

Collaboration Checklist for Service Learning

Throughout your service learning experiences, you'll want to work together as a team with your classmates, your professor and with the community partner. This involves both a collaborative mindset and the use of specific team-oriented communication skills.

Directions: Put a + where you have well developed skills now, an X where you have some abilities but could still improve, and a – in areas where you definitely want to improve.

Category 1: Join “with” others.

Take a relationship mindset with all your interactions.

- _____ Use “we” not “I” language.
- _____ Totally avoid “us” versus “them” language!
- _____ Seek common interests, talk about what you share or have in common.
- _____ Acknowledge strengths and areas of expertise of everyone involved.
- _____ Consult others with your ideas, strategies, etc. BEFORE acting.
- _____ When you talk, move closer to one another and/or lean in (to show interest and involvement.)
- _____ Keep in touch with others regularly to give progress updates.
- _____ Work to build positive professional relationships with everybody.

Category 2: Control the process, not the person(s).

Often difficulties can be alleviated or minimized with effective communication that is clear, inclusive, and team-oriented.

- _____ Work to keep everyone working together rather than splintering off into competitive sub-groups.
- _____ Choose meeting settings and timing to accommodate everyone as much as possible.
- _____ Work to keep everyone informed, even if some are unable to attend meetings.
- _____ Determine the “best” channel for communication for every interaction- email, phone, text messaging, face-to-face, etc. (Think especially about whether nonverbal communication – body language, vocal tone, etc. will be needed for clear understanding of messages.)
- _____ Either limit or increase the number of people involved to get the job done.
- _____ Encourage others to talk fully and share details in depth
- _____ Listen actively to what others are saying even if you disagree.
- _____ Check out your assumptions as you go along. Don't assume you know what others are thinking or perceiving.

Category 3: Use constructive, productive communication.

Constructive communication helps build a supportive climate for your work.

- _____ Be unconditionally constructive with all you say!
- _____ Use supportive language rather than defensive language.
- _____ Refuse to sabotage the process of problem solving; stick with it!
- _____ Separate the person/people from the problem
- _____ Choose persuasion to make your point rather than coercion or forcing.

Category 4: Be firm with goals but flexible in how they are

achieved. *Things happen so that your plans may need to change. Persevering with a flexible “can do” attitude will see you through to the completion of the project or experience (and is a most valuable career/life skill!)*

- _____ Talk about your goals for the project or experience and get specific in what you are trying to accomplish.
- _____ Set a list of criteria for your “ideal” end project or experience.
- _____ Check in with everybody to get buy in as you make decisions before you finalize project goals or ideal project/experience criteria.
- _____ Work toward your goals, but be ready to be flexible in getting there when new information or resources come into play.
- _____ Separate content related to the project from any relationship issues
- _____ Focus on interests in the situation, not on positions people hold

Category 5: Assume there is a solution for every challenge.

Possibility thinking can carry you toward new options and creative solutions.

- _____ Invent options that point toward win:win solutions.
- _____ Reframe or change the way you are looking at the situation if necessary to come up with a creative but doable solution.
- _____ Approach issues or concerns one at a time.
- _____ First tackle any issues or concerns that you can easily agree upon, then address those that are more contentious.
- _____ Refuse to be pessimistic.
- _____ Seek help if you or your group get stuck in any way.
- _____ Know that you’re in it together with the rest of the team.
- _____ Celebrate your accomplishments and problem solving!

