

Evergreen Center for Community Based Learning and Action
Tips to Prepare for Community Engagement

**Community Based Learning both meets critical
COMMUNITY NEEDS and promotes *STUDENT LEARNING***

How to approach an organization

Do they have a volunteer/internship application online?

- Career development and academic advising online resources

Generate interview questions and contact the organizations

- Research orgs online – mission, programs
- Gather your questions – imagine your role at this organization...

Reflect on: (Writing Activity)

- 1) What does the organization do in its day-to-day?
- 2) How will you contribute to the organization's work?
- 3) Student learning connection – what skills/experience will you build there?
- 4) What will you leave with the organization to carry on the work?

Remember: BALANCE the work needed for the organization and your personal project interest.

Put organization needs first - your primary reason for volunteering/interning.

Interviewing Organizations:

What needs you can fill within the organization and be honest about your timeline and commitment. If you have a specific project to propose, be sure it would benefit the organization. You may end up getting more out of doing what is needed as opposed to your original plan.

Organizations may ask you to:

- Be ready for an interview.
- Have a RELEVANT resume prepared
- Know how long you can work with them.
- Articulate specific skills that you can contribute.

Results:

- What do you hope to create by the end of the quarter?
- How will you complete or transition your project?

Finding a site:

-Decide what you want to do

Find something that you are passionate about, affects you personally, or you are invested in so that you will stick with the project.

-Investigate organizations

Look for organizations that meet your passion or work on an issue that you care about. Remember about **balance!**

-Study

Research ways people have worked on your issue in the past.

-Connect

Call, e-mail, or follow the organization's process for volunteer or intern applications. Remember to always follow up with people. Even if you no longer have interest in working with them, tell them so! Don't just leave their email or phonecall unreturned.

-Meet and discuss

Meet with organizations prepared with ideas about how you would like to work with them.

Listen to their feedback, there may be new information that informs whether your original idea will work or not.

Ask what they need from you.

Consider supporting their request, local organizations work to meet important community needs. They have spent time assessing needs and building systems to respond. Your contribution will deepen their capacity.

-Structure

Lay out your learning goals and how you will complete them, a timeline, and how you will be accountable to your learning goals. (Internship and ILC paperwork incorporated this in the forms). Seek support from ACADEMIC ADVISING as needed.

-Reflection

Write a paper, do a final project, analyze your process and whether or not you reached your goals. If you did not, how could you have? If you did, what did you do to get there? What did you gain over the entire process? It may be helpful to journal or take notes throughout your Community-Based Learning project.

-Contributions

Make sure you give a copy of your work to the organization and the CCBLA to give the tools to the community and future students to carry on the work.

Working Respectfully with Community Organizations:

(Thanks to CIELO, Kokua and Stonewall Youth for facilitating this discussion with students)

Interns/Volunteers who are learning and are helpful to the organization do the following:

- Are genuine in communications with organization about expectations
- Are communicative and clear about their time commitments
- They take these commitments seriously and are honest about them. They are where they say they will be, when they say they'll be there, and if they are not, they have communicated it as much ahead of time as possible.
- Are self directed and self-starting. They assess what work needs to be done on their own after they get into the swing of things and *ask* what needs to be done.
- Are aware of their appearance to best fill the needs of the organization and respect the people whom that organization is serving.
- Are aware of nonverbal cues, such as eye contact, posture, stance, and general demeanor. They try to keep how they are making those around them feel.
- Considers the socio-economic or cultural messages that are sent by their stuff, especially piercings, brands, tattoos, jewelry and devices like iPads.
- Think about when it is and isn't appropriate to use a device like a cell phone while at the organization.
- Are thoughtful about the history/experiences of people of different socio-cultural backgrounds and situations. They don't judge others simply by comparing their lives to their own; they realize that they likely cannot understand where everyone is coming from, and they are sensitive to this and don't take it for granted.

Things that get in the way of mutually beneficial connections for students and organizations:

- No call/no showing. If you aren't going to be there, let the right person know. Also, let them know as soon as you know.
- Not communicating your needs, or not communicating in general
- Waiting around for someone to tell you to do something.
- Answering texts/calls while working
- Not empathizing with different personality styles/work styles/needs of others.
- Using inappropriate vocabulary for the people you are talking to (so others are not marginalized as a result)
- Taking things personally, getting into debates.
- Not educating yourself about the people and community you are serving, but expecting that community or those people (or the organization) to educate you.