

Steps to Building Strong Partnerships for Service Learning

In preparation for the course:

- Begin the collaborative process several months in advance to allow time for planning and getting to know your partner(s).
- Before contacting potential partners, outline your course and service learning objectives as well as any other basic guidelines or parameters for the project you feel are important.
- Research community organizations, schools and people that are involved in addressing issues relevant to your course. The CUP-Service Learning Office can assist you in locating possible partners.
- Once you have identified likely partners, visit and learn about their programs, goals and pressing needs **before** defining the specific service your students will provide.
- Explain the concept of service learning to the partner. Provide information about your course goals and what you hope students may learn through their experiences.
- Involve community partners in the planning stages. Agencies can provide valuable insights into community needs, provide guest speakers, and assist in the development or presentation of curriculum. Once agency partners understand your course goals, they can be a tremendous help in designing service activities that meet student learning objectives.
- Remember that the agency has the final say in the service to be provided to their clients. Discuss potential obstacles or perceived challenges. Don't give up if the partnership does not pan out. Begin the process with another agency that looks promising.
- Develop shared responsibility for the program (orientation, training, project development, supervision, reflection and recognition). Share costs where possible.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities, timelines, and the logistical details of student service (such as transportation, fingerprinting, TB tests, etc.) **well before** the class starts.
- Design a plan for evaluation of the project. How will you know if you have achieved success? Involve your community partner (and the CUP-Service Learning Office if appropriate) in designing and implementing this plan.
- Develop a plan for communicating during the semester and follow through. Ensure that the community partner can reach you as issues arise.

