# SERVICE-LEARNING IN ECONOMICS OF SUSTAINABILITY

## INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE-LEARNING *created by Francisco (Paco) Mesch and used with permission*

This document is a tool to help guide you through the service-learning component of our course. Please read it thoroughly. Service-Learning is not envisioned to be charity work (although helping the community is significant and worthwhile); rather, the community service activities that you will be engaged in focus more on education, social awareness, and strengthening specific skills that will cultivate a sense of ownership for your academic, personal, and professional career goals.

Service-Learning is an important component of Economics of Sustainability because it will give you the opportunity to link course readings, projects, and assignments with what you experience out in the community. As you venture through your service with an agency, you will have the chance to learn and develop your own insights on critical issues.

Reflection is a key element in service-learning because it gives you the opportunity to explore and examine the impact of service and how it ties in with the course objectives. You will be keeping a journal in which you can reflect on your service-learning experience. Through service-Learning and reflection, you can develop important skills to empower yourself and others to proactively impact the good of the community.

Please contact Grace Robbings (your instructor) or Michael Reese or Francisco (Paco) Mesch (from the Center for Career Connections) if you have questions or need help with your service-learning assignment. Have fun and feel good about your service!

## COURSE OUTCOMES

The course outcomes are repeated below. Outcomes from service-learning projects may coincide with the bolded outcomes.

* Present the key concepts and elements of sustainability economics and how it differs from “traditional” economic models
* Present the history and evolution of sustainability, green and ecological economics concepts
* **Explain how industries and markets interact with the environment in term of economic impact**
* **Discuss policy and economic issues in terms of extracting, pricing and consuming resources, as well as disposing of waste**
* **Using case studies, select tools and develop and analyze metrics for ecological, business and social economic risks and benefits**
* **Apply sustainability economic concepts to evaluate various business and public policy strategies**
* **Using sound economic principles, develop a business case for integrating sustainability economics principles and metrics in corporate financial analysis**
* **Develop a proposal with supporting documentation to make a presentation to corporate managers and inform decision-making**

## GETTING STARTED

### Student Responsibilities

Students who participate in Service-Learning should:

* Be familiar with the responsibilities outlined in this document
* Complete the Service-Learning Agreement
* Complete the Student Timesheet
* Complete the Course Assignments (see below for Levels I, II, and III projects)
* Complete the Student Self-Evaluation

### Service-Learning Step-by-Step

The following steps outline what you need to do in order to start and finish your service experience as a part of this course. Please note that each step **must** be completed in order to receive a grade for your experience.

#### STEP 1: Select a Service-Learning Site/Project

Choose a Service-Learning site from the proposed agencies and contact the site representative to set up a meeting. If you are having trouble with this or need help, please contact Grace or Michael. Please note there are varying levels of involvement with the Service-Learning Project. If you need help determining which level a certain project might be, please ask Grace or Michael.

#### STEP 2: Complete and Return the Service-Learning Agreement

The Service-Learning agreement is to let your instructor know you have secured a placement and are in agreement about your position with your agency supervisor. You cannot start to accumulate hours for service until you have returned this to Grace. The Service-Learning Agreement should be handed in no later than the beginning of week 4 of the quarter (April 22nd, 2013).

#### STEP 3: Attend Orientation

Most agencies require Service Learners to participate in an orientation. You must attend all orientations and trainings as required by your chosen site.

#### STEP 4: Serve

Begin your service and follow through with your commitments.

#### STEP 5: Reflect

Spend time reflecting on your service experience each day. Grace will provide you with guidelines and reflective questions, the responses to which will be recorded at the back of your learning portfolio.

#### STEP 6: Service Hours and Course Assignments

Complete the required hours of service and any assignments related to service-learning (journal and/or project). Your timesheet will be used to verify your hours and should be turned in to Grace 1 full week before the end of the quarter.

#### STEP 7: Evaluate

Remind your service-learning supervisor to evaluate your performance 2 weeks before the end of the quarter. You will also need to complete a self-evaluation and return it to Grace no later than 1 full week before the end of the quarter.

## CHOOSING A SERVICE-LEARNING LEVEL APPROPRIATE FOR THE AGENCY/PROJECT

* Level I – 15 hours of service + Service-Learning Reflection Journal
* Level II – 15 hours of service + Service-Learning Reflection Journal + Service-Learning Project Write-Up
* Level III – 30+ hours of service + 3 hours of one-on-one meetings with Grace + Service Learning Reflection Journal + Service-Learning Project Analsysis and Write-Up

### Level I

(15 hours of service + Service-Learning Reflection Journal = **10% of the overall course grade**)

This level of service-learning is geared toward projects that involve **self-learning** (locating oneself in relationship to the concept of sustainability in terms of skills, knowledge, values, and assumptions). You will be working on a sustainability project and reflecting on how that work links to the concepts and theories of the course. There is not a project write-up that is required for this level of service-learning.

In your journal entries, you should reflect on:

* What skills am I developing in my Service-Learning?
* What knowledge have I gained in my Service-Learning (e.g. knowledge about the organization, its issues and service, the clientele, the staff)?
* What links exist between my Service-Learning and the concepts of sustainability economics?
* In my Service-Learning, what are my biggest personal challenges?
* Have my values and perspectives changed in the course of my Service-Learning? How? Why?
* Does Service-Learning change how I view my responsibilities as a citizen or community member?
* How does Service-Learning relate to my sense of civic engagement or civic consciousness?

### Level II

(15 hours of service + Service-Learning Reflection Journal + Service-Learning Project Write-Up = **30% of the overall course grade**)

This level of service-learning is geared toward projects that involve **service-learning** (experiential community-based learning in the context of an academic course). You will be working on a sustainability project and reflecting on how that work links to the concepts and theories of the course. In addition, the service-learning project will result in a project that ties directly to the course outcomes.

In your journal entries, you should respond to the reflective questions above (Level I) as well as:

* What is the purpose of the organization where I plan to do Service-Learning?
* How does this organization relate to the themes and content of my course?
* How do my role and responsibilities as a Service-Learning student relate to my course?
* What knowledge and skills do I bring to this Service-Learning experience?
* What knowledge and skills will I gain through this Service-Learning experience?
* How do I approach my service-learning academically, not just on the basis of "volunteerism"?

In addition, your service-learning experience will lead to a service-learning project (a research paper, a literature review, a presentation, etc.) that directly demonstrates achievement of one of the course learning outcomes.

### Level III

(30+ hours of service + 3 hours of one-on-one meetings with Grace + Service Learning Reflection Journal + Service-Learning Project Analsysis and Write-Up = **30% of the overall course grade + 1 credit of Independent Studies in Economics**)

This level of service-learning is geared toward projects that involve **discipline-based learning** (academic coursework consisting of content (i.e. knowledge, concepts, application of theories) that reflect the expectations of discipline mastery). You will be working on a sustainability project that directly demonstrates mastery of the concepts of the course. You will complete the reflective journal as well as provide an economic analysis and write-up of your service learning project.

In your journal entries, you should respond to the reflective questions above (Level II) as well as:

* What are themes, concepts and relationships in my course that I can explore in my Service-Learning?
* What assumptions or theories guide or frame the course information?
* How do these assumptions or theories shape my attitude and perspective as I engage in Service-Learning?

#### Remember

As a student, it is important to keep in mind your own personal, academic, and career goals. Service-Learning is a teaching and learning method, which enables you to define, support, and explore your world. By extending your learning into the community you can:

* Enhance your understanding of course content.
* Create/expand opportunities for yourself when transferring
* Explore career options
* Empower yourself and others through leadership, social action, and citizenship

Make sure you follow through with the time commitment and schedule you make with an agency. People will be counting on you, and it is important that you take your commitment seriously. Complete your time sheet at each visit to your agency.

## Important Information to Remember When Choosing a Service-Learning Site

Many agencies work with children, students in the public schools, the criminal justice system, and health services. Washington State law requires anyone working with these agencies and the populations they serve to obtain a background check or, depending on the agency, a health-related check.

For those who choose an agency within a health field, you may be asked to have a chest x-ray taken, to answer general questions about your health, or to take a tuberculosis test. The background check may consist of filling out a form and/or having your finger prints taken. This "check" includes a person's police record, which may cover any and all infractions you have incurred.

Background checks are completed for your own safety and there is no reason to be discouraged by this; it is a simple process that is coordinated by the agency to meet State laws. Not all agencies working with the above mentioned groups may require you to complete this process.

Also, not all agencies may note this information right away so remember, be aware and ask questions. If you need assistance with this portion of your service-learning placement, speak with your instructor within the first two weeks of the quarter and/or ask for assistance from the Service-Learning Coordinator.

## SAFE SERVICE

Being aware and practicing safe service is extremely important to your instructor and Bellevue College. If you have any doubts about safety, please consult your site supervisor, instructor, or the Center for Career Connections immediately. Below are some tips that you can use to ensure your safety during your Service-Learning experience.

* Know your site supervisor and his/her contact information
* Inquire about policies, procedures, and etiquette specific to your service site
* When in doubt, always ask for help
* Pitch in where needed and remain flexible and helpful within the limits of your responsibility
* Avoid the responsibility of being in charge of money
* Avoid the responsibility of opening or closing the community agency for the day
* Respect the privacy of all clients (recipients of volunteer service) by maintaining confidentiality
* Do not use obscene language or other forms of communications that may be perceived as inappropriate or harassing
* Do not offer your home as a shelter for clients
* Do not give your phone number or address to clients
* Do not have financial exchanges with clients
* Do not transport clients
* Be kind, courteous, and helpful to all clients and visitors
* Do not report to the service site under the influence of drugs or alcohol
* Dress comfortably, neatly, and appropriately
* Do not wear excessive or expensive jewelry
* Do not leave your personal belongings or your purse in an unsafe location
* Familiarize yourself with the neighborhood and environment of the service site
* Be aware of current events affecting the area where you serve
* Leave the service site number and your schedule with a friend
* Avoid one-on-one situations that isolate you from a supervised area of activity
* Restrict service activities to the pre-approved and designated site
* Avoid planning off-site activities unless this is done in conjunction with the site supervisor
* Report any suspicions of abuse, neglect, or criminal activity to Grace, Michael, and/or Paco