



Youth Leaders in Service Community Innovation Guide



*A framework for planning imaginative projects
to develop a community*

***This guide was created by Bliss W. Browne of Imagine Chicago
for Youth Leaders in Service, a program of Hopa Mountain,
in cooperation with the
Corporation for National and Community Service***

*The purpose of **Youth Leaders in Service** is to engage rural and tribal youth, ages 11-17, living in Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation, in leading service-learning activities that create healthier communities.*

Adult service learning program directors will work with youth leaders to determine a meaningful community service project, coach training and reflection on the process, support the recruitment of adult volunteers, and manage grant funds and documentation.

Youth, with service-learning adult mentors, will design and implement innovative community projects with local community partners that improve their communities and build their civic engagement, academic, leadership and community problem solving skills.

This guide is set up as a sequence of outlines for planning an asset-based and youth-led community service learning project.

- Step 1: Organize a team and learn about team and community strengths and possibilities p.6**
- Step 2: Talk with people in the community about things that might make a difference p.9**
- Step 3: Design an innovative project plan p.12**
- Step 4: ACT: Implement your ideas p.13**
- Step 5: Record, reflect and communicate your learning and progress p.16**
- Step 6: Assess and sustain your progress p.18**

What is Service Learning?

There are many kinds of community service, all of which make an impact.

Service-Learning integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and build community leadership and connections. **Service Learning** projects address important community needs and unmet opportunities through strategic inquiry, committed action and reflection, and lead to visible outcomes. **Service-Learning** is intensive and has a strategic plan of action with the goal of sustainable change.

Principles of Effective Practice for K–12 Service-Learning include:

- a. **Curriculum Integration:** though community-based service-learning projects generally are not part of a school curriculum, supporting learning new and relevant content.
- b. **Reflection:** facilitating continuous reflection before, during, and after the service experiences—using multiple, intellectually challenging methods that encourage critical and creative thinking to address learning objectives.
- c. **Youth Voice:** engaging the vision and leadership of young people as valued contributors to society by integrating their ideas into the selection, design, implementation, and evaluation of service-learning experiences.
- d. **Diversity:** fostering civil discourse and democratic values through the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences and through a respect for all learners.
- e. **Meaningful Service:** applying asset-based inquiry and solution-oriented actions to community needs in real-world environments.
- f. **Process Monitoring:** analyzing student reflections and assessment measures, in combination with project and partner evaluation data, for continuous review and improvement.
- g. **Duration:** ensuring that service and learning experiences are of sufficient intensity and duration so that all phases of planning through project evaluation are included.
- h. **Reciprocal Partnerships:** leveraging community assets and

promoting collaborative communication and interaction among stakeholders.

Keep in Mind:

Take an “ASSET-BASED” approach – building blocks for positive innovations come from recognizing, valuing, building on and connecting the best of what already is

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to community improvement based on research into 3,000 effective community change projects in historically challenged communities. Research showed that these three approaches in combination were the keys to success:

- + **ASSET-BASED**, meaning it seeks to discover, appreciate and connect individual and community talents, skills and resources (rather than focusing on problems and needs)
- + **INTERNALLY-FOCUSED**, meaning it is community-led rather than driven or delivered by external agencies
- + **RELATIONSHIP-DRIVEN**, meaning it builds on the power of associations and informal linkages within the community, and recognizes the value of relationships built over time between people, community associations and external institutions.

Useful tools in taking an ABCD approach include

- + ***Appreciative inquiry*** which identifies and builds on stories of what’s working to imagine and achieve even greater success. This strengthens people's confidence in their own capacities and inspires them to take action
- + ***Participatory and collaborative approaches to project development***, which are based on principles of empowerment and co-design and co-ownership of process and outcomes. In this program, a specific objective is to empower youth leadership.

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

By Bliss Browne, Imagine Chicago

Appreciative inquiry is an approach to organizational and community development that has been used successfully worldwide to cultivate hope, build capacity, unleash collective appreciation and imagination, and bring about positive change. It is based on the simple idea that human beings move in the direction of what we ask about. When groups ask about human problems and conflicts, they often inadvertently magnify the very problems they had hoped to resolve.

Conversely, when groups study exalted human values and achievements, like peak experiences, best practices, and worthy accomplishments, these tend to flourish. AI deliberately asks *positive questions* around affirmative topics to ignite constructive dialogue and inspired action within organizations and communities. Change research shows that community innovation methods that evoke stories, and affirm and compel groups of people to envision positive images of the future grounded in the best of the past, have the greatest potential to produce deep and sustaining change and inspire collective action.

Appreciative Inquiry differs fundamentally from traditional problem-solving approaches. The basic assumption of problem-solving methodologies is that people and organizations are “broken” and need to be fixed. The process usually involves: (1) identifying the key problems; (2) analyzing the root causes; (3) searching for possible solutions; and (4) developing an action plan. Deficit-based analysis tends to undermine human organizing and motivation, because it creates a sense of threat, separation, defensiveness and deference to expert hierarchies. Problem solving as a means of inspiring and sustaining human systems change is therefore limited.

In contrast, the underlying assumption of appreciative inquiry is that people and organizations are full of assets, capabilities, resources, and strengths that can be located, affirmed, leveraged and encouraged. There are a variety of AI models that guide how Appreciative Inquiry is practiced but all of them are based on:

1. Choosing the positive as the focus of inquiry
2. Inquiring into stories of life-giving forces
3. Locating themes that appear in the stories and selecting topics for further inquiry
4. Creating shared images of a preferred future
5. Finding innovative ways to create that future.

Through constructive dialogue, trusted experience is shared, new possibilities imagined and new partnerships created to bring the desired future into being. The classic AI 4-D cycle includes: (1) **discovery** (valuing); (2) **dream** (envisioning); (3) **designing** through dialogue; and (4) **delivery** (co-constructing the future.)

For many more resources and case studies on Appreciative Inquiry, see the AI Commons: appreciativeinquiry.case.edu and Imagine Chicago imaginechicago.org

STEP 1: Gather your team, share stories and learn about each other's strengths and hopes

How will you work together in a way that people want to be there and contribute?

As we work together, we learn new ways of seeing the world. That can challenge and unsettle us. So it's important to create spaces within which differences are honored rather than judged, and where people listen respectfully and honor each other's ways of seeing in a way which builds trust.

Informal conversations that draw out people's successful experiences and projects help uncover motivations, skills, talents and resources and build trust. They remind us of assets to build on and reinforce pride in our strengths. The recognition of what we have to contribute strengthens local knowledge and confidence in our abilities to make a difference.

1. Sample Group Introduction Activity

In small groups, share the following –

- Your name
- A reason you want to make a difference in your community
- One strength you have as a community builder

2. Make a list of all of your team's strengths and motivations for participating

For reflection:

Why does it matter to know what people care about and what strengths they have?

3. As a group, make a list of positive resources in your community. Work with a partner or as a full team to answer this question so you get many different ideas about the assets. List as many assets as you can.

Your Community Now

What things do you like about your neighborhood?

What are some important issues in your neighborhood?

What's one small change you'd like to see that might make a big difference?

What people or organizations are making a positive difference now?

Person/Organization

Impact

What are some areas of community life you'd like to learn more about?

Who are some of the people you'd most like to talk with in deciding on a community project?

What are some ways you might like to get them involved?

4. WORKING AS A TEAM, DRAW

+ A "MAP" OF SOME OF THE THINGS IN YOUR COMMUNITY THAT ARE IMPORTANT RESOURCES. Show ways they are connected.

+ LIST SOME OF THE QUESTIONS YOU'D LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS. for example,

- + *What experiences working across difference have expanded the way you see?*
- + *What powerful experiences and encounters have raised your consciousness about important community issues?*
- + *What is a project our team could complete in six months that could make a big difference?*

ENGAGEMENT TOOL: Brainstorming bursts

Think about having different people host a brainstorming session around a community issue on which someone wants to gather good ideas about how best to act. The host opens the session by stating what they are hoping to accomplish. The group as a whole then generates ideas and afterwards evaluates the most promising ones for moving forward. As appropriate, people can then claim relevant responsibilities.

Brainstorming allows a group of people to develop bold new ideas or concepts. It is generally used as a first step in creative visioning and invites the equal participation of all group members in a freewheeling, energy producing, visioning process without the fear of criticism. Engaging your team in this very important step in the decision-making process translates into a feeling of ownership and responsibility for the success of the project. And it's energizing and fun!

All you need is a flip chart or writing surface large enough to be seen by all participants, a volunteer to record the ideas, and a comfortable setting that encourages creativity.

While conducting a brainstorming activity remember these simple guidelines:

- + The bolder the idea the better. It will encourage compelling and unique ideas.
- + Suspend all criticism or evaluation of any suggestions. Encourage all ideas!
- + Quantity not quality is the key. Evaluation comes later.
- + Encourage improvements and continuation of ideas. Bolder ideas are often inspired by building on someone else's idea, sometimes even in a way which is the opposite of the original suggestion!

Before beginning this exercise share these **DOVE** guidelines with your team:

- D** **D**efer judgment
- O** **O**ffbeat ideas encouraged
- V** **V**ast number of ideas sought
- E** **E**xpand on other people's ideas



Here are some tips to get the most out of your brainstorm :

- + Conduct a brainstorm during the early part of action planning
- + Review the above guidelines with all participants
- + Keep sessions short -- 15 to 30 minutes.
- + Focus the brainstorm(s) on a simple action-oriented question.
- + Encourage ALL members of the group to contribute their ideas and build on each other's ideas
- + Separate the idea generating (brainstorm) process from the evaluation process to generate as many ideas as possible.

After completing the brainstorming portion of the exercise, give the team time to review the suggestions. With the focus person who has invited the brainstorm as the lead, as a group:

- + Cull list for duplication
- + Clarify ideas
- + Order/group ideas
- + Evaluate and review ideas
- + Develop a method of narrowing the list to the best and most feasible idea(s)
- + Report on the results of your brainstorm to other interested teams and specify ways they can become involved in moving the idea/project forward

☺ Congratulate yourselves for a job well done!

STEP 2 Organize a Community Meeting: Talk with people in the community about things that might make a difference

To make sure that your meeting gets different perspectives, make a list of different ways of looking at the people in the community (such as by generations, by culture, etc.) Keep in mind that everyone has skills and resources that they can contribute.

You can use this organizer to plan your meeting.

Whom will we invite?

Name	Address	Phone

(list more names on the back)

How will we contact them?

What will we say to them is the purpose of the meeting?

What time and place might be most convenient to all participants?

What materials will we have available at the meeting?

How can we organize the meeting in away that people will want to come and contribute their strengths and resources to our project development?

STEP 2(CONTINUED)

1. *At the meeting, think of a good way to have some of your community partners share their strengths and the strengths of their organizations.*
2. *Share with them your map of your team's strengths and what you see as important community resources. Add their strengths to it.*
3. *Share with them some of your ideas about changes that would make the community healthier and stronger..*
4. *Ask them to share some of their reflections about your ideas and also their ideas of things that they could work on with you.*

IMAGINE**Our Community/Neighborhood "IF"**

What small changes would make a big difference to a healthier, stronger community? Brainstorm together a list of those changes.

Change

**How would it make our
community a better place?**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

As a team, decide the change(s) you would like to work on...

Choose a change that best meets the following standards:

- Can it build on positive things happening in the neighborhood?
-
- Will it involve different people from the neighborhood and keep them involved?
-
- Do you have a team of 24+ youth personally committed to this project/these projects?
-
- Do you have people willing to lead the different parts of this project?
-
- Does each project result in healthier youth, families and communities?
-
- Will your project(s) be sustained and continue to make a difference in the future?
-
- Can you recruit volunteers to help you with this?
-
- Are there other organizations that also care about this and might be good partners?
-
- (Add other criteria important to you to consider when choosing your project)

STEP 3 Design an innovative project plan for each team's project...

What change do you want to make? Please describe your proposed innovation:

- How does the change build on positive things happening in the neighborhood?
- How will it involve different people in the neighborhood (especially youth) and keep them involved in the future?
- How did your team decide on this project? List why this project is important to each of the team members.
- In what ways will this project make a difference to those involved? to the community?
- How will your project be sustained and continue to make a difference in the future?

STEP 4 Move to Action!

A. ACTION PLAN SUMMARY (Use worksheets on the next few pages to think through the details)

List the steps necessary to carry out the project (be sure to include meetings).
Brainstorming among your team members will help identify necessary steps.

	<u>Action Steps</u> (What needs to be done?)	<u>Team Member Responsible</u> (Who will do it?)	<u>By When?</u>	<u>How Much Will It Cost?</u> (List \$\$ or other resources needed.)
	Example: Send out project flyers	Maria Hernandez	12/1/09	\$10 to print flyers 2 volunteers to distribute them
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10				

B. BUDGET worksheet– What materials do you need? How much will they cost?

Make a list of the materials you need and their costs.. Your materials section of the action plan should help you make this list.

- *Base your costs on research and estimates.*
- *Most of the money should be spent for materials needed to create the project..*
- *Budget some money for materials to tell about your project (film, display boards....).*
- *Your project grant may not go towards salaries, stipends, or money to pay students.*
- *Checks are made out to an organization, serving as your fiscal agent. Refer to the fiscal agent handout for more information.*

Expenses

Material (put explanation here if needed)	Purpose	Cost
Ex: Plants(2 baby crabapple trees @ \$25/piece)	for community garden	\$50
Total:		\$ _____

Each subgrantee organization can apply for up to \$15,000 and must be able to **fully** match 1:1 the grant with cash or in-kind contributions. In-kind match support is defined as the value of a non-cash contribution to the program. Examples would be equipment, supplies, and the value of goods and services directly benefiting the program.

EXPECTED INCOME and MATCHING FUNDS

Identify the sources of expected income below. This will supplement the project grant that your group is eligible to receive. Also list any in-kind donations. Examples include: support from local businesses, a fundraiser selling cookies, or other donations or in-kind support.

Source of Income	Amount
Total:	\$ _____

STEP 4 Move to Action (continued)

Determining responsibilities: *Who will do what to make the project happen?*

Identify the different jobs that apply to the project steps in Part A. List these jobs and then match them with members of the team. For example, who will be responsible for communicating; for setting meetings; for handling the budget?

Job	Team member responsible
Ex: Volunteer recruitment Photography	All team members Joan Smith
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Note: At this point and at other times during the project, you will realize that there are different jobs not on the original list. Just add them to this list and add them to **Part A** of the Action Plan.

STEP 5: Record, reflect and communicate progress

Bi-weekly progress log completed by : (team member name)

Project Title _____ Month _____

Summarize briefly what has happened with your project over the past two weeks. What have been high points and low points?

Activities completed over the past month:

Date	Activity	Ways we have documented
------	----------	-------------------------

What have you learned?

Review the key goals and motivations for the project. How have these changed?

Upcoming month's workplan (project activities to accomplish outcomes):

Date	Activity	How it supports outcomes
------	----------	--------------------------

Note: You may want to rotate the responsibility each meeting of keeping this record of project progress so many team members can contribute to recording the progress

STEP 5 Record, reflect and communicate progress (continued)

1. Identify communication roles for people on your team:

Example: JoAnn N. will speak at events, like the community fair

2. Who might want to know about what you are doing?

3. How will you describe your project to interested parties?

a) What is your project?

b) What do you hope to accomplish?

c) What are some specific examples of how it is making a difference and who is involved?

d) Draft a short summary of your project, which includes the information above.

4. What are some personal stories about your project? Include things people said, how folks reacted, and funny or inspiring stories.

5. Some other things to be ready to talk about:

a) how the project got going

b) what has happened with the project (review your monthly progress reports for help.)

c) your personal motivation in participating

d) how you got others interested in helping or participating

e) what you have learned

f) who has benefitted

STEP 6 Assess and Sustain your Progress

STANDING IN THE FUTURE

Imagine yourself a year from now looking back at what you have created with your team and the difference it has made in your school or neighborhood. As you think about what has happened...

What key results have you accomplished that people see have made a difference?

What have you and others done to keep the vision at the heart of the project alive and engaging? How have you included diverse perspectives and experiences?

Who has gotten involved? How has their active leadership been encouraged?

How has the vision and leadership of young people been integrated into the selection, design, implementation, and evaluation of the project?

- i. **Duration:** ensuring that service and learning experiences are of sufficient intensity and duration so that all phases of planning through project evaluation are included.
- j. **Reciprocal Partnerships:** What are they now able to do as a result of their involvement?

How have you communicated information about your project to your team members and the outside community?

What new *structures* for ongoing involvement now exist (or what old structures have been strengthened) as a result of your project? How have you leveraged community assets and promoted collaborative communication and interaction among partners?

What else have you done to sustain your project's impact?

STEP 6 (continued) Assessing Progress

Here are another organizer that can help you assess the difference you have made and share the impact with others. A Final Report is extremely helpful in communicating your success to others and in leveraging support for future projects.

The story of our project:

How this project has built on positive things happening in the community:

Who got involved and how they got involved:

How this project has made a difference:

What we learned:

Step 6 (continued) : Building On Progress**What will we do to . . .****Maintain the progress?**

Who

Will Do What

When

Communicate about the progress?

Who

Will Do What

When

Create more progress?

Who

Will Do What

When

Youth Leaders in Service Resource Bank

Here are some ideas to help create and sustain progress. Be sure to add your own. In fact, you can use these ideas as part of your meetings so that everyone contributes to this bank.

1. How to involve the community in imaginative projects

- Be sure that the community members have opportunities to help make the plans
- Base the project on priorities of the community

2. How to keep volunteers involved

- Recognize their contributions publicly on a regular basis.
- Listen to their recommendations for improvements in the process.

3. How to communicate your progress

- Be able to give a summary of your project in two minutes.
- Make a display board of important information and labeled pictures.
- Tell anecdotes (personal quotes or funny and inspiring stories) about your project.

4. How to evaluate your progress

- Look at the amount of time voluntarily invested
- Ask people what difference it has made to them to be involved
- Ask community members what they think about the change--and how to keep it

5. How to build on your progress

- Look for low-cost or no-cost projects that would make more progress for the community
- Write proposals to get funding for the low-cost projects
- Work with local resources (park district, schools, police, churches) to create more projects.
