RURASL: Community Organization Guide on Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship

RURAL 3.0
SERVICE LEARNING
FOR THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural 3.0

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This Guide was created for rural community organizations that want to participate in rural Service-Learning or to apply the rural Social Entrepreneurship approach and collaborate with higher education (HE) institutions (academic teachers). The Guide will help to answer the questions that might arise when rural community organizations start their collaboration with HE institutions on rural Service-Learning or rural Social Entrepreneurship projects.

This Guide was developed by Kaunas District Local Action Group and Plenum with the collaboration of all RURASL project partners.

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About RURASL and this Community Guide

What is RURASL?

RURASL: Service-Learning for the Rural Development is a Knowledge Alliance between eight higher education institutions and eight community organizations that have experience with Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship in rural areas. The Alliance aims to contribute to the development of rural areas, meeting their needs, and boosting innovation in these areas through an innovative methodology while creating community-university partnerships.

Higher Education Institutions in RURASL:

1. IPVC ESE (Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo – ESCOLA SUPERIOR DE EDUCAÇÃO), Portugal, Coordinator, http://www.ipvc.pt/escola-educacao
2. PhWien (Pädagogische Hochschule Wien), Austria, https://phwien.ac.at/en
3. FFZG (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb), Croatia,https://web2020.ffzg.unizg.hr/international/
4. RSM (Erasmus University Rotterdam Rotterdam School of Management), Netherlands, https://www.rsm.nl/
5. SCE (Strascheg Center for Entrepreneurship GmbH, Munich University for Applied Sciences), Germany, https://www.sce.de/en/home.html
6. UAM (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), Spain, http://www.uam.es/UAM/Home.htm?language=es
7. VMU (Vytautas Magnus University), Lithuania, https://www.vdu.lt/en/
8. UniBO (University of Bologna,) Italy, https://www.unibo.it/en/homepage

Community organizations in RURASL:

1. LAG5 (Local Action Group), Croatia, http://www.lag5.hr
2. LAG Ammersee (Local Action Group Ammersee), Germany, http://www.lagammersee.de/
3. LAG Kaunas (Local Action Group Kaunas), Lithuania, http://www.kaunorvvg.lt

4. LAG Galsinma (Local Action Group Galsinma), Spain, https://www.galsinma.org/

5. LAG AJD (Local Action Group AJDeão), Portugal, www.associacaodeao.wix.com/ajdeao

6. SSA (Stichting Schutsluis Alblasserdam), Netherlands, http://schutsluis-alblasserdam.nl/

7. Plenum (Gesellschaft für ganzheitlich nachhaltige entwicklung gmbh), Austria, http://www.plenum.at

8. LAG L'Altra Romagna (Local Action Group L'Altra Romagna), Italy, http://www.altraromagna.it/en/the-group/

The goals of the RURASL project are to:

- help develop the core skills and entrepreneurial capabilities of the rural community (for which such development is not easily accessible)

- improve the quality of education for sustainable development and promote university-community partnerships in the rural areas through the innovative service-learning methodology

- increase the relevance of universities as their students aim to fulfill a service that is in line with the demands of the rural businesses and social needs in rural areas

- establish a virtual Hub with a broad network of academic and rural stakeholders that will offer teaching and learning content (dedicated transnational academic module with courses on service-learning and social entrepreneurship, community training materials and digital collaborative & learning tools) and will promote interactions between universities and rural community stakeholders

The main benefits of the project are:

- creation of international university-rural community alliance that promotes education and entrepreneurship of people in rural areas, bringing HEIs and rural community enterprises together to work on the common issue - development of the necessary knowledge and skills needed to make a change in the rural communities

- strengthening the skills and the innovative capacity of adult rural social entrepreneurs (SE)

- providing practical Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship experiences to university students in the specific rural settings
- development of the core skills and rural SE amongst the high potential rural community in a sustainable, ecologically, and socially sound way

About this Guide

This community guide aims to help community organizations to engage in Service-Learning or social entrepreneurship projects in rural areas with HEIs, serving university students as mentors during these projects. Since community organizations serve as brokers between rural beneficiaries and students but may lack direct experience in working with students, this guide aims to serve as training material for community partners to provide them with mentoring skills and knowledge on how to effectively utilize students. LAG Kaunas and Plenum, as representatives of community organizations, have collected data from other community partners in the RURASL project to assess their educational needs. Together with HEI partners they have developed this guide based on these needs to help other community organizations in structuring meaningful student involvement and assisting students with the implementation of their activity plans. Rural partners in the RURASL project collaborated with HEI partners and the local community to ensure that the grassroots development needs are answered to with the knowledge set produced by HEIs.

As a direct result of the RURASL project, this guide contains customizable material and suggestions for community organizations to improve their mentoring skills and knowledge on how to effectively utilize students in community-university partnerships.

This guide will help community organizations to:

- define rural needs to be included in the university course on Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship
- prepare for the discussion of student orientation, activity plan, clarification of responsibilities and risk management issues
- explain students their organization's mission and goals
- assist in developing opportunities for rural Service-Learning activities that are significant and challenging to students and that build on their knowledge and skills
- facilitate student reflection on their rural Service-Learning experience
- participate in the evaluation process at the end of the course

This guide is an open educational resource that is publicly available for all community organizations interested in community-university partnerships.

Also, it is linked to the World Cafe event of the RURASL project, which is designed based on this community training material, implemented online as a community training webinar and recorded for the future use by community organizations.

What are Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship approaches in learning?
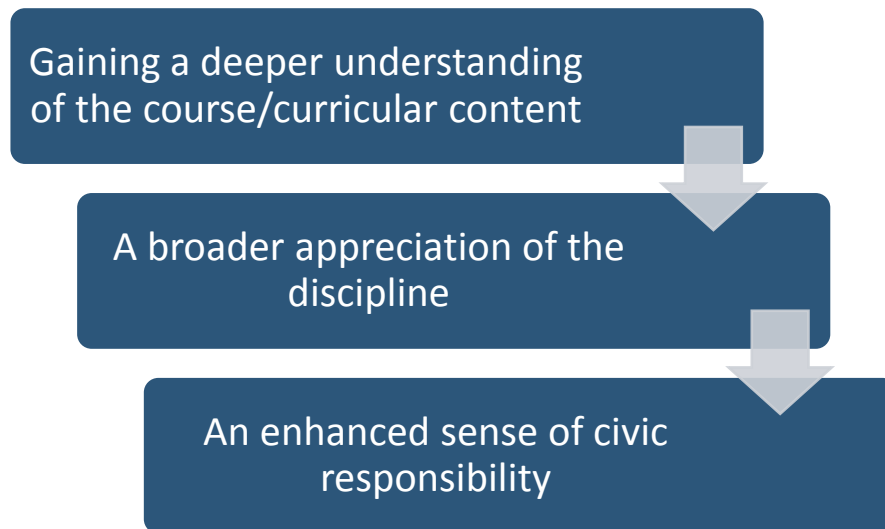
Service-Learning, according to the definition of the project *Europe Engage – Developing a Culture of Civic Engagement through Service-Learning within Higher Education in Europe*, (sometimes referred to as *community-based* or *community-engaged learning*) is an innovative pedagogical approach that integrates meaningful community service or engagement into the curriculum. It offers students academic credits for the learning that derives from active engagement within the community and the work on a real-world problem. Reflection and experiential learning strategies underpin the learning process and the service is linked to the academic discipline. Service-Learning brings together students, academics, and the community whereby all become teaching resources, problem solvers, and partners. In addition to enhancing academic and real-world learning, the overall purpose of Service-Learning is to instill in students a sense of civic engagement and responsibility and work towards positive social change within society[1].

Social Entrepreneurship approach recognizes social needs and uses entrepreneurial principles to create and organize innovative ways to foster social change.

Clevenger-Bright et al. (2012) explain that community-based service activities are paired with structured preparation and student reflection. What is unique about Service-Learning is that it offers a direct application of theoretical models. Proponents of academic Service-Learning believe that the real-world application of classroom knowledge in a community setting allows students to synthesize course material in more meaningful ways.

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[1] https://europeengage.org/our-definition-of-service-learning/

Common goals achieved through Service-Learning (adapted from Clevenger-Bright et al., 2012) [2]

Gaining a deeper understanding of the course/curricular content

A broader appreciation of the discipline

An enhanced sense of civic responsibility

Rural Service-Learning and rural Social Entrepreneurship approach represent an extremely flexible and mobile study system that combines specific lectures, classroom seminars, and targeted work in a rural community.

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[2] https://www.washington.edu/teaching/topics/engaging-students-in-learning/service-learning/

What is a rural community partner?

A rural community partner is a rural organization (e.g. local action group, a non-profit organization, foundation, association, municipality, etc.) that collaborates with students during Service-Learning studies. Rural community partners define their rural needs and explain them to students. Students attend academic lectures and classroom seminars, engage in reflection on defined rural needs, and try to solve specific rural problems/needs/challenges. For students, the rural community has the role of a co-educator.

The following graph illustrates the benefits of Service-Learning for a rural community partner:
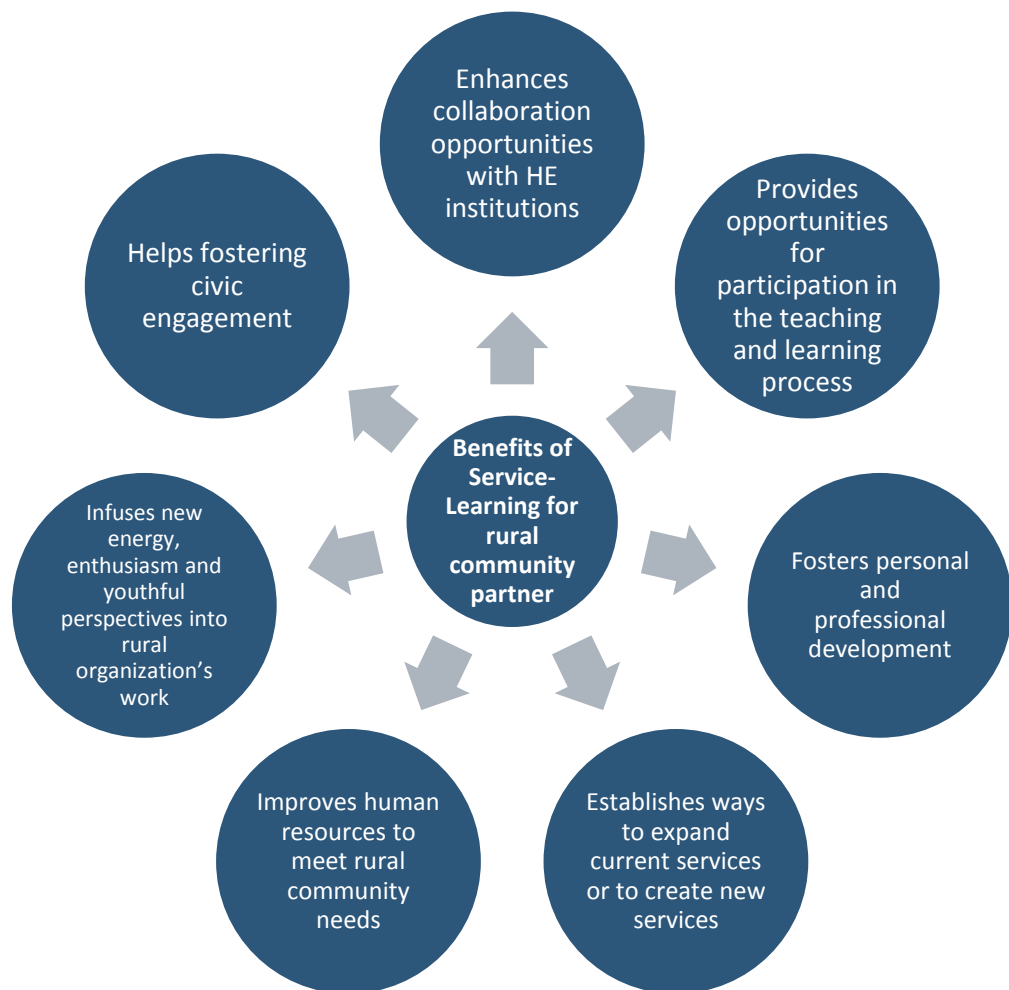
Benefits of Service-Learning for rural community partner (Bender, 2014)

Guidelines for rural community partner organizations

Forms of implementation and organization of rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship

Rural Service-Learning (S-L) and Social Entrepreneurship (SE) can be implemented in three different forms.

Rural community organizations have different responsibilities as well as structural and logistics obligations in organizing these 3 types of activities.

Implementation of rural Service-Learning S-L) or Social Entrepreneurship (SE) in the immediate vicinity of higher education institutions

HE institutions that reside in rural communities (i.e. in the immediate vicinity of rural community organizations) draw on students who reside in the rural community. Compared to HE institutions from urban areas, in this form of implementation one can expect less complex bureaucracies, these institutions are more accessible to community organizations and, consequently, more customized university-community partnerships may be formed. Students can better understand the importance of the rural community, as well as the opportunities and limitations of their community. Students and academic teachers from HEIs may live next door to rural beneficiaries who are receiving services provided by a community organization that mentors students.

Still, the implementation of rural S-L or SE activities requires student training from community organizations regarding rural needs, existing resources, and/ or lack of them.

In RURASL project, we have examples of this form of implementation from Portugal, Lithuania, and the Netherlands.

In Portugal, 21 students from Viana do Castelo (Higher School of Education – Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo- IPVC) went to the rural area – Deão (about 15km from the city center of Viana do Castelo) to participate in a rural Service-Learning project supervised by the local action group AJD: 'Steps for a Better Society'. The aim of this project was to paint the walls of the facilities of AJD with drawings depicting the traditions, history, and cultural heritage of Deão. 'Steps for a Better Society' was the academic response of a group of

Primary Teacher Education students from Viana do Castelo Polytechnic to the needs of AJD (Rural LAG), regarding its local heritage.

Also, in another project, 4 undergraduate students from Higher School of Education (3rd-year students of IPVC) participated in a Service-Learning project "Right to play" supervised by AJD and the local group International Amnesty. The aim of this SL project was to draw the attention of AJD's children to other realities, where children do not have the right to play as they do. The other projects ("Refoios em movimento – Moving Towers" and "Reforestation of common lands of Refoios do Lima") were implemented with undergraduate students of Agronomy (1st-year students of IPVC).

Since the IPVC (HEI partner) was close to AJD (rural partner) and other rural community organizations, they were able to organize and implement more than one project in the rural area, which is the real benefit of immediate vicinity between university and community partners.

Implementation of rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship in areas that are remote from higher education institutions

HE institutions that are urban and do not reside in rural communities have different life experiences on a daily level and <u>might struggle to recognize rural needs</u> and provide Service-Learning that is truly beneficial for rural beneficiaries.

Also, these communities might not be easily <u>accessible by public transportation</u>, and it might also take a lot of time for students to reach them. So, if community organization plans a face to face 1-hour meeting with students, it needs to be aware that it might take 3 hours for students. Online meeting apps might reduce such issues.

Apart from travel, it is necessary to emphasize that these projects require more advanced planning, significant support from community organizations, and higher structural and logistics demands.

Finally, during the semester students have regular class schedules and it imposes another limitation regarding multiple trips to remote rural areas.

In RURASL project, we have examples of this form of implementation from Spain and Germany.

In Spain, rural Service-Learning was implemented through collaboration between Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) and Local Action Group Galsinma formed by 45 municipalities of the North Mountain range of Madrid. Nine first-year students of Primary Teacher Education Bachelor study from UAM went to 2 municipal toy libraries of GALSINMA (Talamanca de Jarama and El Berrueco - the rural area in the northern mountains of Madrid region about 50 km from the UAM university) and implemented their service-learning project "SL Assistance to the child population" that lasted 4 months (30 hours in total). The main objective of the service was to organize and implement activities that facilitate awareness of the situations experienced by people at social exclusion risk in rural settings.

Implementation of rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship as a summer/winter school

If implemented as a residential summer school, rural S-L and SE projects allow students to reside in the rural community during the service instead of traveling back and forth to their universities. But, students and community organizations in this scenario must commit to full-time availability and be prepared to also work in the evening or during the weekend. Students need meals and housing and have to implement rural S-L and SE within a shorter period of time than their peers in other 2 forms of implementation.

This might pose additional workload for community organizations since the role of the mentor is not only intellectual support to students but also logistical (to provide meals, housing, materials and equipment for the work, etc.). They become hosts for students, apart from being their mentors.

Finally, rural community organizations may not find summer or winter as the optimal time to implement rural S-L and SE projects, since they might experience reduced staffing due to summer/winter vacations.

In RURASL project, we have examples of this form of implementation from Italy, Austria, and Croatia.

In Croatia, 11 students from the country capital (University of Zagreb) traveled 600 km to the rural area - the island of Korčula to participate in service-learning projects supervised by the rural partner, local action group LAG5. Their S-L projects dealt with:

- introducing robotics (micro:bit and Mbot) to school children in rural schools,

- teaching rural entrepreneurs how to design free websites,

- development of digital skills for (cultural) rural tourism

- digitization of heritage in the museum of Korčula (especially the latest finds from the Marco Polo House)

All students were graduate students of Information Sciences, a study with programs: Informatics (teaching and research-oriented studies), Library Science, Museum study, and heritage management.

Finally, more examples of all three types of implementation are available in RURASL MOOC (http://193.198.214.48:8080/course/view.php?id=7). The testimonies from students, teachers, rural community organizations, and rural beneficiaries are available at RURASL YouTube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEOwS_yvg6PiOoCb_6NLWhg/featured

How to define rural needs and explain them to students?

It is important to clearly define the rural needs of rural beneficiaries that participate in a Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship project. Rural community needs depend on various circumstances, such as location, number of community members, social and economic environment, characteristics of the activities of the rural organization, etc. Also, rural needs depend on the characteristics of rural communities (e.g. sports clubs, educational centers, etc.) and their members (e.g. farmers, housewives, tourist workers, retirees, cultural workers, etc.). The fulfillment of a particular rural need and suggestions of the potential solution depends directly on how clearly the rural needs were defined. Our suggestion is to discuss the rural needs with rural beneficiaries.

The second, also very important stage is to explain these rural needs to students.

Students might attend HE institutions that reside in rural communities. These HE institutions often draw on students who are from the community/region where the college is located.

On the other side, there are students attending HE institutions that do not reside in rural communities. Here both students and faculty have urban life experiences and the gap between these students and rural beneficiaries can be significant.

You have to pay special attention if students are not members of your rural community or do not have a rural background. What seems clear and comprehensible to you, might not be so understandable for students. It is then of the utmost importance to explain the rural needs in detail to them, if possible, with practical examples.

The following example/table can be helpful to provide students with the initial overview of rural needs and structuring of the students' activities:

Context	Initial needs	Participating organizations	Rural SL objectives	Rural SL activities	Number of students
students coming from urban areas	need to cope with the aging population	Elderly residence	Improve elder's cognitive functions	Animation	2
students residing in rural areas	lack of content for children	Primary school	Bring STEM closer to children through informal learning	Robotics	5

In the Netherlands, the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM) of the Erasmus University has taught a minor course *Learning by Doing: Consulting Social Entrepreneurs* from 2019 to November 2019. In this minor, students have formed teams to consult small social organizations on tackling contemporary challenges. One of their rural partners (these social organizations) was Stichting Schutsluis Alblasserdam (SSA).

- SSA's aim is to obtain support for the reconstruction of a demolished water lock in Alblasserdam. SSA is serving a community that consists of water heritage, built environment, watersports, tourism, ecology and biodiversity stakeholders / beneficiaries.

- SSA has asked RSM to let students study the legitimacy of the aim for the lock reconstruction and advice SSA the way forward.

- Four students attending the minor advised SSA on the basis of their theoretical research and conversations with stakeholders / beneficiaries.

- Students' advice was to change the organizational form to an association instead of a foundation with members as this could help to obtain support and create more visibility in society in general and more specific for certain stakeholders.

- The course was an interesting experience for students that are not from rural areas in the Netherlands, and even more for the ones that are from different countries, as the Dutch system is very different from the systems in other countries. For SSA it was beneficial to work with students and become more knowledgeable about academic theories and literature. It was a real win-win situation.

Student orientation

As mentioned before, it is important to clearly define rural needs. It is easier to have a discussion on student orientation when you exactly know which needs could be satisfied with the help of students. Secondly, it is important to have sufficient amount of information on students: what subject they are studying, are they from a rural area or not, what educational needs and competencies do they have, what kind of skills they need to have to engage in Service-Learning, etc.? You also have to define what your expectations are towards students and what students' expectations are regarding their rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship project.

The discussion of student orientation will be successful and your collaboration with students will give the expected results if this part is well prepared. You should remember that your goal is to facilitate learning experiences for students in rural community surroundings and let them work as freely and independently as possible.

The following are some suggestions provided by Susan Bender (2014) that you may want to include in student's orientation:[3]

1.	Rural Community Partner Information	Inform students about your organization: What are your objectives? Who do you serve? What are your services/activities? What are the local demographics? How are you financed/funded? What is your mission? What is your philosophy?
2.	Staff	Who is your staff and what are their positions? Is there any jargon or language generally used by staff that students would want to know?
3.	Provide a List of Contacts/Numbers	List people/agencies that will be useful for students in doing their work.
4.	Responsibilities	What is expected from students? Describe the role students play in your organization. How will students' performance be appraised?
5.	Policies	Sign-in/out, dress code, office rules.
6.	Training	If any training is needed, what kind and when?

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[3] http://ccncce.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/ServiceLearningCommunityManual.pdf

7.	Final Product	What is the final goal to be reached and the final product to be created by students by the end of service?
8.	Scheduling	What are your organization's hours of operation? When should students complete their service? When will you meet with students during the semester to review the work they have done independently?
9.	Mentoring	All rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship students must have a contact person at the rural community site who will mentor them. The amount of time each student will need mentoring depends on the project or service activity. Students may be allowed to work independently without specific activities assigned at each visit. In that case, supervision time can be more effectively used for questions and feedback. If the assigned site mentor will not be available for any reason, please make sure the student has another site representative available if needed. Additionally, throughout the assignment, the site mentor should help the student interpret the experience he/she is gaining and the work of the organization and others. It is important to remember that students are not volunteers. Students need to meet rural community needs, but they are also using this experience to enhance their learning of the academic course material. Students are receiving academic credit for learning through their service efforts. Your assistance is needed to help students to reflect on what their experience means to them and how it relates to their coursework and that assistance is very valuable.
10.	Sign-In Procedure	Students might be required to have a sign-in time log completed every time they come to your organization. Students might ask their rural site mentor or someone from your organization to initial their time log during each visit.
11.	Identification	You can ask students to have their HE institution identification available.
12.	Modeling	The rural site mentors become part of the student's image of what it

		means to be a professional. Often the interpersonal relations that develop between a rural mentor and a student are among the most significant parts of the student's experience. Taking an interest in the student, his/her activities, and sharing feelings and interests beyond the work situation can be very helpful.
13.	Student Documentation	Your rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship students may ask you to verify service hours spent at your organization. If a student requests that, please do so for any hours that you can verify.

Well-coordinated communication

The collaboration will only be successful if communication between you, students, and teachers is well coordinated. It means that you should designate a mentor in your organization that works with students during the semester while completing their tasks.

HE institutions also designate supervisors for Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship students. You should communicate with these HE institutions' supervisors about the arising issues of Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship. According to R.Schramm (2016), HE institutions' supervisor's role is to work with the community partner to define the project and put together the team of students to carry out the project.

It is recommended to have an activity plan on communication.

Also, it is important to have at least one "live" conversation among the rural mentor, HEI supervisors, and students.

It is recommended for each partner to use the following chart created by Duncan & Kopperud (2007) to prepare for an initial meeting.

Student	
Learning Objectives	
Skills	
Talents	
Interests	
Experience	
Rural Community Partner	
Mission	
Skills of Staff Members/Volunteers	
Skills/Talents of Rural Beneficiaries	
Interests of the Organization	
The experience we can provide	

The following graph illustrates the well-coordinated communication implemented in the rural Service-Learning course in Spain. Students of the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM) did their Service-Learning in the municipal toy libraries of rural municipalities belonging to Local Action Group GALSINMA.

Communication of the LAG with the rural community (Town Hall representatives)

Communication between supervisor and students

The success of SL implementation in the area has been largely due to the excellent communication and coordination between the University and the LAG

Communication between the representative of the Town Hall in turn with the coordinator/supervisor of the toy library

Communication between the LAG and the University (after having obtained all the information from the municipalities)

How to deal with the clarification of responsibilities and risk management issues?

As it was mentioned before, community partners should have a mentor for arising issues during the Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship activity. The main task for the mentor is to clarify responsibilities and risk management issues. It is recommended to talk about all issues related to students' service. Students should be provided with information about the location of the community partner, the office/workspace for them to use, the number of hours of support you can provide them with, local working conditions, the ways to reach your organization (e.g. by public transport or by car). Community partners should take into consideration that some students can only work part-time on the Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship project. It is also important to emphasize that students' service in a rural community organization must meet the requirements of the national law. You have to pay special attention to the requirements of social insurance, labor law, volunteering, etc.

It is important to emphasize that rural Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship projects do not represent internship or volunteering, although students can help rural community partners to a great extent.
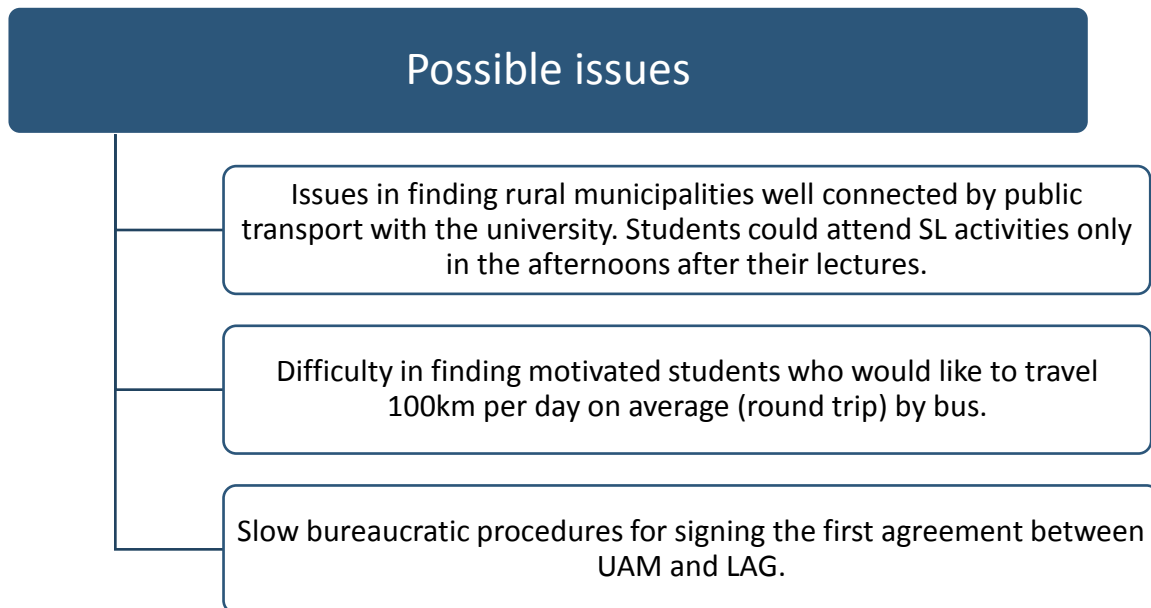
A key role of the rural community partner is to make links to three aspects of rural Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship - community needs, HE institutions' requirements, and an educational environment for students.

The following table, according to the Community Partner Guide to Service-Learning (2016) by the University of Vermont, can help to clarify the responsibilities of rural organization and risk management issues.

Provide students with adequate training for assigned tasks: • Set appropriate tasks • Be realistic about the time commitment and student expectations • Be visible and available as a mentor for students
Provide a safe work environment and reasonable hours for students to perform their service: • Transport information • Workspace • Work schedule and flexibility • Staff, beneficiaries, and other workers • Contact information in case of questions or concerns • Office protocol and norms
Provide students orientation and explain to them your mission and goals, enabling them to better understand their role: • Mission and goals • The function of your organization and individual roles
Provide ongoing feedback: • Communicate, evaluate and reflect • Say "thank you" to students for their work

It is recommended to have a Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding between a rural community organization and HE institution. You can find the suggested example in Appendix No. 1.

The following figure describes issues that the Local Action Group GALSINMA and the UAM (Spain) were facing while planning their rural Service-Learning project. These findings can be useful to have in mind to prevent risks from becoming issues while preparing for rural Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship project implementation.

Possible issues

- Issues in finding rural municipalities well connected by public transport with the university. Students could attend SL activities only in the afternoons after their lectures.

- Difficulty in finding motivated students who would like to travel 100km per day on average (round trip) by bus.

- Slow bureaucratic procedures for signing the first agreement between UAM and LAG.

How to explain the organization's mission and goals to students?

The mission and goals of the organization describe the end-point toward which activities are aimed. In most cases, students are likely to become familiar with the goals of your organization when choosing it. It is important for them that the activities of the chosen organization are related to their academic rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship studies. The chosen organizations should help students to perform activities that address real community needs.

Our recommendation is to discuss issues related to the organization's mission and goals with students in the first meeting. You should know how students understand the goals of your organization. Is their perception the same as yours regarding the mission and goals?

Students working at the rural community partner organization should reflect its mission and goals, and this reflection should be important to the organization. As Schramm (2016) points out, the project needs to be important to the organization and of a type and scale that is appropriate for student teams. There also needs to be a good "fit" between the project and the team. These aspects guarantee sufficient involvement of both sides to rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship project. The best results are achieved when individual student skills (e.g. writing, interviewing, photographing, ICT skills, etc.) and knowledge (e.g. law, business, economics, psychology, sociology, education, environment, agriculture, etc.) reflect rural community partners' needs.
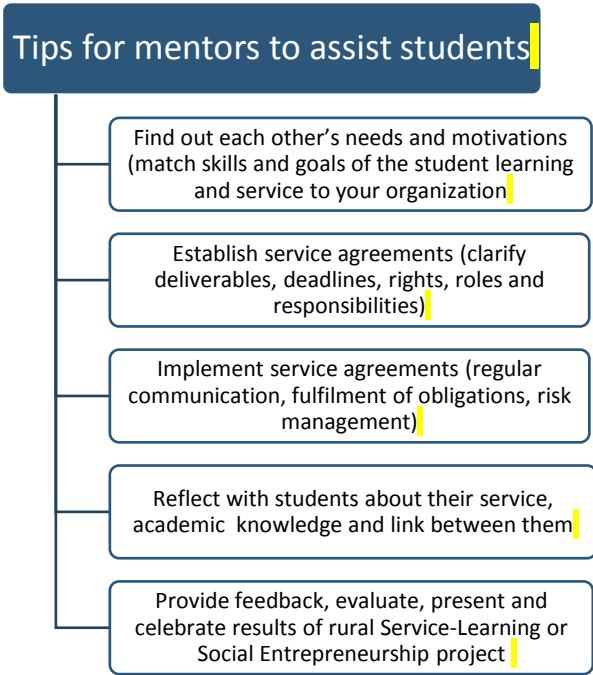
The Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship project may take many forms. According to Schramm (2016), students may perform indirect service - gathering information, doing analysis, and making recommendations about a problem or topic of interest to the organization. This can include evaluations with students examining a past or on-going program or activity to assess its effectiveness or efficiency. Students may also perform direct service, helping an organization put a program or procedure or operation in place, getting something started, or helping make an existing program run better.

How to assist in developing opportunities for rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship activities?

The assistance of a designated mentor from your organization for students during the Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship project is significant. Only competent assistance creates satisfying collaboration in rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship activities that build on students' knowledge and skills.

You should know that in this case student learning is not only about the content, but also about the process. This active process develops students' autonomy and their ability to apply their learning, it develops the necessary knowledge and skills needed to foster changes in rural communities.

To develop solutions for challenging rural issues, as well as product and process innovation, a mentor should constantly communicate with students and help them as soon as possible if they are facing problems related to the service for your organization.

Tips for mentors to assist students

- Find out each other's needs and motivations (match skills and goals of the student learning and service to your organization
- Establish service agreements (clarify deliverables, deadlines, rights, roles and responsibilities)
- Implement service agreements (regular communication, fulfilment of obligations, risk management)
- Reflect with students about their service, academic knowledge and link between them
- Provide feedback, evaluate, present and celebrate results of rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship project

Tips for Building and Maintaining an Effective Partnership, according to Community Partner Guide to Service-Learning (2016) by University of Vermont

How a rural partner can facilitate student reflection on their rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship experience?

According to Service-Learning Toolkit (2015) developed by Michigan State University, reflection is a very important part of rural Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship which enables connections between community engagement activities and classroom learning. Student participation in rural Service-Learning or rural Social Entrepreneurship activities is an active process. The reflection has a significant value for students and HE institutions.

According to Bringle & Hatcher (1999), "*Reflection activities provide the bridge between community service activities and the educational content of the course. Reflection activities direct the student's attention to new interpretations of events and provide a means through which the community service can be studied and interpreted*".

The student reflection has three main steps (Clayton and Day, 2003):
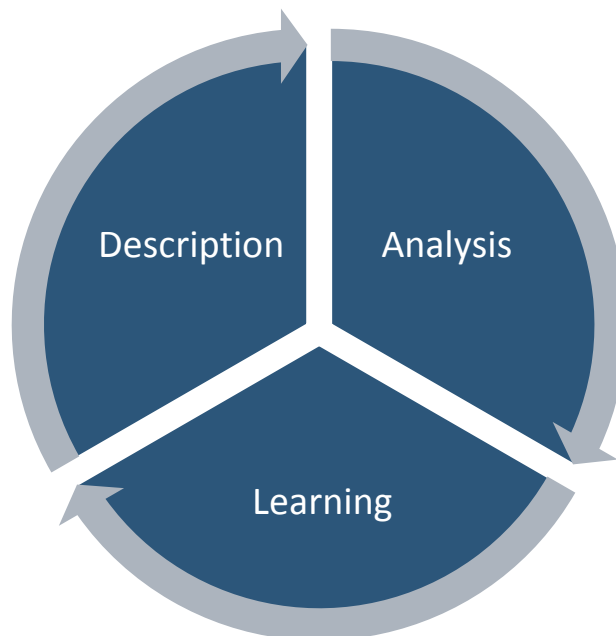
In the first step, **Description**, students should create mindful and attentive descriptions of their rural Service-Learning or rural Social Entrepreneurship project. In the second step, **Analysis**, they analyze their experience identifying the links between the learning objectives

and objectives of the service they perform, which allows them to make meaning out of their project. In the final step, **Learning**, they transform their experience into applicable learning.

The main principle of the reflection is unbiasedness. What does that mean?

Students should unbiasedly describe their experience during the rural Service-Learning or rural Social Entrepreneurship project. Furthermore, their reflection should be goal-oriented and they need to analyze the impact that their experience made to their personal growth, civic engagement, and academic enhancement. The last step of the reflection is to summarise what and how did they learn, how important is their new knowledge, etc.

These are reflections of rural partners (AJD) in the project from Portugal "Steps for a Better Society" (a collaboration between IPVC and AJD):

> *I think it is extremely important to talk about the impact that the RURASL project has had on our community, namely this specific activity. The cultural reality and tradition of each place as well as the way we treat them has a very important role in our society. What we can and can not do with all the past testimonies, influences the continuity and how this community can grow. It is extremely important to speak about the impact that this activity had on the AJD that is immersed in the community, which goes far beyond the historical and social reality. That impact passes through the material and immaterial values of AJD. The project has empowered people who were probably unaware of these AJD detailed stories in space and time, helping them to understand a little more about the history of this community and this region.*

Jerusa Lopes (project technician at AJD)

> *The work that was carried out here was very important. It also had a very important impact on our children and young people, since they are the ones who visit our premises here. And above all, having put the children in contact with these students who came to do this activity, was very important, because they made it possible for children to idealize the whole issue of culture and values and their social identity here in this community.*

Angélica Neves (socio-cultural animation technician at AJD)

These are reflections of students in the project from Portugal "Steps for a Better Society":

> *I believe that the benefit of this project, of Service-Learning, was the out of the box experience. We belong to a generation that is used to attend classes in the classroom. Therefore, I think this context was beneficial for everyone.*

Student 1 of the Higher School of Education – Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo

> *One of the important experiences to mention is the class taught as part of the subject "Theories and Practices of Visual and Performative Arts" in which students of the Higher School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo received a visit from one of the members of the Association's governing bodies. In that class, students learned about specific elements of Deão, such as the caroça or croça, cradle, hood, and other elements of the parish, such as palmitos and candles. Service-Learning made students feel closer to their community and understand their own identity, as AJD would say… "Faz-se caminho ao andar" (You make the path as you go).*

Student 2 of the Higher School of Education – Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo

> *I think the most difficult thing was trying to reconcile the whole story on paper. Going from paper to wall was hard but it all went well. At first, it may seem that it is something very hard and complicated, but in the end all that effort was worth it. Go for it, because in the end, it is worth it.*

Student 3 of the Higher School of Education – Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo

> *Enjoy it! If you participate in a Service-Learning project you will have contact with many people, many communities, which in my case were children and I loved it.*

Student 4 of the Higher School of Education – Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo

> *Each group had a theme and had to transfer the assigned theme to the wall. Through drawing, each group was able to draw typical things, such as "caroças", party arches, their traditions, and legends. We had direct contact with the people of Deão. School children came to help us and also contributed to the project with their creativity to paint both the container and the wall. Enjoy the time! The work itself is magnificent! You will love to participate, to paint, to have the most fun!*

Student 5 of the Higher School of Education – Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo

Finally, here we provide two examples of formats of reflexive journals that students might use to document their reflection and learning.

Rural community organizations are usually not required to create or evaluate student reflection activities, but they can facilitate student reflection on their rural Service-Learning or Social Entrepreneurship experiences and their learning if they encourage students to produce their reflexive journals and if they understand the importance of reflection.

The example is provided by RURASL partner Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) from Lithuania.

The reflexive journal

After every visit to the community, students write the date of their visit to the communinity in their journal and describe the content of activities performed (participation in events, conversations, meetings, other social, intellectual and physical activities, etc.) and indicate the duration of activities.

Students are invited to reflect on what they learned, knowledge, skills, and experiences they gained and how it is connected to their studies and academic subject.

This reflective activity represent means to create connections between community engagement activities and classroom learning.

The reflexive journal

The reflexive journal is submitted to the teacher at the end of the semester.

It contains a summative presentation of reflexive entries which are written by students after every visit in the community. The reflexive journal contains sections on analysis of personal, organizational and other problems faced and tackled in the communities, relation of service to university curriculum and study subject, reflection on connections between academic achievement, civic engagement, personal growth, and development, etc.

Students analyse **relation** between 'theory' they have been studying in their course and other academic subjects' through learning materials & resources and 'practice' (practical experience in the community and organization) they discovered during Service-Learning.

Students are encouraged to reveal contradictions between theory and practice they noticed and understood during their service in the community. Students are invited to reflect on whether they have been feeling comfortable in the community and to indicate which experiences were the most valuable.

How to participate in the evaluation process at the end of the course?

Last but not least, rural Service-Learning and rural Social Entrepreneurship activities need to be evaluated. As it is written in the Community Partner Guide to Service-Learning (2016) by the University of Vermont, evaluation of a rural Service-Learning and rural Social Entrepreneurship experience is an essential element ensuring the on-going success of the partnership of students, community partners, and HE institutions. Evaluation can be implemented in many different forms: interviews, surveys, and questionnaires. The evaluation process usually involves the representatives of the HE institution, students, and rural community partners. When evaluating and assessing the partnership it is important to estimate how and if rural needs were met. Additionally, the evaluation process should include both internal and external aspects.

The external aspect of evaluation comprises recommendations or suggestions to the HE institution for future student collaboration with your organization. The internal aspect relates to the evaluation of the relationship between the organization and students and what should be changed in the future regarding the role of the community organization.

The following questions, prepared according to Community Partner Guide to Service-Learning (2016) by the University of Vermont, can be helpful in the evaluation process:

1	How could you improve your role and the effectiveness of rural Service-Learning or rural Social Entrepreneurship partnership?
2	How did students respond to the rural Service-learning or rural Social Entrepreneurship activity? How did your organization respond to this collaboration? Are you both benefiting from the collaboration?
3	How did HE institution feel about the collaboration?
4	What was learned about the relationship your organization has with HE institution and with students? How these relationships could be improved?

Experience in the evaluation process of LAG GALSINMA and the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM)

An online questionnaire that rural supervisors have completed and that was created by the UAM

Supervisors from LAG Galsinma created short videos describing their experience. Students also created videos as a proof of their critical thinking skills.

Additional information for rural community partner organizations

Where to find an academic partner?

Rural community organizations that want to participate in rural Service-Learning or to apply a rural Social Entrepreneurship approach and collaborate with higher education (HE) institutions might look for potential HE partners through **RURASL Matchmaking domain** (link: **http://hub.rural.ffzg.unizg.hr**).

RURASL Matchmaking domain is a place where rural community organizations might find solutions to their rural issues and collaborate with universities across different disciplines. The domain is open for registration for both rural organizations and academic experts, that can join and collaborate, whether offering their expertise to an existing project, browse the repository of best practices or find the expert in their field.

The users are provided with keywords to identify **Field(s) of education of students**, which is useful for community organizations to find the academic partner that could respond to their needs in the most professional way.

The following Erasmus+ ISCED fields of education can be used as matchmaking keywords:

Accounting and taxation	Computer use	Environmental sciences
Architecture and town planning	Crop and livestock production	Fashion, interior, and industrial design
Audio-visual techniques and media production	Database and network design and administration	Finance, banking, and insurance
Biochemistry	Dental studies	Fine arts
Biology	Domestic services	Fisheries
Building and civil engineering	Earth sciences	Food processing
Business administration	Economics	Forestry
Chemical engineering and processes	Education science	Hair and beauty services
Chemistry	Electricity and energy	Handicrafts
Community sanitation	Electronics and automation	History and archaeology
	Environmental protection technology	Horticulture

Hotel, restaurants, and catering

Journalism and reporting

Language acquisition

Law

Library, information, and archival studies

Literature and linguistics

Management and administration

Marketing and advertising

Materials (glass, paper, plastic, and wood)

Mathematics

Mechanics and metal trades

Medical diagnostic and treatment technology

Medicine

Military and defense

Mining and extraction

Motor vehicles, ships, and aircraft

Music and performing arts

Natural environments and wildlife

Nursing and midwifery

Occupational health and safety

Pharmacy

Philosophy and ethics

Physics

Political sciences and civics

Protection of persons and property

Psychology

Religion and theology

Secretarial and office work

Sociology and cultural studies

Software & applications development and analysis

Sports

Statistics

Teacher training with subject specialization

Teacher training without subject specialization

Textiles (clothes, footwear, and leather)

Therapy and rehabilitation

Traditional & complementary medicine & therapy

Training for pre-school teachers

Transport services

Travel, tourism, and leisure

Veterinary

Wholesale and retail sales

Work skills

Furthermore, in the **Matchmaking domain** community organizations can use the following keywords that represent the **Focus area(s) of the rural development** that they would like to work on in rural service-learning. These areas are defined by the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD).

1A: Innovation & cooperation

1B: Links with research & innovation

1C: Lifelong learning & vocational training

2A: Farm's performance, restructuring & modernization

2B: Entry of skilled/younger farmers

3A: Agri-food chain integration & quality

4A: Biodiversity restoration, preservation & enhancement

4B: Water management

4C: Soil erosion & soil management

5A: Water use efficiency

5B: Energy use efficiency

5C: Renewable sources & waste management

5E: Carbon conservation & sequestration

6A: Diversification & job creation

6B: Local development

6C: Information & communication technologies (ICT)

Also, community organizations can make their search for partners more specific and use the following keywords that represent the **Rural development priorities** defined by ENRD.

M01: Knowledge transfer and information actions

M02: Consultancy (Advisory services, farm management, and farm relief services)

M03: Quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

M04: Investments in physical assets

M05: Restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and catastrophic events and introduction of appropriate prevention actions

M06: Farm and business development

M07: Basic services and village renewal in rural areas

M08: Investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests

M09: Setting up of producer groups and organizations

M10: Agri-environment-climate

M11: Organic farming

M12: Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments

M13: Payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints

M14: Animal welfare

M15: Forest-environmental and climatic services and forest conservation

M16: Co-operation

M17: Risk management

M18: Financing of complementary national direct payments

M19: Support for LEADER local development (CLLD – community-led local development)

M20: Technical assistance

Finally, community organizations can choose the following **Domain**(s) that they would like to contribute to through university-community collaboration.

	Mountain area	Organic farming
Elderly	Natural resource	Producer groups
Market development	Nature conservation	Product quality
Migrants	Networking	Protected areas

Public goods	Rural SMEs	Sustainability
Renewable energy	Short supply chains & local markets	Tourism
Renewables		Vocational training & skills acquisition
Risk management	Smart Villages	
Rural business	Social inclusion	Water management
Rural proofing	Social services	Women
Rural services	Soil management	Young farmers
	Stakeholder involvement	Youth

How to offer expertise to the academic partner?

Rural community organizations can join the database of rural entities and universities interested in community-university partnerships, which forms the basis of the virtual Hub. The aim of the database is to collect information on rural community organizations that work on rural development (but lack access to Service-Learning) and universities that aim to connect students, faculty, and the local community, but rarely address rural issues. Joining the database, rural community organizations can list their needs and offer their expertise.

Link to the database: http://theta.ffzg.hr/ruralhub/Survey/LAG

Where to find out more about Service-Learning and rural Service-Learning?

Rural community organizations can take RURASL Massive Open Online Course.

Link: http://193.198.214.48:8080/course/view.php?id=7

Participants in this MOOC, community organizations either based in rural areas (like local action groups) or fulfilling needs of rural areas will learn key characteristics of rural service-learning (SL), differences between urban and rural SL, examples of good practices from diverse study fields, curriculum design options, mentoring of students by rural organizations and student assessment design. They will also learn how to effectively utilize students in community-university partnerships.

The MOOC is based on the need assessment from 8 countries (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Croatia and Lithuania) and training materials developed by academic teachers and community organizations from these countries.

Rural community organizations can find all additional information on the RURASL website: **https://rural.ffzg.unizg.hr/**

The testimonies from students, teachers, rural community organizations, and rural beneficiaries about rural Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship **are available at RURASL YouTube channel:**

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEOwS_yvg6PiOoCb_6NLWhg/featured

Appendix

Appendix No. 1 Service-Learning Agreement Form

Service-Learning Agreement Form

Name of student: _____ _

Student's E-mail Address: _____

Student's Mailing Address: _____

Student's Phone Number: _____

Name of Mentor: _____

Name of Organization: _____

Mentor's E-mail Address: _____

Mentor's Phone Number: _____

Mailing Address: _____ ___

Brief Description of Service-Learning:

_____

_____

_____

The term of this Service-Learning begins on_____ and ends _____.

Student's Agreement:

I agree to fulfil the objectives of my work plan (which will be created until_____).

I agree to meet regularly with my mentor, to perform my duties to the best of my ability, and to fulfill the required number of hours (_____). I agree to make every effort to connect this Service-Learning with the concepts I will learn in class, and to share these reflections with the course facilitators and students, and my Service-Learning mentor. I will ask questions when I need more information and deal with challenges as efficiently as possible by contacting the appropriate support person. I will obey the policies, rules, and regulations of the Organization.

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Mentor's Agreement:

I agree to coordinate this student in an educationally and professionally appropriate manner: I will help him/her to develop a set of goals and objectives and meet regularly with the student to provide clear and consistent feedback on his/her work. I will help the student to understand the organization with the time that I have available, and create opportunities for the student to be involved in organizational functions beyond the specific projects he/she is working on. I will also provide feedback to the course facilitator at least once during the semester and once after the semester. I will maintain contact with the course facilitator should any challenges or concerns arise. I understand that the student is pursuing academic coursework concerning this Service-Learning and will do my best to help the student to make meaningful connections between these two experiences.

Mentor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

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