

Checklist: Service Learning

Service learning projects are designed to meet community-identified needs; they also have learning objectives for the youth involved in organizing and implementing the projects. Schools and community organizations use service learning as a tool to help youth strengthen academic skills, foster civic responsibility, and develop leadership and life skills. Service learning projects can be done in a club setting or with a small group of youth, in or out of the formal classroom setting. Youth are expected to take the initiative and actively participate in all steps of the project with guidance from adult facilitators (PCV and counterparts). The National Youth Leadership Council identified the following actions below, for quality service learning as leading to the most effective participant outcomes.¹ This checklist is designed to be used by Volunteers seeking to implement service learning activities with youth.

Italics indicate that the action is also included as a quality standard that Volunteers report on under the GenEq/LGL CSPP in the VRF.

Ensure service project is meaningful

- The service learning project addresses a community-identified need and is valued by the community served.
- Youth participants express interest in and are actively engaged in the project.

Link project to learning goals

- The service learning project has clearly articulated learning objectives for the youth participants.

Make time for reflection

- Youth participants spend time before, during, and after the project to reflect on the service experience. Reflection activities prompt youth to:
 - Think critically about complex community problems and alternative solutions.
 - Examine their preconceptions and assumptions in order to explore and understand their roles and responsibilities as community members.
- Over the course of the project, youth discuss gender-related challenges and strategies for overcoming these challenges.*

¹ National Youth Leadership Council: <http://nylc.org/standards/>

Encourage diversity

- Youth participants identify and analyze different points of view to gain understanding of multiple perspectives and overcome stereotypes.

Nourish youth voices

- Youth are engaged in developing the project's learning objectives and priorities.* This could include:
 - Generating ideas during the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.
 - Decision-making process throughout the service learning experiences.
 - Creating an environment that supports trust and open expression of ideas.
- If the group is co-ed, both sexes actively participate.*

Establish partnerships

- The project involves a variety of partners, including youth, educators, families, community members, community-based organizations, and/or businesses that:
 - Communicate regularly about the service learning project activities and progress.
 - Collaborate to establish a shared vision and common goals to address community needs.
- The project involves and engages male and female community partners.*

Monitor progress

- Youth participants collect evidence of progress toward meeting their service and learning objectives and use the evidence to improve their project.
- Youth participants communicate about their project progress with the broader community.

Maintain duration and intensity

- The service learning project occurs during concentrated blocks of time over the course of several weeks or months.*
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