



FALL 2024

# WORK BASED LEARNING GUIDE

SERVICE LEARNING  
PROJECT

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CAREER READY  
ALLEGHENY

# SERVICE LEARNING OVERVIEW

A service learning project is an unpaid activity that combines academic work with service and social action. It focuses on civic responsibility and community involvement where students complete a planned series of activities and apply their individual skills and knowledge to help meet a need in the school or greater community. Service learning activities that are in service to an agency or carried out with employees who share similar community service goals can also be leveraged as career exploration.

Students are supervised by an educator and/or a worksite supervisor. A service learning project may be individual, team, or classroom oriented with anywhere between 1-50 students participating. Students are required to complete 10-60 hours of service. 10 hours meet graduation requirements per Act 158, while 6 weeks or 60 hours meet criteria for work-based learning within the industry-based learning indicator to meet career readiness benchmark within the FutureReady Index.

## SERVICE LEARNING BENEFITS

- Students have the opportunity to contribute positively to their community
- Students have the opportunity to address a need within their community therefore taking a more active role in their community
- Early exposure to potential career pathways
- Students have the opportunity to build social capital by working alongside adults
- Employers have the opportunity for focused involvement in young people's learning
- Employers can introduce young people to various jobs available in their industry



# TYPES OF OPPORTUNITIES

## **Student-initiated or driven**

Students may form a project plan based on personal interests or connections.

*Example:* Religious organizations attended by students may do annual community service projects such as volunteering at a food pantry or food bank where the student can volunteer their time through their religious organization connection.

*Example:* Organize a food drive.

*Example:* Volunteer at an animal shelter.

*Example:* Start a recycling program at their school.

## **Teacher planned**

Teachers may have projects built into their curriculum that meet state standards and can organize their students into groups for service learning projects. Projects could be developed by teachers or in partnership with community-based organizations.

*Example:* Collaboration on a community art project. Can collaborate with other classes' ongoing projects.

*Example:* Starting a school/community garden.

*Example:* Start an awareness campaign (anti-bullying, anti-racism, etc.)

*Example:* Set up a tutoring program.

## **Employer driven**

Many corporations and companies have included corporate volunteering into their work benefits package. Students may have the opportunity to join, especially if they involve their school or community.

*Example:* Create and care for a green space.

*Example:* Organize a clean-up activity.

*Example:* Hold a fundraising event or donation drive.

# SERVICE LEARNING AS CAREER READINESS

Service Learning may be presented as career exploration by encouraging students to look for and invest in opportunities aligned with their interests. Adding multiple elements beyond the required hours such as a short interview with the manager or volunteer coordinator, or having front-facing responsibilities as well as behind the scenes elements allows students to gather a full picture of possible careers within a field of interest and learn about the choices people made leading to particular careers. For example, a project to organize and pack food for a foodbank could be coupled with interviews of agency staff or an examination of the roles in food distribution.



A Service Learning Project also offers opportunities for students to build employability skills by working with others, showing initiative, and collaboratively solving a problem or accomplishing a task. For example, if a student is interested in healthcare, they may become a blood donor ambassador through the Red Cross. This is a service learning project the Red Cross has created with high school students in mind, and in this role, students can learn more about the healthcare industry, interview nurses, as well as observe and understand the logistics of organizing an event such as a blood drive.

# STUDENT SAFETY

## Clearances

According to the Department of Human Services Act 54 of 2018 states that employees who participate in an internship, externship, co-operative, work study or similar program with a school, who have identified as the minor's supervisor and the person responsible for the child's welfare are required to obtain school volunteer background clearances. Employees described above are required to have a Pennsylvania State Police criminal history check and child abuse history certification, which are now provided free of charge for these employees, as they are considered volunteers under §§6344.2(a). If the employee has resided in Pennsylvania for less than 10 years, a federal criminal history check is also required. If the child interacts with other workers at the employee's job site, only the employee is required to have clearances as long as that employee remains in the immediate vicinity of the student and is identified as the responsible adult (PA Department of Education, n.d.).

*Links to all clearances can be found [here](#).*



## Safety Training for Students

Students should receive training about potential workplace hazards and how to protect themselves. The school entity must provide basic safety instruction, and the workplace must supplement this training with location-specific and occupation-specific instruction.

# PLANNING A SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

## In Preparation for a Service Learning Project

- Identify interested and qualified students
- Work with employers, partners, or students to identify service learning opportunities (either educator, student, or employer driven)
- Submit a project proposal for approval to your school leadership. A project proposal must include a project description, learning goal(s), timeline, number of service hours, the project's contribution to the community, and the sponsoring organization. The project must be supervised and assessed by an adult with successful completion verified in writing by the adult supervisor. See attachment A1 for proposal template.
- Work with youth to identify their goals for the project (learning goal, employability skill goal, and community service goal) and complete learning plan (Attachment A2)
- Ensure students and employers or partners understand the expectations for project completion, skill building and verifying hours.
- Ensure all adults who will be working directly with youth have appropriate clearances.

## During the Service Learning Project

- Provide opportunities for reflection throughout the experience
- Maintain communication with community partners
- Utilize a timesheet for youth to track the number of hours they complete and have it signed by supervisor (Attachment A3)

## After the Service Learning Project

- Collect signed learning plan and timesheets and document per your school expectations for evidence collection
- Work with youth to write thank you note or send thank you email to supervisor
- Publicly recognize student work
- Utilize employer and student feedback for any revisions or improvements needed in organizing the service learning project

# DOCUMENTING LEARNING AND COMPLETION

This guide is intended to support the implementation of work-based learning activities within the [Industry-Based Learning Indicator for the Future Ready PA Index](#) and/or the [PA High School Graduation Requirements](#). At minimum, complete the following documents and file them with the appropriate member of the school staff:

## 1. Service Learning Project Application:

Use this to document the project, identify the teacher advisor who will guide the student, and request approval from your school administration.

## 2. Service Learning Plan:

Students should complete this in preparation and during their experience to set learning goals and provide evidence for mastery of Career Education and Work Standards. This also should describe how the project is connected to the student's career plan.

## 3. Timesheet to Document Hours:

For an experience to count towards evidence of completion of a work-based learning activity and meet the criteria for the industry-based learning indicator, the student must complete 60 hours worth of service. To count as evidence towards the Evidence-Based Pathway for graduation, the student must complete at least 10 hours of service.

## 4. Post-Experience Evidence of Student Learning:

Post-experience activities should provide evidence that the student met the goals in their learning plan. Depending on the learning goals and activities, there can be a variety of acceptable pieces of evidence that also align with the strands of Career Education and Work Standards. They may include student evaluations, or reflections.

## References:

[PA Academic Standards for Career Education and Work](#)

[Name a Future Work Based Learning Plan](#)

[PA Department of Education Work-Based Learning Toolkit](#)

[PA Department of Education SAS Resources : Evidence Comparison](#)

Editable templates for all documentation can be found on [www.careerreadyalleggheny.org](http://www.careerreadyalleggheny.org) in the Resources > Educators section.