

Continually build the understanding of and commitment to service-learning in your organization.

# QUESTIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS ENTERING A SERVICE-LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

## Program Purpose

1. Why does your organization want to involve student service-learners? (See possible purposes on page 5.)
2. What type of partnership does your organization want? How complex? How formal? How long-term? (See levels of collaboration on page 13.)
3. How does your organization involve student service-learners now? Is it working? (See sample survey for colleagues on the following page.)

## Service Goals

4. Do you seek to fill existing service slots? To expand these slots? To devise new ways students can serve? Do you want long-term placements, one-time projects, or some combination?
5. Identify unmet needs of your organization and the people it serves. To what degree are you able to help teachers and students find ways to meet these needs?
6. How will you know whether students are effective? How might you give feedback to help students improve? (See assessment ideas, pages 18-21.)

## Student Learning Goals

7. What knowledge, skills and experiences can students gain from working with your organization and its people? What do you want them to learn?
8. What prior skills do students need?
9. What orientation and training is needed? What will you provide? What must the school provide?

10. To what degree are you able to work with teachers on curriculum? Under what circumstances would you be willing to help assess what students are learning? (See assessment ideas, page 18.)

## Placing Student Volunteers

11. How will you match students with service tasks? Are position descriptions in writing? (See "Matching Students with Projects or Placements," page 10.)
12. Do you want to work with group projects, individual volunteers, or both?
13. What is the minimum useful number of hours for a student to volunteer?
14. How many student volunteers do you want? What ages?
15. What days and hours can you use student volunteers? What are the priorities?

## Logistics

16. Who will supervise students? What will that consist of?
17. How will you ensure student safety? Does your organization have adequate liability insurance? Do you have adequate background checks on staff and volunteers?
18. How will you communicate standards for dress and behavior?
19. Where will service take place? How might students get to and from sites?
20. Do you have other logistical concerns? (Sign-in procedures, etc.)
21. What are your questions for the teacher?

# HOW DO STUDENTS VOLUNTEER IN OUR ORGANIZATION?

*We distribute this survey to the staff and volunteers in our organization to help us identify ways that students serve our organization now, and to help us find ways to strengthen students' contributions. Please complete this survey and return to \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ Thanks!*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Program/Division: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How have you involved student volunteers in the past? (What service(s) did they provide? Please describe.):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Education<br><input type="checkbox"/> Issue-Oriented Advocacy<br><input type="checkbox"/> Planning and Organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Service to Individuals (Specify) _____<br><input type="checkbox"/> Raising Funds or Collecting Other Resources<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
|---|--|

2. What were the expected benefits for our organization and the people it serves?

3. What were the students' educational goals?  Did not know.

4. How completely were goals met (both organizational goals and student learning goals)? What was the students' most important contribution?

5. How many students of each grade level were involved? List partners and contacts.

\_\_\_\_\_ K-3    \_\_\_\_\_ 4-6    \_\_\_\_\_ 7-8    \_\_\_\_\_ 9-12    \_\_\_\_\_ College    \_\_\_\_\_ Post-Graduate

Name	School	Contact Information
------	--------	---------------------

6. Who oriented and trained students? Was it effective?

7. Did students work in  groups  as individuals  both at different times.

9. How did they get to volunteer sites?

10. What problems came up? How were they dealt with?

# MATCHING STUDENTS WITH PROJECTS OR PLACEMENTS

First figure out why you want student volunteers. (See “Why Should My Organization Consider Service-Learning?” and “What Are the First Steps?” in this manual.) This will help you set goals for how many volunteers, how frequent, how long their hours, what training they might need, etc.

Decide whether you want a few students in longer-term placements, or many students on short-term projects. You may also wish to engage students in developing their own service opportunities.

There is a huge range of things students can do. The list on the following page gives possibilities at different ages. Find detailed program examples on the Web. (See “Resources” section.) Talking to colleagues, to teachers, and to the students themselves will also generate ideas.

In the end, the assignment of students to service tasks requires negotiation between site supervisor, students, and instructor. Experience helps. Start small and build on success over time.

Students will be much more motivated if they have choices and a role in planning their projects. Make clear to schools that your customers also need a say.

Methods to aid the process include:

- Campus Service Fair - Local schools or campuses may hold fairs where you can meet and recruit students.

Placements: volunteer positions for individuals within an organization.

Projects: one or more students carry out a task (and may even plan it).



- Classroom Presentations - Ask if you can speak to classes. (Many high schools offer service courses. At the college level, try a discipline area relevant to your need.)
  - Student Application (See sample below in this manual.) - Ask for student interests, goals, skills and experience. Older students may include a resume.
  - Instructor Meeting - For short-term and group projects, meet with the instructor to work out plans.
  - Interview - For longer service commitments, sit down together so both student and site supervisor can lay out goals and expectations.
- Plan with Students - Meet with older students (and with teachers) to work out what skills and resources students have, and to explore which of your needs students can address.

Other details to consider:

- Schedules - students may have severed limits on availability
- Transportation
- Safety - of both students and people served
- Confidentiality - of both students and people served

# 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 <u>Any Issue</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise money</li> <li>• Make educational posters</li> <li>• Create artwork for educational materials</li> <li>• Offer benefit performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise money</li> <li>• Design and screen T-shirts</li> <li>• Organize a school fair</li> <li>• Paint a mural</li> <li>• Write letters to policy makers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research, write and publish articles</li> <li>• Speak to young students</li> <li>• Put information on a Web page</li> <li>• Hold a film festival</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research, write and publish articles</li> <li>• Produce a newspaper</li> <li>• Start a campus chapter of an organization</li> <li>• Speak to civic groups</li> <li>• Testify to legislature</li> <li>• Organize a conference</li> <li>• Add to a Web page</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research, write and publish articles</li> <li>• Produce a newspaper</li> <li>• Start a campus chapter of an organization</li> <li>• Organize speakers forum</li> <li>• Organize a public hearing</li> <li>• Design a Web page</li> </ul>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assemble soap, tooth brush, etc. bags for homeless</li> <li>• Tape public service announcements</li> <li>• Make charts on hand-washing and other basic activities for pre-schoolers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make posters</li> <li>• Assemble bags with toiletries for homeless people</li> <li>• Present educational skits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote blood drive</li> <li>• Present health/prevention information to peers</li> <li>• Organize exercise classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote blood drive</li> <li>• Organize health fair</li> <li>• Comfort hospital patients</li> <li>• Present health information to children and community</li> <li>• Organize exercise classes</li> <li>• Coach youth sports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize health fair</li> <li>• Organize blood drive</li> <li>• Comfort hospital patients</li> <li>• Present health information to peers and community</li> <li>• Provide basic health care (with training)</li> <li>• Coach youth sports</li> </ul>
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plant flowers</li> <li>• Clean up trash</li> <li>• Make posters</li> <li>• Collect recyclables</li> <li>• Decorate shopping bags with educational messages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plant native trees or grasses</li> <li>• Set up compost bins</li> <li>• Stencil storm drains and leaflet the neighboring houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape using native plants</li> <li>• Set up recycling and composting</li> <li>• Stencil storm drains</li> <li>• Organize a trash clean-up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor habitat</li> <li>• Design native habitat restoration</li> <li>• Monitor and analyze water/air/habitat quality</li> <li>• Conduct energy/resource use audits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor habitat</li> <li>• Monitor and analyze water/air/habitat quality</li> <li>• Conduct energy/resource audits</li> <li>• Assist research</li> </ul>
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicize fire prevention measures</li> <li>• Publicize McGruff safe Houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive training to be peer mediators</li> <li>• Help organize a school disaster drill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize bicycle safety rodeo for young children</li> <li>• Organize anti-violence campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train for emergency preparedness</li> <li>• Hold a home safety fair</li> <li>• Organize safe driving/bicycling/walking to school campaigns</li> <li>• Organize peer mediation training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize training for emergency preparedness</li> <li>• Organize home safety audits</li> <li>• Organize anti-violence campaign</li> <li>• Staff hot lines</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in reading circles</li> <li>• Present activities to pre-schoolers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutor</li> <li>• Make books for smaller children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize an orientation to junior high</li> <li>• Make displays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop curriculum</li> <li>• Teach lessons to younger students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutor</li> <li>• Train tutors</li> <li>• Serve as teacher's aides</li> <li>• Organize forums</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and deliver food or other items</li> <li>• Market hand-made craft goods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and deliver food, blankets, clothing, toys, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide child care</li> <li>• Build furniture</li> <li>• Do yard work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize child care</li> <li>• Build furniture</li> <li>• Help build a house</li> <li>• Do home chores</li> <li>• Cook at soup kitchen</li> <li>• Collect planning data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer child care</li> <li>• Cook at soup kitchen</li> <li>• Conduct research for economic planning</li> <li>• Staff shelters, work training centers, etc.</li> <li>• Hold tax training</li> </ul>
Immigrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make welcome gifts appropriate to the culture</li> <li>• Hold a welcome ceremony</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize an opportunity to share food and music between cultures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold an educational forum for the public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize a soccer tournament</li> <li>• Tutor ESL students</li> <li>• Teach language classes to elementary students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize opportunities to share culture</li> <li>• Teach citizenship classes</li> <li>• Teach ESL classes</li> </ul>
Inter-generational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make and deliver cards/placemats</li> <li>• Play games</li> <li>• Look at family photos to stimulate memory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share songs, games, other activities</li> <li>• Garden together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do home chores</li> <li>• Collect oral history</li> <li>• Organize a public issues forum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do home chores</li> <li>• Organize a "seniors prom"</li> <li>• Co-write community history</li> <li>• Write/read letters</li> <li>• Teach enrichment classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize volunteers</li> <li>• Organize outings to museums, shopping, etc.</li> <li>• Teach classes</li> <li>• Write/read letters</li> </ul>

# STUDENT APPLICATION FOR SERVICE

Student Name _____	Date _____
Telephone (_____) _____	Cell _____
Email _____	
School _____	Grade/Year _____
Assigning Teacher _____	
Address _____	
City	State      Zip
Telephone (_____) _____	Cell _____
Email _____	
Emergency Contact _____	Relationship to You _____
Work Phone (_____) _____	Home Phone (_____) _____

What are your qualifications for service? Include special skills (music, arts, sports, office skills, etc.):

What does your teacher expect you to learn from this service experience?

What do you expect to get out of this service experience?

How will you get to the service site?     walk/bicycle       drive myself       bus  
 ride with: \_\_\_\_\_       other: \_\_\_\_\_

List times you can serve. (Specific hours where possible.)    Total hours you want to serve: \_\_\_\_\_

	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
morning							
afternoon							
evening							

Date you can start: \_\_\_\_\_      Date you must finish by: \_\_\_\_\_

List and describe your previous volunteer and work experiences (continue on the back if necessary):

Start Date	End Date	Organization/Employer	Your Responsibilities

# BUILDING CAPACITY FOR SERVICE-LEARNING

## Levels of Partnership

### Cooperation

Agency and school share information  
Limited commitment and risk  
Periodic interaction  
Roles distinct and separate  
Service site at school or agency

### Coordination

Agency and school meet to plan a program  
Regular contact  
Recurrent planning  
Frequent communication  
Projects may be existing or new initiatives

### Collaboration

Agency and school form a new structure  
Shared commitment and leadership  
Comprehensive, joint decision-making  
Ongoing communication  
Joint resource development and funding

### Cultivation

Agency and school jointly champion service-learning projects  
Intentional, ongoing advocacy  
Focus on sustainability  
Shared teaching and leadership of service  
Outreach and training of new partners

(Adapted from Roehlkepartain, 1995; & Abravanel, 2003.)

## What Level Do You Need?

What commitment and resources do you seek? You may want the broad exposure of cooperation with many groups (cooperation). You may find that a few good joint projects meet your needs. (coordination) Or you may find it more worthwhile to fully develop just one or two in-depth partnerships (collaboration). You

may even want to merge functions of your organization with your partners (cultivation).

## Build Internal Support

To succeed, you will need support. Build a group of “champions” and “cheerleaders” within your organization.

Develop a comprehensive vision for service-learning. Tie that vision into organizational mission and goals.

Provide training on service-learning for board and volunteers as well as staff. Use free and low-cost opportunities as they occur. Build capacity steadily.

Arrange for staff/volunteers to hear from students and people served—your most persuasive salespeople.

Organize service-learning projects for staff/volunteers so that they can experience the value of reflection and other elements of quality service-learning programs.

## Staffing Strategies

There is a need for staff/volunteer time to manage student volunteers. Ideally, students will become so valuable that this allocation of resources becomes a basic part of the organization.

Even so, it is helpful (and often necessary) to generate additional resources for service-learning. Fortunately, students themselves are one of the best resources. Following are possible ways to staff your student service-learning effort, especially during start-up:

Local Colleges/Universities/Schools or Minnesota Campus Compact:

- Interns - Advanced students (often from professional degree programs) give many hours in return for on-the-job training. May need stipend.
- Work Study - Colleges and universities must place in the community a certain percentage of student workers who

receive Federal Work Study funds.  
Organizations must match funding.

ServeMinnesota! / Corporation for National and Community Service:

- VISTA - Skilled full-time volunteers mobilized by the Corporation for National and Community Service.
- Youth Works / AmeriCorps - Minnesota's full-time volunteer program.
- Senior Volunteer Corps - Retirees, including teachers and others with direct relevant experience.
- Community-based Learn and Serve America - Federally funded program of sub-grants and training to community-based organizations.

Collaborative Options:

- Several organizations could band together to engage a student volunteer coordinator.
- Join with youth-oriented organizations such as 4-H and Girl Scouts with experience mobilizing students.
- A very few schools have reallocated a portion of their building costs (typically 25-40% of the cost of running a school) into project-based learning in the community.

See "Resources," in this manual for contact information and additional resources.

## Tips for Working with Teachers

Build a bridge to schools through Community Education, principals, or the coordinator of school-to-work or service-learning (if there is one).

Schools have a distinct culture which may seem daunting to an outsider. Teachers spend almost all their work day with students, so have little time on their own to communicate or to organize projects. Thus though teachers can use outside assistance, persistence may be required to establish the relationship.

- Identify the specific people you will work with. Get to know them and their work style.
- Keep the principal informed. Involve him/her if possible.
  - Ask each teacher when he/she has planning or "prep" time.
  - Ask each teacher how he/she prefers to communicate: email, home email, phone, voice mail, notes his/her office mail box, home phone, etc..
  - Find out how to contact teachers during summer and breaks.
  - If some bit of educational jargon



confuses you, ask for help.

- Remember that educators must always ask: "How will this help students?"
- Don't give up!

## Tips for Working with Students

If your organization has no experience working with young people, ask your school partners for tips or training. You may wish to enlist the help of a youth-serving organization such as the YMCA, Girl Scouts, or 4-H. Or you may have staff or volunteers with untapped experience in the area.

A brief introduction to working with youth is included in "Service-Learning 101," in this manual. "A Practical Guide to Developing Agency-School Partnerships for Service-Learning," from the Points of Light Foundation (see "Resources") has a good section on this topic.

# SERVICE-LEARNING 101 - FOR CBOs

*To ease the isolation of its residents, Edgebrook Care Center asked students from Edgerton High School to help. The students raised funds for two new computer stations at the center. Students signed up 23 senior-citizens for email. Then they trained the seniors to get on-line. The first day, one woman received her first ever photos of grandchildren.*

## What Is Service-Learning?

Service-learning is a form of experiential learning whereby students apply content knowledge, critical thinking and good judgment to address genuine community needs.

Where traditional community service focuses mostly on getting the job done, service-learning also seeks to ensure that volunteers learn from service. To accomplish this, volunteers need to have opportunities to reflect upon their service. For student volunteers, service often must link to their curriculum. (For example, students might conduct water quality monitoring in Biology, teach young children for Child Development, or produce an issue-oriented newsletter for English.)

This section offers an orientation to service-learning so that community and school partners can begin to speak the same language about service projects.

## What Makes a Quality Program?

Service-learning practitioners widely agree on a few core elements which every quality program should include. (See chart next page.)

Research on what makes service-learning effective (Melchior, 1998) also shows that programs which involve students in longer service projects (at least 30 hours) have greater impact on student learning. This is key, since many organizations also seek longer commitments from students, in order

to maximize the return on investment for training, placement, and supervision.

Program longevity was another indicator of program quality. One key strategy for sustainability is to help teachers develop projects which they can do year after year.

Regular use of oral and written reflection, and links to formal course curriculum were the other key factors.

## How Do We Work With Youth?

Many adults are uncomfortable working with youth and young adults. Distrustful of inexperience, and perhaps remembering personal insecurities as youth, adults often minimize what youth can contribute.

Yet young people offer a unique dedication, humor, creativity and clarity of vision. For organizations that work with dynamic issues such as the arts, education, technology, or public safety, input from youth is invaluable.

The most important requirement for work with youth is to treat them with respect. Be clear and specific about your expectations, and take time to hear theirs. Communicate as you would with any volunteer. A little encouragement and willingness to listen will go a long way.

- Respect students as capable resources
- Ask for their input early in planning
- Listen
- Be ready to explain the reasons for your actions and ideas
- Give students room to make decisions
- Let students know that they are accountable for successes *and* failures
- Spell out agreed-upon responsibilities in writing
- Embrace the fresh perspective  
(DesMarais, 2000)

## What Is the CBO's Responsibility for Student Learning?

The school or college usually has primary responsibility for educational goals, and for integrating service-learning experiences with curricula. Yet CBOs can play active and meaningful roles. (Of course, many organizations such as 4-H and Girl Scouts have youth service programs of their own.)

At the least, insist that teachers and students tell you their learning goals. This will help you shape students' experiences.

Site supervisors are in a unique position to give feedback on student efforts. (See "Assess Student Performance," page 18.)

You may also wish to engage students in reflective discussions, or to give input into

class assignments. For example, suggest to teachers possible essay or research topics, or possible test questions.

## Logistics

While student volunteers sometimes present distinct transportation, liability, and safety challenges, there are many existing resources to help, including education partners. (See "Resources" below. Roehlkepartain, and Cairn & Kielsmeier, are particularly useful.)

Your organization's risk management plan may need to be revised to ensure the safety of students. In addition, you will need to review the necessity of criminal background checks for volunteers or staff who will have direct contact with students.

## Effective Service-Learning

<b>Orientation &amp; Training</b>	<b>Meaningful Service</b>	<b>Reflection</b>	<b>Demonstration of Learning</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission, goals, philosophy, and history of the host organization</li> <li>• Team-building among participants</li> <li>• Skills needed to perform the service itself</li> <li>• Needs of those served, including social context in which they live</li> <li>• Problem-solving skills</li> <li>• Guidelines for safety and confidentiality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service meets real human and/or environmental needs</li> <li>• Host organization, educators, and students all help plan and organize service</li> <li>• Partner organization and educators state clear purpose and goals</li> <li>• Service engages and challenges students</li> <li>• Values diversity</li> <li>• Partners evaluate the program and work continually to improve it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes place before, during, and after service</li> <li>• Includes description, analysis of the situation, and possible future actions</li> <li>• Explores solutions to problems which come up during service</li> <li>• Examines social and other causes and possible solutions for problems</li> <li>• Requires students to apply classroom learning</li> <li>• Ties assignments into curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students receive concrete feedback from site supervisors, teachers, and possibly from people served</li> <li>• Students have opportunities to report what they have learned</li> <li>• Students receive acknowledgment appropriate to the level of their contribution</li> </ul>

(Informed in part by the work of the National Youth Leadership Council, including "Essential Elements of Service-Learning," NYLC, 1998.)

## Essential Elements of Service-Learning

In 1998, the National Youth Leadership Council developed a guide to eleven “Essential Elements of Service-Learning” to promote high quality school-based service-learning. Below is an excerpt of that document, with added information specific to community-based organizations that work in service-learning partnerships with schools/colleges/universities. The elements are particularly useful in evaluating the strength of a service-learning program.

Organizational Support for Service-Learning: The School/College/University	Organizational Support for Service-Learning: The Community Partner
<p>Cluster I: Mission and Policy</p> <p><u>Essential Element 1:</u> Effective service-learning is connected to and relevant to the institution’s mission.</p> <p><u>Essential Element 2:</u> Effective service-learning is supported by school, district/institution wide policies that are designed to uphold quality service-learning practice.</p>	<p><i>Does the organization’s mission allow for the inclusion of service-learning?</i></p> <p><i>Can the organization or agency’s strategic goals be modified to include service-learning as a method of achieving the organization’s mission?</i></p>
<p>Cluster II: Organizational Structure and Resources</p> <p><u>Essential Element 3:</u> Effective service-learning is supported by compatible structural elements and by the resources necessary to sustain high quality service-learning practice.</p>	<p><i>Does the organization or agency have—and is it willing to commit—the necessary staff time and resources to support service-learning?</i></p>
<p>Cluster III: Professional Development</p> <p><u>Essential Element 4:</u> Effective service-learning provides staff with strong training in the philosophy and pedagogy of service-learning.</p> <p><u>Essential Element 5:</u> Effective service-learning offers staff ongoing opportunities to network, observe, and problem-solve with other staff within and outside their schools and campuses in order to refine their service-learning practice.</p>	<p><i>Does the organization or agency staff understand and support service-learning, as distinct from community service? Can the organization adapt to accommodate students as “learners,” as well as “volunteers”?</i></p> <p><i>Is the organization willing and able to collaborate with educators in planning and developing mutually beneficial service-learning opportunities? What other community partners may be engaged in a support network for service-learning?</i></p>
<p>(NYLC, 1998; adapted from Abravanel, 2002) Used with permission. For a full copy of the original “Essential Elements,” contact NYLC. See “Resources,” in this manual.</p>	

# 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 field work is typically sharper for undergraduate and postgraduate levels.) On occasion, this too may include some input from a site supervisor. For field work, 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 students' 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.

On the next two pages is a feedback form from the Community Service-Learning program at Winona Senior High School. The most important question to instructors has always been, “How has your site been improved,” by the student's service?



Winona Senior High - Community Service-Learning Class Assessment Form  
(Second page of two-page form - to be completed by the site supervisor)

**Please rate as follows: 4 = superior 3 = above average 2 = satisfactory 1 = passable 0 = failing**

1.	Student reports at the time agreed upon and notifies site supervisor in advance if s/he is going to be absent.	4	3	2	1	0
2.	Student completes tasks assigned.	4	3	2	1	0
3.	Student's attire and grooming are appropriate for the site.	4	3	2	1	0
4.	Student does tasks with a positive, willing attitude.	4	3	2	1	0
5.	Student shows initiative; is a self-starter and able to function without always being told what to do.	4	3	2	1	0
6.	Student responds positively to suggestions and guidance from supervisor.	4	3	2	1	0
7.	Student handles self well in a variety of situations.	4	3	2	1	0
8.	Student shows an interest in the overall operation and purpose of the site.	4	3	2	1	0
9.	Student has established good rapport with the people s/he works with. (clients, staff, etc.)	4	3	2	1	0
10.	Student sticks with difficult tasks.	4	3	2	1	0
11.	Student demonstrates an understanding of people and their special needs.	4	3	2	1	0
12.	The student's service has allowed us to do things we would not have otherwise have been able to do.	4	3	2	1	0
13.	The student's service has allowed us to do things even better than we would have otherwise been able to do.	4	3	2	1	0
14.		4	3	2	1	0
15.		4	3	2	1	0
16.		4	3	2	1	0
17.		4	3	2	1	0
18.		4	3	2	1	0
19.	The service provided has had a positive impact on the population served at this site.	4	3	2	1	0
20.	My overall opinion of the service provided the student.	4	3	2	1	0

# ASSESSING IMPACTS OF SERVICE-LEARNING ON COMMUNITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

There is a significant and growing body of research supporting the effectiveness of well-run service-learning as an educational strategy. (Billig, 2000; See other references in “Resources.”)

Further, there are more students than ever involved in service—nearly thirteen million in 1997, a quarter of all high school students. 64% of all public schools and 83% of public high schools organized *community service*. 33% of all schools and 50% of public high schools organized *service-learning*. (Skinner and Chapman, 1999)

Yet unfortunately, to date there has been little analysis of the impact of all this service on communities. In any case, it is up to each organization to decide how much its involvement with service-learning is meeting its own goals.

## What Should We Look For?

Assessing impact requires a review of original objectives. Were you seeking to extend contacts? Educate the public about an issue? Find an academic partner to help shape your strategic plan? Address an unmet need of your clients? Increase the diversity of your volunteer pool?

What you need to know also depends upon who wants to know, and what they’re going to do with the information. Are you participating in a grant or other program which requires you to collect evaluation data? Are there board members, funders, or other stakeholders with specific questions about student involvement? Or are you simply trying to make the case for investing time and resources in service-learning?

## Measuring Community Impact

Some questions will be easy to answer. Either it happened or it didn’t. Other questions—such as the overall health of a

community or an ecosystem—may be impossible to answer in the short term.

You must determine the value of “process” goals, such as simply holding project planning meetings, vs. “product” goals such as those below.

Here are a few methods for collecting information about the impact of service. If your organization does not have evaluation staff, there are places to find evaluation assistance. Check “Resources.”

- **Count Hours** - This common measure can be valuable if students are answering phones or some other task normally organized by time.
- **Count People Served** - Can be valuable with activities such as public outreach where the number of contacts is important. It may be difficult to quantify results when a project serves a whole community.
- **Count the Products** - Effective when students work with things: planting trees, bagging food, stuffing a mailing, etc. You must define levels of quality. (Are trees seedlings or ten feet tall?)
- **Pre-/Post-Test Service Recipients** - Is especially valuable in an institutional setting such as a tutoring program. Tests can be time-consuming.
- **Survey Users** - Again, ask those served. May be useful especially if a large number is involved. (Such as conference participants.)
- **Group Feedback Sessions** - Can give rich, detailed information. Sessions need to be structured, but may be informal. People often speak at greater depth in the give and take of a group than they do in individual interviews.
- **Interviews** - How satisfied are the people served? This method is very effective, but takes much time.

# SERVICE-LEARNING RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

## National Resources

### Points of Light Foundation

1400 I Street, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20005 (202) 729-8000 (800) 272-8306  
<http://www.pointsoflight.org>

- *Practical Guide for Developing Agency/School Partnerships for Service Learning* (1995) Eugene Roehlkepartain. 138 pages.  
From the agency perspective, a practical manual for creating service learning opportunities. Defines service-learning, presents principles and strategies to build programs, establish service learning partnerships with schools, ideas for implementing programs based on others' successful experiences, and provides ready-to-use worksheets for planning and implementation.
- *Agencies + Schools = Service-Learning--A Training Toolbox* (1996) Rich Cairn and Cynthia Scherer. 92 pages.  
Cookbook-style manual aids trainers, agencies and schools to do effective training. Provides sample agendas and handouts. How to guide agencies to develop service-learning opportunities. How agencies and schools can develop successful partnerships.

### National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC)

1667 Snelling Ave. No., St. Paul, MN 55108 (651) 631-3672 <http://www.nylc.org>

- *Essential Elements of Service Learning for Effective Practice: Organizational Support*. (1998) National Service Learning Cooperative. 34 pages.  
Guidebook offers best practice elements, tells how to use elements and accompanying benchmarks. Defines two sets of essential elements (one for effective service-learning practice and the second for organizations implementing service learning). Program examples for each element.

### New Hampshire Campus Compact

[www.compactnh.org](http://www.compactnh.org)

- "K-H Partnerships Toolkit" Free pdf download.
- "New Hampshire K-16 Partnerships in Service-Learning" \$10.00

### New Hampshire Campus Compact

[www.compactnh.org](http://www.compactnh.org)

- "K-H Partnerships Toolkit" Free pdf download.
- "New Hampshire K-16 Partnerships in Service-Learning" \$10.00

### Education Commission of the States

700 Broadway, Ste. 1200, Denver, CO 80203 (303) 299-3600 [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org)

- "Building Community through Service-Learning: The Role of the Community Partner." Susan A. Abravanel. Free pdf download. (Do search using title.)

### National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

[www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)

- Browse and search among hundreds of resources, some on-line. On-line library.

## Minnesota Resources

### **ServeMinnesota!**

431 South 7<sup>th</sup> St., Ste. 2540, Minneapolis, MN 55415 (612) 3337740

[www.serveminnesota.org](http://www.serveminnesota.org)

- Manages YouthWorks-AmeriCorps, and Community-Based Learn and Serve Federal grants programs.

### **Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA)**

1800 White Bear Ave. N., Maplewood, MN 55109-3704 (651) 255-0469

[www.mavanetwork.org](http://www.mavanetwork.org)

- Membership organization for volunteer administrations and other supporters of volunteerism.

### **Minnesota Campus Compact**

2356 Univ. Ave. West, Ste. 280, St. Paul, MN 55114 (651) 603-5082

[www.mncampuscompact.org](http://www.mncampuscompact.org)

- Compact administers service-learning grant programs for colleges and universities, offers training, technical assistance, and resource materials.

### **Minnesota Department of Education**

1500 Highway 36 West, Roseville, MN 55113-4266 (651) 582-8434 toll-free (MN only)

(888) 234-1270 <http://children.state.mn.us/>

- Provides sub-grants and training to schools through Federal Learn and Serve program.

### **VISTA - Senior Corps**

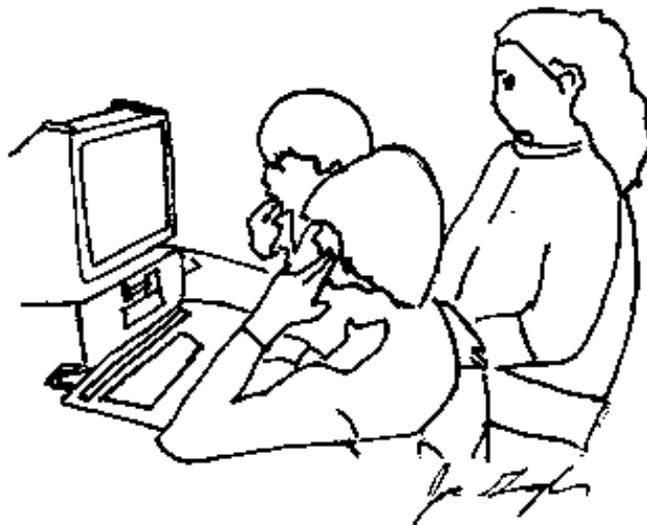
Minnesota Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service, 431 S. 7<sup>th</sup> St., Ste. 2480, Minneapolis, MN 55415 (612) 334-4083 [www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org)

- Dedicates some full-time VISTA-AmeriCorps members (Volunteers In Service To America) to support service-learning efforts including "America Reads."

### **Community Education**

Contact your local school district.

- Youth Development-Youth Service - Local tax levy to support youth programs through the school districts.



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For contact information, see "Resources" section.