



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

SERVICE- LEARNING

COURSE DESIGN GUIDE

Dear faculty, staff, and administrators:

Welcome to the exciting world of service-learning! This guide and online accompanying workbook was created by Teaching and Learning Innovation (TLI), an instructor-support unit within the Division of Academic Affairs. TLI houses the service-learning initiative at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. They are a resource for faculty members, staff instructors, and graduate teaching assistants interested in offering a service-learning course at UT.

The guide was designed to be used in one of two ways:

- In conjunction with the online Service-Learning Course Design Workbook, **as a planning tool** to guide you through the process of designing a service-learning course in alignment with the standards of UT’s new S course designation
- **As a reference tool** that includes helpful resources to support service-learning instructors as well as answers to common questions about course design, implementation, and evaluation of these courses

We hope these resources prove helpful to you as you design a transformative service-learning experience for your students. Our offices invite opportunities to learn about the exciting work you are doing and to support you in your service-learning work.

Thank you for being a part of the growing network of citizens, scholars, and professionals creating positive change through service-learning and engaged research!

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Visit **tiny.utk.edu/slworkbook** to access the Service-Learning Course Design Workbook that accompanies this guide.

About Our Unit

Teaching and Learning Innovation (TLI)

advances the Volunteer experience through programs, services, and partnerships that support faculty and enrich student learning at UT. With a focus on evidence-based teaching and learning practices, TLI engages faculty in the creation and implementation of educational experiences and environments that are transformative, innovative, inclusive, and outcomes-focused. Our priorities and initiatives include:

- **Experiential Learning**
- **Service-Learning**
- **E-Learning**
- **Assessment**
- **Risk Management**
- **The Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL)**
- **Inclusive Teaching Strategies**

Visit teaching.utk.edu for more information.

TLI's Service-Learning initiative

facilitates service-learning partnerships across a multitude of academic disciplines and community sectors. Our work includes the following:

- **Supporting faculty in the design of quality reciprocal service-learning courses**
- **Facilitating meaningful and relevant community partnerships**
- **Implementing the service-learning S course designation**
- **Mobilizing local communities through cross-disciplinary service-learning partnerships that address areas of environmental sustainability, social integrity, and economic viability**

Our website includes a wealth of resources for faculty, students, and community partners who are currently involved or interested in service-learning. For more information, visit servicelearning.utk.edu.

Service-learning is an important part of the University of Tennessee's Quality Enhancement Plan, **Experience Learning**. The goal of Experience Learning is to transform the educational experience for undergraduate and graduate students at UT, giving students more opportunities to be involved in civic engagement, solve complex real-world problems, and contribute to the welfare of their communities as part of their regular coursework. To find out more about Experience Learning and the programs and resources available to service-learning faculty, visit experiencelearning.utk.edu.

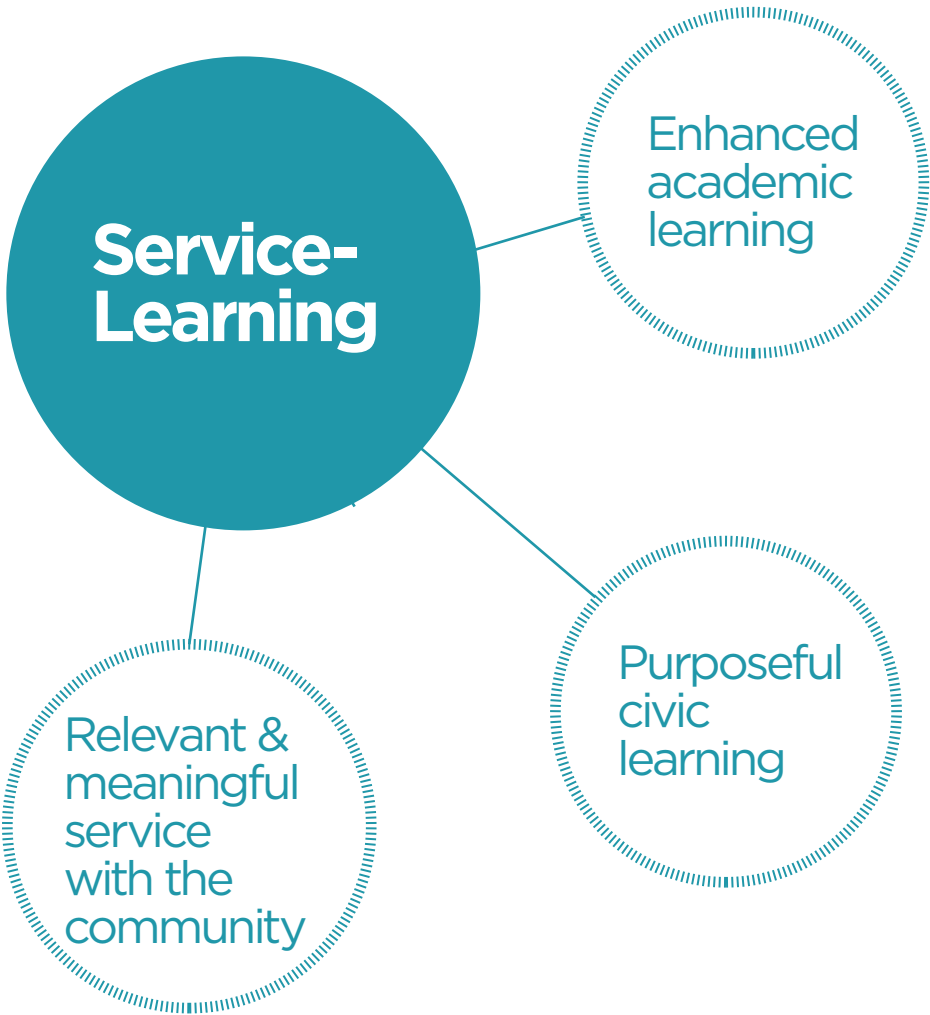
INTRODUCTION



What Is Service-Learning?

Service-learning is a course-based experiential learning strategy that engages students in meaningful service with a community partner while employing ongoing reflection to connect the service to course content. When implemented according to standards of best practice, service-learning can enhance academic learning, promote civic responsiveness, and strengthen communities (definition adapted from Learn and Serve America).

Service-learning differs structurally from other forms of community-based experiential learning such as fieldwork, internships, or volunteerism. It is characterized by the purposeful integration of the service experience into the course. It entails collaboratively designing a service project with a community partner, selecting course content and assignments that inform the service, and facilitating ongoing reflection that prompts students to make meaning of the service experience in light of the course learning.



Service-learning courses are characterized by four attributes:

1

One or more academic learning outcomes that will be enhanced by the service.

Enhanced academic learning refers to the added value the service experience brings to student learning. Generally there are two ways the integration of service can enhance learning: 1) by complementing more traditional classroom- and book-based pedagogies (e.g., students improving their Spanish-speaking abilities by serving in a Latino/Latina community organization), or 2) by enabling learning possibilities precluded in more traditional pedagogies (the same students learning about Latino/Latina culture as a complement to their language learning). The instructor should be purposeful in designing the service experience and accompanying coursework to enhance the students' academic learning in one or both ways and should communicate these provisions to the community partner during the planning stage.

3

Collaborative design of a service project or experience by the instructor and one or more community partners that advances the learning outcomes while meeting a need identified by the community partner. A service-learning community partner can be 1) any nonprofit or public sector organization, agency, or institution, or 2) a private sector business or establishment that is underserved in the traditional market economy.

2

One or more civic learning outcomes that will be enhanced by the service. Civic learning involves personalizing the learning experience in light of each student's role as a citizen, scholar, or professional. The civic knowledge, skills, values, or propensities to be advanced through the service-learning should be determined by the instructor and reflected in the student learning outcomes and course content. Civic learning can range in intensity from a general focus on responsible citizenship (e.g., democratic preparedness or professional ethics) to an emphasis on change-making (e.g., political or social action).

4

Structured reflection by the students in light of intended academic and civic learning outcomes. Reflection is the purposeful consideration of the service project or experience by students in light of intended academic and civic learning outcomes. For example, a reflection assignment may include examining some aspect of the service project or experience in light of a theory or framework observed within the discipline. Ongoing reflection should allow the service and learning to continually inform and add value to each other. Reflection activities can include guided discussion, structured journals, blog entries, oral presentations, or written papers. Reflection questions should be rooted in course content and should prompt students to consider their roles and responsibilities as citizens, academics, and professionals in a complex and diverse society.

Why Service-Learning?

Service-learning aims to engage students in transformative community work rather than charity work. Literature on service-learning (Astin et al., 2000; Bringle & Hatcher, 2010; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler et al., 2001; Kuh, 2008) documents benefits to faculty, students, communities, and universities.

Service-learning can create significant benefits for all involved:

For Faculty

- Increases student engagement and fosters increased interaction with students
- Creates new avenues for community-based research and scholarly work
- Increases opportunities for professional recognition and reward
- Connects teaching to research and service functions
- Connects faculty across disciplines

For Students

- Enhances academic learning by connecting course content to real-world experience
- Prompts self-reflection on the student's role as a citizen, scholar, or professional
- Stimulates increased awareness of frameworks including diversity and sustainability
- Fosters practical skills such as public speaking, collaboration, and problem solving
- Increases opportunities for mentorship by faculty
- Increases sense of connectedness to the university and local community

For Community Partners

- Connects community partners to university resources and opportunities
- Educates students about community issues and engages faculty expertise
- Creates opportunities for ideas and work products to support the partner
- Promotes the work of the organization and increases opportunities for ongoing service

For Colleges and Universities

- Improves student satisfaction, persistence, and retention
- Enhances opportunities for student and faculty recruitment
- Enhances opportunities for community, legislative, and alumni relations
- Increases opportunities for grants, contracts, and donations
- Creates opportunities to showcase student and faculty achievements



Steps for Planning and Implementing a Service-Learning Course

Ready to get started? These steps can help you plan and implement your course in a way that will be meaningful to all involved.

 See section 1 of the workbook for a planning checklist.

- 1** Discuss your service-learning course plans with your department chair. This is an important first step as you determine whether teaching a service-learning course is a good investment of your time and energy.
- 2** Determine student learning outcomes for your course. Consider both academic and civic learning outcomes.
- 3** Identify one or more possible community partners who can provide experiences to students in line with your intended learning outcomes for the course. Review our ever-growing list of interested partners at tiny.utk.edu/partner.
- 4** Contact potential partners to determine whether they are a good match. If the potential community partner is interested in learning more about service-learning, you can direct them to the UT Community Partner Guide to Service-Learning, available online at tiny.utk.edu/cpguide.
- 5** Arrange to meet the community partner in person to discuss the objectives and details of the project. Use a memorandum of collaboration to facilitate the process and record the results.
- 6** Become familiar with the risk management procedures for service-learning courses. Consider accessibility of the experience to students with disabilities, adult students, and students whose ethnic, racial, religious, sexual, or gender orientation might put them at risk in the service context. *Note: Student Disability Services provides information on accommodating students with disabilities at sds.utk.edu.*
- 7** Develop course assignments and assessments that align with both the academic and civic learning outcomes. The Office of Service-Learning (OSL) and the Teaching and Learning Center can provide ideas and examples in addition to the resources provided in this guide.
- 8** Create a plan for integrating reflection as a tool to connect the service to the academic and civic learning outcomes.
- 9** Design a process for evaluating and improving the partnership with the community partner. OSL evaluation forms are available at servicelearning.utk.edu/forms.
- 10** Review the S designation information at servicelearning.utk.edu/s-designation to help determine whether you would like to apply to have your course designated.

TLI is available to support faculty at every step of the process. Contact us at tli@utk.edu for assistance.





PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Service-learning can add a degree of unpredictability to a course, so it is good to build your course in a way that allows for shifting learning needs and circumstances (Howard, 2001). Consider the factors discussed in this section when planning a service-learning course.

Working with a Community Partner

The points on these pages outline preliminary considerations regarding roles and responsibilities for collaborating with your community partner. For more information about working with a service-learning community partner, see section 4 of this guide.



Communicate early and often.

Initiate communication early with a phone call, email, or site visit to provide the community partner with enough time to adequately plan and prepare for the service project, and for you to prepare your students to serve with the organization. Advance communication can prevent the community partner becoming overwhelmed with the duties of the partnership. While scheduling needs depend on the nature of the project, an ideal timeline for beginning the planning process with a community partner is three months before the start of the course.



Discuss learning expectations and, if possible, provide your partner with a syllabus.

Discussion can help both parties determine whether the partnership is a good fit and better align the service and course content.



Invite the community partner to class.

Inviting your community partner or partners to give a presentation about their organization to your class will help students understand the nature and function of the organization, its history, the context of the issues the organization addresses, and how they can effectively contribute to the organization's work. Remember to make parking arrangements for your community partner if they come to campus. As an alternative, you can request to host a class session at the community partner organization's site.



Complete a memorandum of collaboration (MOC).

The MOC will assist you both in planning the details of the service experience and understanding each other's needs and expectations. If your department or college has an MOC, follow their processes for documentation. If not, use the OSL form at servicelearning.utk.edu/forms.



If possible, work toward a long-term partnership.

A long-term commitment can ease the initial pressure of the partnership, as well as creating the potential for continuous improvement and impact on both organizational needs and student learning outcomes.



Expectations of Service-Learning Students

It is important to communicate the expectations of the service-learning project in the syllabus and when the course begins. Service-learning students represent UT to the external community, and their participation should reflect the highest standards of ethical and professional behavior.

The following items outline additional standards that you may want to communicate to your students; your community partner may have additional expectations, and these should be taken into consideration as well in the course planning stage.

Students should:

- become **familiar with the mission and history** of the community partner
- **know the learning objectives** of the course and the **function of the service** in advancing their organization's mission
- **commit to completing** the service project and any other activities or assignments they take on
- **ask questions** often and **effectively deal with challenges**
- **perform** to the best of their abilities
- **be respectful** toward staff members, community members, and clients of the organization
- **maintain the dress and etiquette** standard of the organization
- **refrain from sharing** confidential or internal information with the media
- **call ahead or notify** their site supervisor in a timely fashion if they will be late or absent
- **commit to the organization's cause** throughout the duration of the service project
- be **self-motivated** and **self-directed**
- maintain responsibility for all **deadlines**
- work to **recognize and understand** how their own social status and ideas of self-identity influence their attitudes and behaviors as service-learners
- **recognize the community organization** as an agent in improving the community
- **actively reflect on their experiences** with the organization's staff
- **actively listen** to the organization's feedback
- **communicate** their specific skills, knowledge, talents, or interests to you or their organization

Placement Model

Students choose from several available placements and work on site for 4 to 10 hours a week throughout the semester. The service they provide is the conduit to their learning. They gain access to populations or issues related to their courses and, in return, provide needed assistance to the organizations and their clientele. Examples include tutoring youth, serving meals at a shelter, or planting vegetables at a community garden. It is critical to provide learning and reflection before, during, and after service to offer a meaningful learning experience to the students.

Product Model

Students, working alone or in groups, apply course material to the creation of a tangible product for an organization or agency. Examples include an instructional or training manual for a nonprofit human resources division, an annual report for a local food bank or legal assistance organization, a policy paper in partnership with an environmental advocacy group, a digital history collection for a cultural preservation organization, an inventory system for a bicycle collective, a wall mural for an after-school program, a news article for a homeless advocacy newspaper, or a water resources conservation plan for an urban development project.

Service Project Models

Think about the type of service project you want your students to do. Here are some possible models, adapted from the service-learning program at Marquette University, to consider as you design your service-learning course.

Project Model

Under instructor supervision, students work individually or in small groups with a community partner to devise and implement a project in line with student learning objectives and community partner needs. Examples include students working with middle and high school youth to identify issues of concern and implement strategies for advocacy or change around those issues, creating a secure data collection and management strategy for a refugee resource center, coordinating a clothing drive in partnership with an area shelter, or conducting an economic analysis of community issues for a local government agency or nongovernmental organization.

Presentation Model

Students apply course learning to the creation of presentations for audiences in the community such as youth, industry professionals, or policy-making entities. Often students work in groups to prepare presentations for one or more organizations or agencies as prearranged by the instructor. Sometimes instructors require students to present more than once to stage out the information over the semester or to give students an opportunity to receive feedback, conduct further research, and make modifications. Many instructors have students do mock presentations in class before the official presentation. Examples include education students presenting an interactive reading workshop to public school children, environmental studies students presenting to city council members regarding prospects for local policy improvement, or architecture students presenting building plans to a city project manager. (The final example also employs the product and project models.)



A black and white photograph of a group of students and adults working in a field. In the foreground, several students are using long-handled tools to plant young trees. They are wearing name tags. In the background, there is a large school building with a curved driveway and a parking lot. The sky is overcast.

DEVELOPING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

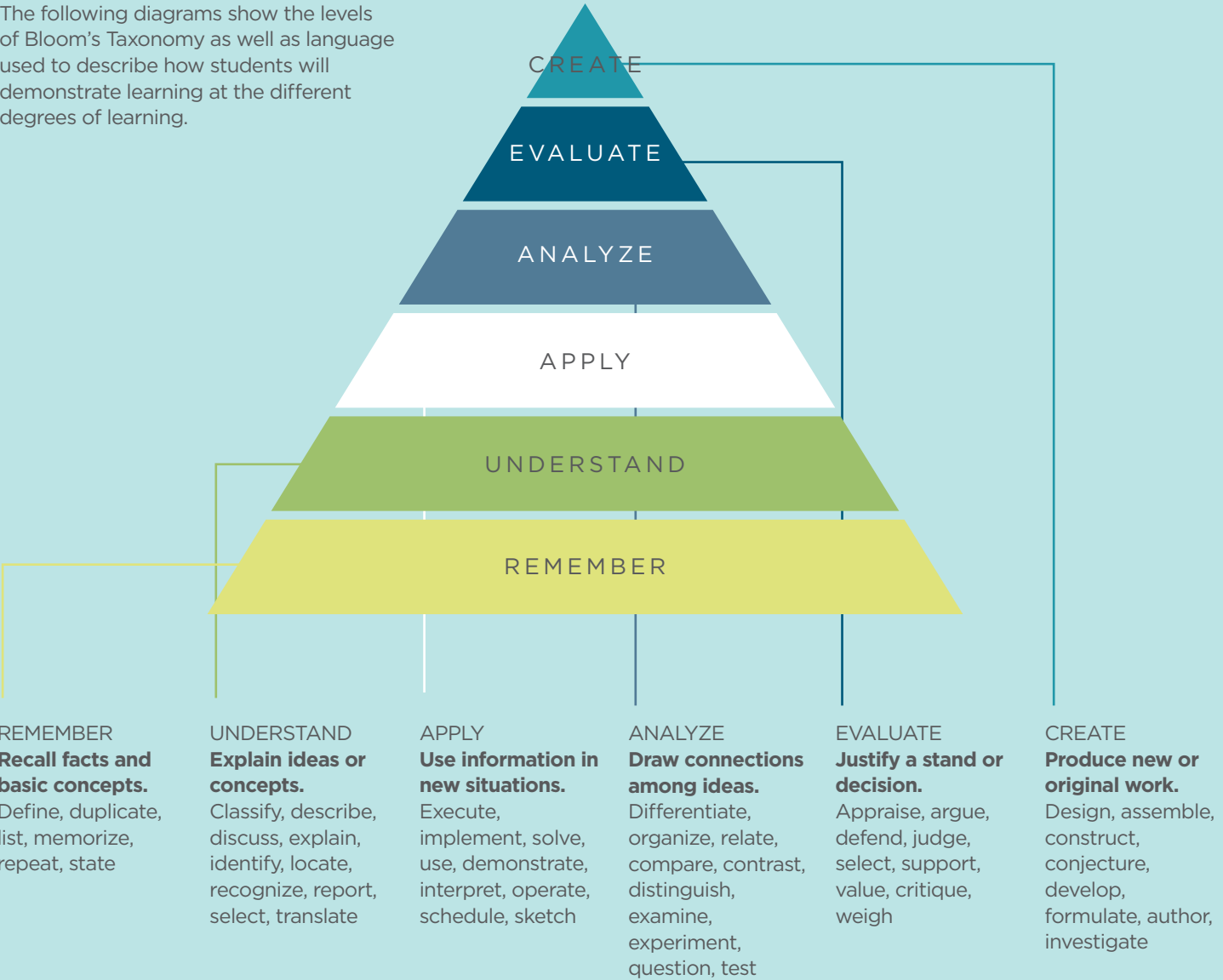
What Is a Student Learning Outcome?

Student learning outcomes are statements that describe what students should be able to achieve as a result of a course or an experience. A good learning outcome defines a specific observable behavior that can be measured in the timeframe of the course. Furthermore, these targets are written in a way that demonstrates that learning is an active rather than a passive process; to this end, a well-stated learning outcome often contains verbs from Bloom’s Taxonomy (Longman, 2001) or a similar taxonomy. Additional taxonomies can be found in O’Neill and Murphy’s *Guide to Taxonomies of Learning* (2010).

LEARNING OUTCOMES BY CATEGORY: WHAT STUDENTS DO					
Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Count	Associate	Calculate	Arrange	Appraise	Compose
Define	Compute	Change	Break down	Assess	Combine
Describe	Convert	Classify	Categorize	Compare	Connect
Draw	Defend	Complete	Combine	Conclude	Design
Identify	Discuss	Compute	Detect	Contrast	Devise
Label	Distinguish	Demonstrate	Develop	Criticize	Group
List	Estimate	Discover	Diagram	Critique	Integrate
Match	Explain	Divide	Differentiate	Determine	Modify
Name	Extend	Examine	Discriminate	Grade	Order
Outline	Extrapolate	Graph	Illustrate	Interpret	Organize
Point	Generalize	Interpolate	Infer	Judge	Plan
Quote	Give examples	Manipulate	Outline	Justify	Prescribe
Read	Infer	Modify	Point out	Measure	Propose
Recall	Paraphrase	Operate	Relate	Rank	Rearrange
Recite	Predict	Prepare	Select	Rate	Reconstruct
Recognize	Rewrite	Produce	Separate	Relate	Reorganize
Record	Summarize	Select	Subdivide	Support	Revise
Repeat		Show	Utilize	Test	Rewrite
Reproduce		Solve			Transform
Select		Subtract			
State		Translate			
Write		Use			

Bloom’s Taxonomy

The following diagrams show the levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy as well as language used to describe how students will demonstrate learning at the different degrees of learning.





Clarity in Learning Outcomes

A good learning outcome is measurable, describes an observable behavior, and uses an active verb. Writing clear learning targets is important because they communicate to students your expectations for their performance and help them know what and how they should prepare for the assessments in the course. As with any statement, learning targets are often rewritten several times in order to fine tune the language.

 See section 2 of the workbook for an exercise in evaluating learning outcomes for clarity.

This process is represented in the following table:

Learning Outcome		Analysis
Option 1: Not an outcome	Be given opportunities to learn effective communication skills.	Describes program content, not the attributes of successful students.
Option 2: Vague	Have a deeper appreciation for good communication practices.	Does not start with an action verb or define the level of learning; subject of learning has no context and is not specific.
Option 3: Less vague	Understand principles of effective communication.	Starts with an action verb but does not define the level of learning; subject of learning is still too vague for assessment.
Option 4: Specific	Communicate effectively in a professional environment through technical reports and presentations.	Starts with an action verb that defines the level of learning; provides context to ensure the outcome is specific and measurable.

Academic and Civic Learning Outcomes

Service-learning courses should be driven by student learning outcomes that reflect both academic and civic learning. Both types of learning are discussed in greater detail under “What Is Service-Learning?” in the introduction to this guide.


Academic learning outcomes refer to what students should be able to demonstrate, know, or do by the end of the course. The integration of service can enhance academic learning for students 1) by complementing more traditional classroom- and book-based pedagogies, or 2) by enabling learning possibilities precluded in more traditional pedagogies.

Civic learning outcomes involve personalizing the learning experience in light of the student’s role as a citizen, scholar, or professional. Civic learning can range in intensity from a general focus on responsible citizenship to an emphasis on change-making.

Writing Learning Outcomes for a Service-Learning Course

When designing learning outcomes for a service-learning course, it is important to reflect upon some fundamental questions for both academic and civic learning outcomes:

- What do you want your students to learn from the academic content of the course? How will you know they've learned it? What seems reasonable within the time available?
- What civic knowledge, skills, values, or propensities do you want students to gain? How will you know it's happened? What seems reasonable within the time available?

 See section 3 of the workbook for an exercise in crafting responses to these questions.

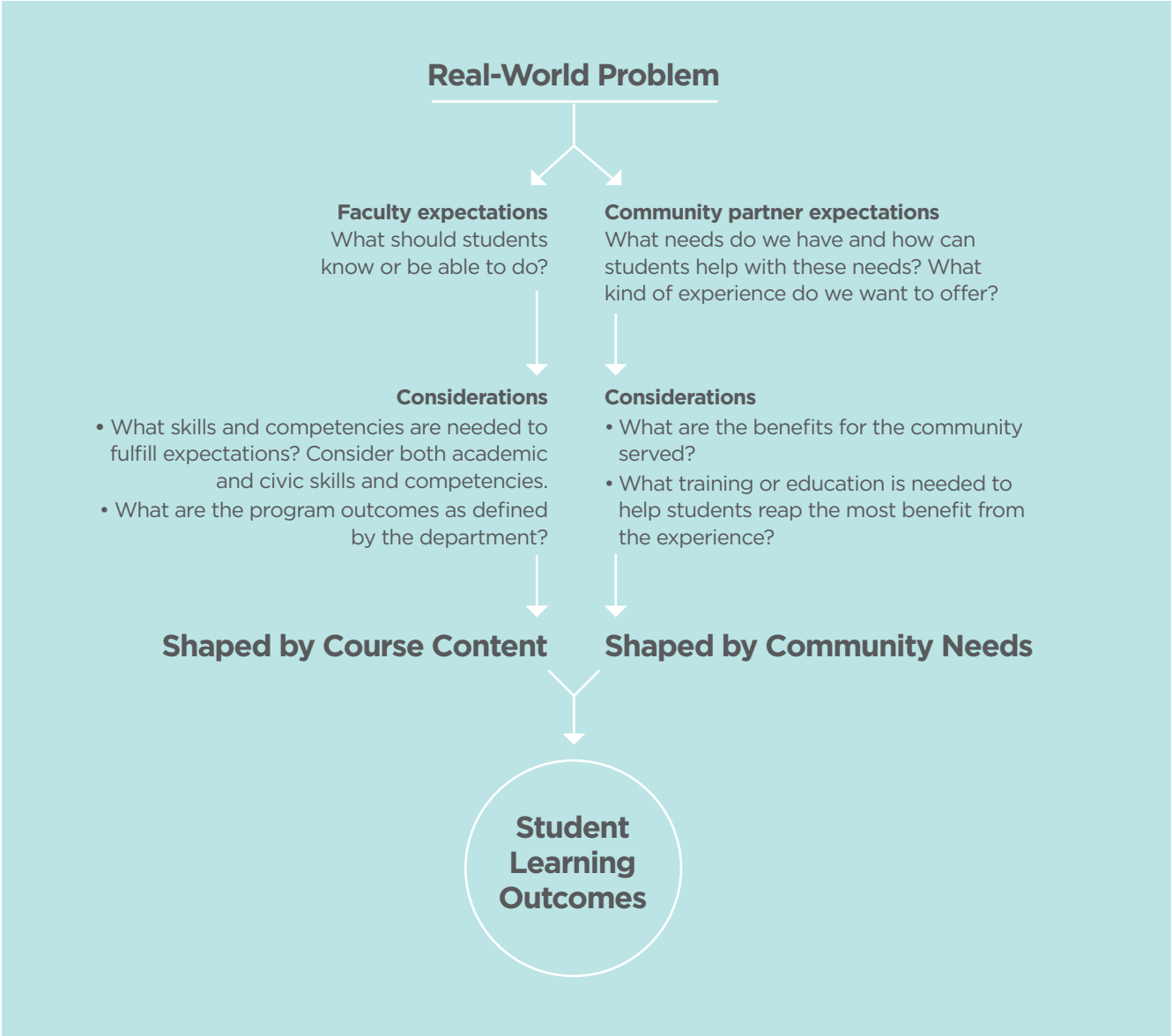
Note that the student learning outcomes should reflect both the learning needs associated with the course and the needs of the community partner. Despite having distinct motivations, both entities are co-stakeholders with the shared responsibility of facilitating learning experiences that address the academic and civic development of the student.

To aid in this process, it is helpful to first **know the programmatic learning outcomes defined by your department** so you can ensure that the learning objectives of the course are consistent with those outcomes. You can obtain your department's outcomes from your department chair or the Teaching and Learning Center.

The next step is to **clearly define what expectations you have for the course and what skills are needed** to fulfill these expectations. This is a necessary process that involves some self-reflection and may inform the type of community partner you engage. For example, a possible expectation for a course on educational policy might be *Students will explain why cultural competency is necessary for effective development and evaluation of educational policies.*

See section 4 of the workbook for an exercise in converting expectations into learning outcomes.

When planning learning outcomes in the context of a service-learning course, consider the content that needs to be addressed through the course as well as the needs and expectations of the community partner.




A group of five people are gathered around a table, engaged in a collaborative planning session. On the left, a man in a white t-shirt and a black headband with a 'D' logo is pointing at a large map or diagram spread across the table. Next to him, a woman in a white t-shirt with a 'Younglife' logo is looking down at the materials. In the center, a woman with glasses and a white t-shirt is looking at a small book or tablet. To her right, a man with a beard and a dark t-shirt is looking towards the center. In the background, another woman is visible, also looking at the materials. The table is covered with various papers, including a large map or diagram, and a small electronic device. The scene is lit with a warm, yellowish light, and a window with a patterned curtain is visible in the background.

PLANNING THE COURSE



Developing a Course Plan

Once you have identified the academic and civic learning outcomes for the course, you can begin to fill in the design of the course itself.

 **See section 5 of the workbook for a matrix outlining each of these areas.**

For each academic learning outcome, identify the following elements:

1. Pre-assessment. What do the students already know?
2. Instructional plan. What content and classroom activities will help them reach the learning outcome?
3. Assessment. How will you know whether they reach the outcome?

For each civic learning outcome, identify the following elements:

1. Pre-assessment. What do the students already know about responsible citizenship in the discipline?
2. Service project plan with community partner. How will the service help them reach the civic outcome?
3. Assessment. How have they grown as a result of the experience?



Finding the Right Community Partner

Finding the most appropriate community organization or organizations to complement your service-learning course is vital to building a meaningful and sustainable partnership. Each listing includes an overview of the organization's mission and needs as well as examples of the types of service-learning activities your students might engage in. We invite you to browse through this list of potential community partners and reach out to any of the contacts listed to begin a discussion.

A list of organizations that have expressed an interest in service-learning projects is available at tiny.utk.edu/partner.

You may also be able to identify potential partners through one of the following resources:

UT Center for Leadership and Service
leadershipandservice.utk.edu

United Way of Greater Knoxville
unitedway.org

Volunteer East Tennessee
volunteeretn.org

Community Campus Partnerships for Health offers a useful resource on developing sustainable community-university partnerships at ccph.memberclicks.net/principles-of-partnership.



Planning the Service Project with Your Community Partner

 See section 6 of the workbook for a sample memorandum of collaboration.

When planning your students' service project with your community partner, determine how the service and the content presented in the course will help students develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies outlined in the student learning outcomes.

For instance, for a course on educational policy, you may list readings that discuss cultural competency in educational policy development. For the service element of the course to align with the content, ensure that your community partner can assist students with practical application of those concepts. Direct communication and reflection with your community partner are vitally important at this stage.

A memorandum of collaboration (MOC) can help guide discussion with your community partner about their vision for the course. If your department or college does not have an MOC, the form is available at servicelearning.utk.edu/forms.

It may be helpful to complete the faculty information section of the MOC before meeting with your community partner so the discussion can focus on how the service will align with the course content and the needs of the community partner.



Incorporating Reflection

Reflection activities are a critical component of effective service-learning because they connect the service activities to the course content, extending the educational agenda beyond rote learning (Bringle and Hatcher, 1999; Hatcher et al., 2004). In other words, it is the element of the course that connects the service and the learning. Reflection can be written or oral, group-based or individual.

Eyler et. al (1996) purport that effective service-learning reflection must conform with what they call “the four Cs”:

- **Continuous** Reflection is structured throughout the course.
- **Connected** Reflection is directly related to the learning objectives.
- **Challenging** Reflection efforts set high expectations, demand high quality feedback, and facilitate instructor feedback that stimulates further student learning.
- **Contextualized** Reflection activities are appropriate to the particular course, and commensurate with and complementary to the level and type of other course learning activities.

Reflection should be built into the course to prompt students to draw connections between the academic content of the course and the civic learning yielded from their service projects, so that each element adds value to the other.

Reflection can be structured to allow students in service to think critically about the following in light of their service experiences:


- the experience's complexity within a larger **social, political, environmental, and economic context**
- their **attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions** around issues such as privilege, prejudice, and stereotype
- possibilities for **further involvement and broader issue awareness**
- **statements, beliefs, or approaches** they might not question otherwise

One simple strategy for developing reflection prompts is to turn your learning outcomes into questions.

For instance, if an outcome is *Students will analyze selected political and legislative issues affecting community health*, a reflection question could be *Based on your service experience, describe one political or legislative issue you have become aware of. What is its impact on community health?*

Possible reflection questions for use before, during, and after service are provided in the appendix of this guide.

Reflection-on-Action vs. Reflection-in-Action

 See section 7 of the workbook for a space to record possible reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action questions to help your students connect learning and service.

According to Merriam & Bierema (2014) there are two types of reflection: reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action.

Questions for **reflection-on-action** require students to critically consider or respond to a situation after it has happened in light of course content.

- Nursing students working on a community health project: *In light of the course learning and service project experience, apply the epidemiological process to identify at least five health needs of the homeless community of Knoxville.*
- Geology students removing invasive species at a local protective wildlife habitat: *What have been the successes and setbacks of this project, and how can we develop strategies to address these?*

Questions for **reflection-in-action** require students to consider what they are doing while they are in the process of doing it. Reflection-in-action is important because it helps students apply knowledge and experiences to actions in real time.

- Students in an agricultural leadership course working at a service site: *How am I applying ethical concepts of servant leadership to this service activity?*
- Social work students developing a care plan for a community partner: *How is the plan I am developing for my client going to meet his or her needs?*
- Spanish students tutoring Latino youth in an after-school program: *How can I effectively communicate study strategies in a way that is culturally relevant and meaningful to them?*

Creating Assessments with the End in Mind

As seen throughout this guide, effectively communicating course expectations to students is essential to successfully managing unpredictable aspects of service-learning courses (e.g., timing issues, changes in policies and procedures, logistical issues, etc.). Clear communication is particularly important in the creation and dissemination of assignments. Instructors must develop assignments and service projects (the latter in conjunction with the community partner) that are properly contextualized with the framework of the established objectives of the program as well as the goals of the course.

This section will discuss key definitions pertaining to assessment as well as types of assignments that can be used specifically for your course. Designing meaningful assessments aligned to established academic and civic learning outcomes is integral to the success of a service-learning course.



What Is Assessment and Why Is It Important?

Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do as a result of their educational experiences. Assessment results can and should be used by instructors to improve students' subsequent mastery of learning outcomes (Huba and Freed, 2000).

Assessment occurs at the course, departmental, college, and institutional levels. UT is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), but assessment practices extend to include many other discipline-specific accreditation agencies. In addition to its important role in accreditation, assessment is a useful tool for continuous improvement of academic programs.

Two types of assessments are used at the course level: formative and summative assessments. **Formative assessments** gauge student learning before or during a learning activity or unit. They provide feedback to the instructor regarding what students know before a subject is introduced, how well students are understanding new material, and how effectively course assignments are producing the desired learning. Formative evaluation activities generally take little time to complete and can therefore occur more than once during a class session. They are also low stakes, with little to no impact on a student's overall grade.

Formative assessments are used to guide and adjust instruction and to help students see what they need to know or improve upon. Examples include one-minute papers in which students summarize what was covered during a class session in their own words, informal quizzes, short homework assignments, class discussion, and mid-semester class evaluations

Conversely, **summative assessments** evaluate student effectiveness in

meeting a learning outcome. These assignments typically take place after instruction for a unit or module or after the course has ended. Examples include final exams, oral presentations, portfolios, group projects, and papers.

Additional information and examples of formative and summative assessments are available in the appendix of this guide.

Assessment Process

Assessment is the process by which programs evaluate what students know, think, or do as a result of those programs. Programs use assessment results to make any improvements needed to the curriculum. See the Assessment Toolbox in Appendix 3 for specific tools.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

FORMATIVE Assessment for learning

- Focuses on students' future achievement.
- Provides instantaneous feedback for instructors.
- Provides insight on how well students are meeting the learning outcomes.
- Usually ungraded.
- Guides instruction.

SUMMATIVE Assessment of learning

- Assesses what has been learned in the past.
- Culminating activity that demonstrates student learning of an outcome.
- Usually graded.
- Provides feedback that ultimately can be used for program improvement.

Reflection Activities for Assessment of Learning

One of the benefits of a service-learning course is the diversity of assessments that can be used to evaluate student understanding of course material. Reflection can be used as a form of assessment of academic and civic learning outcomes in service-learning. Additional information on using reflection as assessment is available at experiencelearning.utk.edu/faculty-assessment-guides.

Assessing the Community Partnership

In addition to assessing student mastery of learning outcomes, it is important to assess the quality of your community partnership. TLI's Service-Learning Initiative has evaluation forms for use by instructors and community partners at servicelearning.utk.edu/forms.

Risk Factors and Risk Management

Given that there are a number of risks involved in sending students out into the community, is it important to be intentional about minimizing and managing these risks. Risk management is defined by Young and Tomski (2002) as “the formal process by which an organization establishes its risk management goals and objectives, identifies and analyzes its risks, and selects and implements measures to address its risks in an organized fashion.”

Risk management does not need to be intimidating. Many risks can be prevented through purposeful planning and preparation. By integrating risk prevention and management into your service-learning planning, you can help ensure everyone involved has a safer and more enjoyable experience.

1.

Identify Risks and Liabilities

Ask yourself the following questions as you plan:

- What are the potential risks to students of engaging in the service-learning activities?
- What are the potential risks to students of having contact with the agency clients?
- What are potential risks to students of traveling to and from their homes, the campus, and the agency?
- What are the potential risks to agency staff and clients of having students on site?
- Have previous students encountered any risks involving this activity or agency?
- How will I inform students of the risks associated with their chosen activities?
- How will I ensure that students are aware of and adhere to the plan in the MOC throughout their service opportunity?

It may be best to work with your community partner to answer these questions. The MOC can help guide this process.

2.

Evaluate and Prioritize Risks

Consider the risks you identified in the first step and prioritize them into high or low risk levels. Consider the level of vulnerability of the students and those they will contact, the location and conditions of the organizational site, the nature of the students' work, and the level of supervision they will have.

3.

Manage Risks

A good rule of thumb is to avoid any activity or situation that is too risky. Retain low-risk activities or modified versions of high-risk activities to make them less risky.

There are things you can do to reduce risk. This list is adapted from the Louisiana State University Center for Community Engagement, Learning and Leadership:

- **Site visits.** Visit the community organization site both before the service-learning experience begins and while your students are there to gain firsthand knowledge of the situations and conditions under which they will serve and learn.
- **Supervision.** Ensure that your students will have adequate supervision by an agency staff member or another designated person at the service site.

- **Orientation.** Risk management and liability issues should be included in a preservice orientation experience for your students. OSL is available upon request to conduct this orientation, which will include risk management and prevention, during your regular class hours. It also is a good idea to have a representative of the community partner organization speak to the class as part of orientation. Students who have previously completed the service-learning experience can also help their peers begin considering responsible and appropriate behavior for the service experience.
- **Communication.** Maintain excellent communication with both your community partner and your students throughout the duration of the service experience. Try to be as accessible as possible.

As a UT employee, you enjoy some level of protection against liability. The UT Office of the General Counsel provides information on employee protections against liability at counsel.tennessee.edu/liability. Contact the office at 865-974-3245 with questions.



Travel

Student travel to and from a service site can be considered much like travel to and from the university for classes. It is typically not reimbursable by the university, nor is the university liable for any potential damages incurred unless the students are traveling in a university vehicle.

Some students may not have access to a personal vehicle on campus. If a student has difficulty getting to and from the service site, you may want to offer an alternative project assignment to that student.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities

OSL is committed to helping faculty and community partners provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities have the option of disclosing their disabilities to you and working with Student Disability Services to arrange accommodations. Additional information on accommodating students with disabilities is available at sds.utk.edu. In cases where accommodations for a student with a disability to participate in service-learning are not available, consider offering an alternative project assignment to that student.

Tracking Service-Learning Hours

The need to track service-learning hours depends on the structure of the service project and the processes in place at the department and college level. Check with your department if you have questions about tracking service hours.

Service-Learning Timeline

The timeline for service-learning varies depending on the type of course, type of service-learning project, and the final agreement between you and your community partner. Generally, service-learning can be divided into four phases.

Phase 1 Initiation & Planning

Recommended three to six months before the start of the course

- Consult with department head; find out what processes and resources are in place at department level
- Create student learning outcomes and plan course assignments and assessments
- Plan for logistics (travel, student training, etc.)
- Identify and initiate contact with community partners
- Consider the type of service project you would like your students to do
- Complete the memorandum of collaboration

Phase 2 Start of Service-Learning & Troubleshooting

Generally within the first three weeks of the service experience

- Initiate and orient students to their new service roles as active learners
- Introduce and overview student learning outcomes for the course
- Work with community partner to prepare students for service (readings, assignments, speakers, pre-reflection, pre-assessment)

Phase 3 Service-Learning Experience, Assessments & Reflection

Averages two to four months, depending on the start of service

- Communicate with your community partner regularly throughout the service
- Regularly prompt student reflection to connect service experiences to academic learning
- Implement assignments and assessments to support progress toward student learning outcomes
- Continue to fulfill responsibilities as determined in planning period

Phase 4 Evaluation & Wrap-up

Final three weeks

- Work with community partner to facilitate students' completion or closing out of service projects
- Complete a service-learning partnership evaluation
- Determine with community partner if partnership will continue
- Complete final deliverables and assessments



DESIGNATING A SERVICE- LEARNING COURSE

The S Designation



The application for S designation and submission instructions are available at servicelearning.utk.edu/s-designation and are included in section 8 of the workbook. TLI is available to answer any questions.

The service-learning S course designation allows departments to demonstrate alignment of proposed service-learning courses with the university's standards for effectiveness. The process was developed by the Service-Learning Steering Committee in 2012 and approved for implementation by the Undergraduate Council and Faculty Senate in fall 2016. The S designation standards are adapted from Jeffrey Howard's *Service-Learning Course Design Workbook* (2001).

For information on approval processes and catalog policies regarding the S designation, see the Undergraduate Council EL subcommittee web page at tiny.utk.edu/ELproposals.



APPENDIX 1: CAMPUS RESOURCES

Center for Career Development

Student Union Level 2
1015 Phillip Fulmer Way
Knoxville, TN 37996-4820
865-974-5435
career.utk.edu

Center for International Education

1620 Melrose Ave.
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996-3531
865-974-3177
cie@utk.edu
cie.utk.edu

Center for Leadership and Service

2238 Dunford Hall
915 Volunteer Blvd.
Knoxville, TN 37996
865-974-1039
leadserve@utk.edu
leadershipandservice.utk.edu

Office of the General Counsel

719 Andy Holt Tower
1331 Circle Park
Knoxville, TN 37996-0170
865-974-3245
counsel.tennessee.edu

Office of Instructional Technology

517 Greve Hall
821 Volunteer Blvd.
Knoxville, TN 37996
865-974-9900
oit.utk.edu
Online contact form: help.utk.edu

Office of Multicultural Student Life

1800 Melrose Ave.
Knoxville, TN 37996-4200
865-974-6861
multicultural@utk.edu
multicultural.utk.edu

Office of Undergraduate Research

407 Blount Hall
1534 White Ave.
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
865-974-8560
ugresearch@utk.edu
ugresearch.utk.edu

Risk Management Office

5723 Middlebrook Pike
Suite 218
Knoxville, TN 37996
865-974-5409
riskmanagement.tennessee.edu

Student Disability Services

100 Dunford Hall
915 Volunteer Blvd.
Knoxville, TN 37996
865-974-6087
VP: 865-622-6566
sds@utk.edu
sds.utk.edu

Student Success Center

324 Greve Hall
821 Volunteer Blvd.
Knoxville, TN 37996
865-974-6641
studentsuccess@utk.edu
studentsuccess.utk.edu

University Libraries

1015 Volunteer Blvd.
Knoxville, TN 37996-1000
865-974-4351
lib.utk.edu

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Remember that sincerity is the most important element when answering reflection questions.

Before the Service Project

1. What are some personal perceptions that you have about the agency you will be working with?
2. What characteristics make a community successful?
3. What are some of your perceptions or beliefs about the population you will be serving?
4. What is the identified problem or community need?
5. How is your community partner site addressing that need?
6. Why are you needed?
7. What concerns, if any, do you have about working in the community?
8. What do you hope to gain from this experience?
9. How does your service-learning experience relate to the learning objectives of the course?
10. What would you like to change about your community?
11. Report a civic experience you have had in the past. Include comments about what type of difference you made to those you served. How did you feel about your service? What if any attitudes or beliefs changed for you as a result of your service?
12. What communities or identity groups are you a member of? How might this be related with your commitment to service?
13. What do you think you will do and what impact do you think you will have?
14. What needs did/do/will your project help fill?
15. What do you think are the causes of those needs?
16. How do you think people contribute to this problem? How do we help to solve it?
17. How does what you perceive your role in this project to be compare with how others may see your role?

During the Service Project

18. How is your service-learning experience related to the readings, discussions, and lectures in class?
19. What happened?

20. What did you observe?
21. What issue is being addressed or population is being served?
22. How is your experience different from what you expected?
23. Identify three areas where you feel you could use additional guidance and learning in order to be more effective.
24. Identify three strengths you demonstrated in your service placement.
25. Relate your service experience to the text/reading/chapter.
26. What resources are missing from the volunteer site, and how can you as students remedy this situation?
27. What is the relationship of your service to the “real world”?
28. How have you been challenged?
29. During your community work experience, have you dealt with being an outsider at your site? How does being an outsider differ from being an insider?
30. What new questions do you have?
31. What did you do at your site since the last reflection discussion?
32. What has worked? What hasn’t?
33. What do you think is (will be) the most valuable service you can offer at your site?
34. Describe your service-learning project. Include a description of the agency or organization you will be working for (i.e., what is their purpose? How big are they? What is their history? What is their mission? What are their goals?).
35. How does the service-learning experience connect to your long-term goals?
36. What new skills have you learned since beginning your service?
37. Have you ever felt hopelessness, despair, discouragement, or burnout related to your service? How have you dealt with this?
38. What did you do today (or this week) that made you feel you made a difference? Why?
39. Identify a person, group, or community that you got to know

this semester who is significantly “other” for you. What are the needs or challenges facing them that particularly got to you? What is one way in which you’ve allowed yourself to be changed as a result of knowing these individuals?

40. What impacts the way you view the situation or experience? What lens are you viewing from?
41. What did you like or dislike about the experience?
42. What did you learn about the people and community?
43. What are some of the pressing needs and issues in the community? How does this project address those needs? What seem to be the root causes of the issue addressed? What should others do about this issue?
44. What would you like to learn more about related to this project or issue? What information can you share with your peers or the community?
45. Has there been a problem situation that you want to discuss with your instructor?

After the Service Project

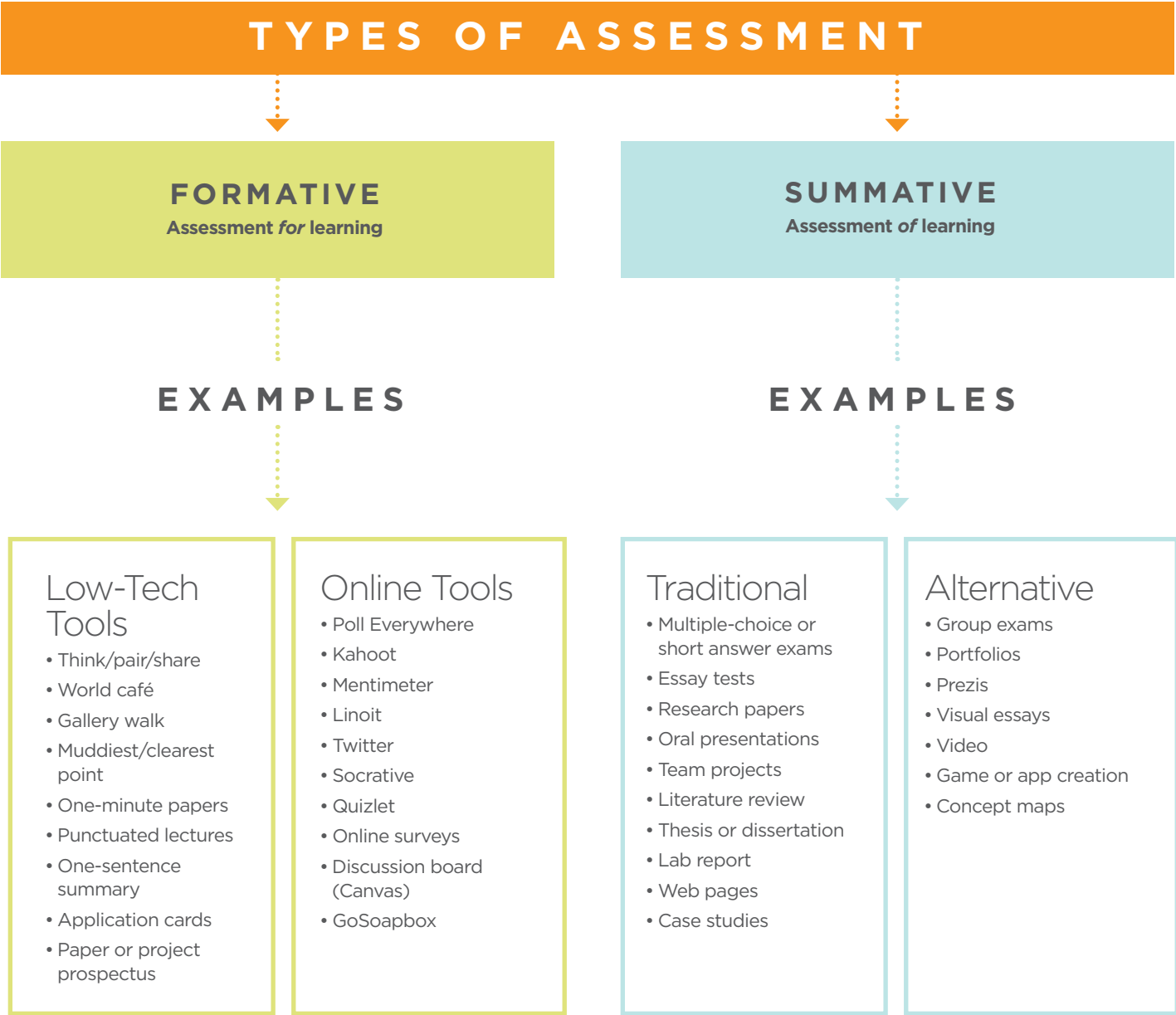
46. Describe what you have learned about yourself as a result of your service.
47. What have you learned about your community?
48. What have you contributed to the community site?
49. What values, opinions, beliefs have changed?
50. In your opinion, what was the most important lesson learned during the course?
51. Do you have a different picture of your community than you had before you began your project?
52. Did you learn a new skill or clarify an interest?
53. What learning occurred for you in this experience? How can you apply this learning?
54. What follow-up is needed to address any challenges or difficulties?
55. If you could do the project again, what would you do differently?

56. What specific skills have you used at your community site?
57. Describe a person you’ve encountered in the community who made a strong impression on you, positive or negative.
58. Talk about any disappointments or successes of your project. What did you learn from it?
59. Complete this sentence: *Because of my service-learning, I am . . .*
60. What about your community involvement has been an eye-opening experience?
61. Do you see benefits of doing community work? Why or why not?
62. How have the environment and social conditions affected the people at your site?
63. What institutional structures are in place at your site or in the community? How do they affect the people you work with?
64. Has the experience affected your world view? If so, how?
65. Have your career options been expanded by your service experience?
66. Would you be interested in continuing your involvement with this group or social issue? If so, how will you do this?
67. What were the most difficult or satisfying parts of your work? Why?
68. Talk about any disappointments and successes of your project. What did you learn from them?
69. How were your values expressed through your community work?
70. What sorts of things made you feel uncomfortable when you were working in the community? Why?
71. Did anything surprise you? If so, what?
72. What were the most difficult and most satisfying parts of the service for you? Why?

Adapted from Austin Community College Faculty Resources.

APPENDIX 3: ASSESSMENT TOOLBOX

Assessment is the process through which programs evaluate what students know, think, or do as a result of those programs. Programs use assessment results to make any improvements needed to the curriculum.



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- University-Assisted Community Schools

A teal-colored overlay covers the entire page. In the background, three people are visible: a woman with glasses in the center, a woman on the left, and a man on the right. They appear to be in a meeting or classroom setting, looking at documents or a screen. The text is white and orange, providing contact information for Teaching and Learning Innovation.

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