# Community Partner Resource Guide for Service-Learning

Service-Learning Overview

For over 20 years, regional colleges and universities have used Service-Learning to engage students in the Spokane community. **Service-Learning (S-L)** is a method of teaching that integrates academic curriculum with hands-on practice by:

[Source: Campus Compact model, February Pre-conference workshop on Service-Learning at the Western States Communication Association 2000 Conference, Sacramento, California.]

◊ Meeting actual community needs

◊ Developing reciprocal partnerships between colleges and non-profit agencies

◊ Integrating the experience into the student's academic curriculum

◊ Reflecting on the service activity, issues of social justice, and link to course curriculum

◊ Providing students with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities

◊ Helping to develop an awareness of the needs and inequities in their local community
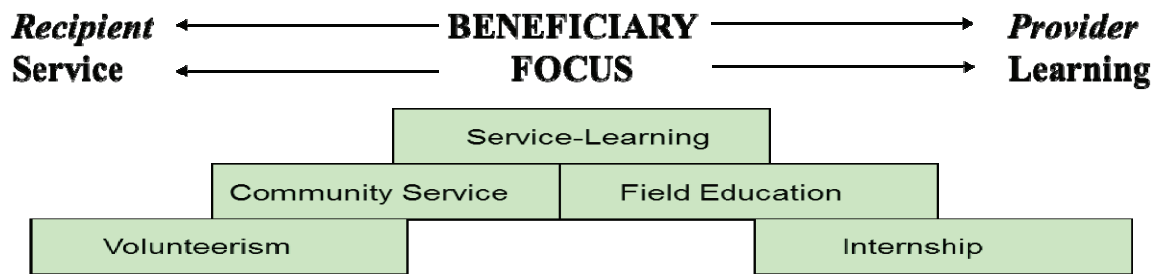
Furco (1996) Service-learning: A balanced approach

Service and learning goals are of equal weight and each enhances the other for each participant. The most meaningful outcomes result from courses that place equal value on both the academic and service sections through reflection activities, working to blend and apply the lessons learned both in the classroom and on site.

Service-Learning: Roles and Expectations

The majority of Service-Learning courses partner students with agencies to perform *direct service* or service that puts students in direct contact with clients. Some courses allow for *indirect service* when the work on-site is project-based. In these courses, students serve the agencies in a "consultant" or "researcher" role by providing such services as public relations work, tax assistance, community-based research, etc.

Community Partner as Co-Educator

Service-Learning recognizes the expertise and knowledge of the community agencies in which students are placed. Community partners serve as *co-educators* by facilitating student learning while they are on-site. The community agency works with Service-Learning students to find a project within their agency that fits within course goals and outcomes. We recommend that agencies:

⇒ Review the course goals and syllabus with students to **determine learning outcomes** for the project and **find the right project** for the student

⇒ **Provide an orientation** to students to help them understand the history, mission and policies of the agency.

⇒ Provide **resources** and **support**. For some students this may be their first experience working with your client population. Please provide information for learning more about your clients and model techniques to encourage appropriate interaction between students and clients.

⇒ **Reflect with students** throughout their service. Check in frequently to assess how the experience is going, how they are connecting course concepts with the experience, and encourage them to reflect on the larger social justice issue surrounding their work.

Campus Service-Learning Offices

Campus Service-Learning offices support faculty, students, and community agencies involved in service-learning. These offices can support your agency by:

⇒ Providing opportunities to recruit students at **Service Fairs**

⇒ Providing **guidance and support** when developing service-learning projects

⇒ **Connecting** your agency with **courses and faculty** that match program needs

⇒ Assisting with **student issues** and **required paperwork**

Is Service-Learning right for your agency?

Service-Learning students differ from traditional volunteers in that they are meeting **specific academic goals** while serving at your agency. Agencies should consider the investment of time and resources before taking on S-L students. Listed below are several questions to ask when considering taking on Service-Learning students at your agency:

- **Do you use young volunteers?**

  The majority of Service-Learning students are aged 18-21 and are balancing school, work, and volunteer commitments. Some agencies require volunteers to be over 21. If this is the case with your agency, you may be limited in the number of available students.

- **Is your agency going through significant transition?**

  Taking on Service-Learning students requires more of a commitment than traditional volunteers. If there is significant transition at your agency consider whether you have the time and staff available to support these students. Be sure to get the endorsement of your executive director before taking on S-L students.

- **What are your needs?**

  - **What is the length of commitment required by your agency?**

  Consider whether you need a long term commitment (6 months to a year) and how many hours per week you need volunteers. Generally, students are required anywhere from 5-30 hours per quarter/semester. Agencies need to determine if their investment of training and time is worth the length of commitment. Agencies can always increase the number of hours required to fit the program's needs.

  If you require more hours than a Service-Learning student is able to complete, you may want to look into recruiting interns or practicum students. Contact individual schools to learn more about these opportunities.

  - **Do you have time to work with the students?**

  Service-Learning students differ from traditional volunteers in that their experience at your site needs to help meet course goals and objectives. There is more on-going paperwork and support compared to a traditional volunteer. Agencies are responsible for matching students with meaningful service opportunities and engaging them in the experience as co-educators. It is important to assess that your agency has the time and staff to invest in working with these students.

  - **Does your agency need specialized volunteers?**

  Most Service-Learning students are undergraduates and do not have specialized skills to offer your agency.

Nuts and Bolts: Recruitment

Effective recruitment is key to finding the right students for your organization. The various campuses offer services to assist your agency in finding both service-learning and general student volunteers. Here are just a few methods for getting the word out about your project:

- **Service Learning Fairs**

  - Each local college/university offers service-learning fairs **every quarter/semester.** Agencies are able to market their program to service-learning students and the campus community as a whole. Contact the service-learning offices at the various schools to be added to their invite list.

  - This is an excellent opportunity to **meet face-to-face** with students and faculty. It is also an opportunity to **network** with local non-profit agencies.

  - Bring an informative display, useful literature, and read up on the objectives of various college classes to determine how your agency might be a good fit for the 'theory to practice' applications students and faculty are seeking.

- **Volunteer Web Sites**

  - www.volunteersolutions.org (United Way)
  - www.volunteermatch.org (National, with local zip codes)
  - www.lendahandspokane.org (Directors of Volunteers in Agencies DOVIA)

- **College/University Websites**

  - Contact the Service-Learning office at the various campuses. Often, they can publicize your programs and events on their website or through student groups.
  - Campuses will assist with "getting the word out" for large one-time or on-going events

- **Campus Interviews & "Cluster" Trainings**

  - To make it easier on college students, especially those without a car, consider interviewing students on campus. You can set up a series of interviews at a campus student union building or coffee shop.
  - Cluster trainings are an easy way to train groups of students at the individual campuses. Service-learning offices can assist you in reserving a classroom or meeting space for the training.

Nuts and Bolts: Orientation

During a student's first visit to your agency, the site supervisor should cover the following items with the Service-Learning student (when applicable):

- ¨ Mission, values and philosophy
- ¨ Provide essential resources and references
- ¨ Job descriptions
- ¨ Organizational and departmental procedures

Review the **Service-Learning Contract** and the **Course Expectations**. Keep a copy of the contract in your files.

Review the job description and goals of the service-learning experience from the community partner point-of-view.

Review Key Policies

- ¨ Dress code
- ¨ Confidentiality
- ¨ Safety/accident procedures (health and first aid)
- ¨ Visitors
- ¨ Other policies specific to the population being served

Introduce student to members of immediate staff and other key personnel as a **Service-Learning Student**.

Give a brief tour to the surrounding area and facilities (rest rooms, computers, parking, etc.)

Identify potential meetings that the student might be interested in attending.

Identify co-workers who can train/assist with questions.

***Please contact Service Learning staff at the student's institution if you have _any_ questions.

Contact information can be found on the student's contract.

Nuts and Bolts: Establishing Agency Objectives

Most students will bring a Service-Learning Agreement Form with them to complete at the beginning of service. They are required to complete the **Agency Objectives** with their agency site supervisor. We recommend that you require students to bring their **course syllabus** to their initial meeting.

Agency objectives should provide students with meaningful opportunities that link course concepts with their service experience. In general, students should have direct contact with agency clients unless they are doing project-based service-learning.

Here is an EXAMPLE of a completed contract:

This Service-Learning Project LEARNING CONTRACT is designed to:

Assist the student and agency in understanding the learning objectives for the course.
Clarify the activities in which the student will be involved at the agency in relation to the learning objectives.
Insure that both the student and the agency are aware of their responsibilities as partners in this service-learning project.

Course Learning Objectives (see syllabus)

1. Develop a broad foundation in current research/theory on human emotion.
2. Familiarize students with current issues, methodologies & debates regarding emotion.
3. Provide students the opportunity to pay attention to emotion in a real world setting.
4.

Agency Objectives and/or Activities (Agency and student should collaborate here to meet course objectives)

1. **Interact with clients and their children**
2. **Assist clients with their children and daily chores**
3. **Tutor and mentor**
4.

Nuts and Bolts: Reflection

Reflection is a key element of Service-Learning. It links the service and the learning. Reflection activities can be as simple as asking a reflective question about the project and relating it to the course or as complex as creative art projects that creatively express their reflective process.

Reflection can help students realize:

- What they have learned through this project
- How it relates to their course
- What it has meant to them

Faculty have developed activities in each of our S-L courses to help students actively reflect on their experiences. These activities include course discussions, journaling, final projects and research papers.

Community Partners can also encourage students to reflect on their experiences while on site. This will further enhance the learning aspect of the project. The following page offers examples of reflection activities that agencies can use to facilitate reflection with their Service-Learning students, staff or clients.

Exit Interview/Reflection Questions

These questions are adapted from: www.mwcsk12.org/faculty/twilson/service/reflections.doc

What do you consider your greatest successes/accomplishments during your service experience?

What were the greatest challenges this service opportunity presented for you?

What work skills did you improve through this service experience? (ex: technical knowledge, responsibility, goal setting, time management, etc…) Please include examples.

What human-relations skills have you developed or improved as a result of your Service-Learning experience? (ex: Leadership, communication, tact, empathy, etc…) Please include examples.

What suggestions do you have to improve the Service-Learning experience offered here? (ex: training, supervision, job responsibilities, etc…)

What advice would you give to another student thinking about doing Service-Learning at this site?

Nuts and Bolts: Working w/College Students

Working with college students can be both challenging and incredibly rewarding. The majority are excited to become involved in community work, but still are learning the art of balancing academic commitments, work, and out-of-classroom commitments. Listed below are some of the challenges and opportunities of working with college students.

Common Challenges

- **Lack of transportation**. To help students overcome these issues have bus schedules on hand and be flexible with scheduling students who carpool to your site.

- **Illness and/or not showing up for shifts**. Discuss with students your policy for not showing up and calling in sick. Students should understand that, similar to a job, your agency and clients depend on the students to show up at their regularly scheduled shifts. Ask students to call in as soon as they know there is an issue, not last minute. *If students are ill and are working with vulnerable populations, ask them to stay home instead of spreading the illness to your clients.*

- **Academic Calendar.** Students attend according to their academic calendar. Make sure to ask them when breaks are scheduled (winter/spring break) and when their quarter/semester is ending.

- **Communication.** Let students know the best way to contact you (email or phone). Always check your junk mail box and encourage students to check theirs so that important messages are not missed.

Many of these challenges can be overcome with a thorough orientation and training. Remember that this may be the first "job" these students have ever held. Train them on professional standards and clearly communicate your policies.

Benefits and Opportunities

- **Flexible Schedule.** Students are often available during the day, night and on weekends.

- **Positive Role Models.** College students can serve as positive role models for youth in your programs. They can help to "demystify" college for clients.

- **Connecting to community.** Students become more engaged in the work of your agency and the needs of the Spokane community.

Service-Learning: INSLP

Inland Northwest Service-Learning Partnership (INSLP)

INSLP is an intercollegiate collaborative resource designed by and for the faculty, staff, students, and community agencies in Service-Learning partnerships with Eastern Washington University, Gonzaga University, Spokane Community College, Spokane Falls Community College, Spokane Public Schools, Washington State University (Spokane) and Whitworth University.

INSLP provides community partners:

- Service-Learning Resources

- Trainings & Education

- Collaboration & Partnership Development

- Recognition

- Standardization e.g., standardized Service-Learning Contract

Institutional Contacts

Eastern Washington University
Office of Community Engagement
(509) 359-2792, communityengagement@ewu.edu

Gonzaga University
Center for Community Action and Service-Learning (CCASL)
(509) 313-6824, servicelearning@gonzaga.edu

Spokane Falls Community College
Center for Service-Learning
(509) 533-3155

Washington State University—Spokane
Student Affairs
(509) 358-7978

Whitworth University
Center for Service-Learning and Community Engagement
(509) 777-4685, serve@whitworth.edu