



Intercultural Service Learning for Newcomers to Canada: An Evidence-based Framework



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Table of Contents

Intercultural Service Learning for Newcomers to Canada: An Evidence-based Framework	2
What is Service Learning?.....	4
Why Intercultural Service Learning for Newcomers?	9
Project Background.....	9
Framework for Successful Service Learning with Newcomers	11
Considerations When Making Placements	12
Logistics and Planning	12
Making Successful Placements	14
Learners.....	15
Partner Organizations.....	18
Case Studies.....	20
Conclusion.....	21
References	22
Appendices	24

What is Service Learning?

Service Learning is a “**structured learning experience** that combines **community service** with **preparation** and **reflection**. Students engaged in Service Learning provide community service in response to community-identified concerns and learn about the context in which service is provided, the connection to their service, their coursework, and their roles as citizens” (Seifer, 1998, p. 274).

Within this framework of Service Learning, a great deal of variation and flexibility exists within different programs.



“Service, combined with learning, adds value to each and transforms both”

(Honnet & Poulsen, 1989, p. 1).

Figure 1, Key Players in Service Learning



There are three key players in developing an effective Service Learning (SL) program: Learners, Educational Institutions, and Community Partners / Partner Organizations.

These groups collaborate to ensure a meaningful SL process that incorporates three essential components: education, community service, and critical reflection. By integrating these three components, Service Learning programs can offer a transformative learning journey for all participants.

Transformation and reciprocity are at the heart of Service Learning. Learners transform themselves through their connections with and contributions to the community. Communities are transformed and benefit from the input of learners who offer their skills, time, and perspectives. The benefits of SL are well documented (Government of Alberta, 2024; Eyler, et al., 2001; Desmond et al., 2011) and extend to improved personal, social, and learning outcomes, as well as career development and contributions to research.

SL is a form of experiential education that has similarities with volunteering, Work-Integrated Learning (WIL), Micro-WIL programs, and practicums. A key feature of SL is that it is mutually beneficial to the learner and the community. The participants' transformation through SL or community engagement is illustrated in the following continuum:

Figure 2, Key Components of Meaningful Service Learning

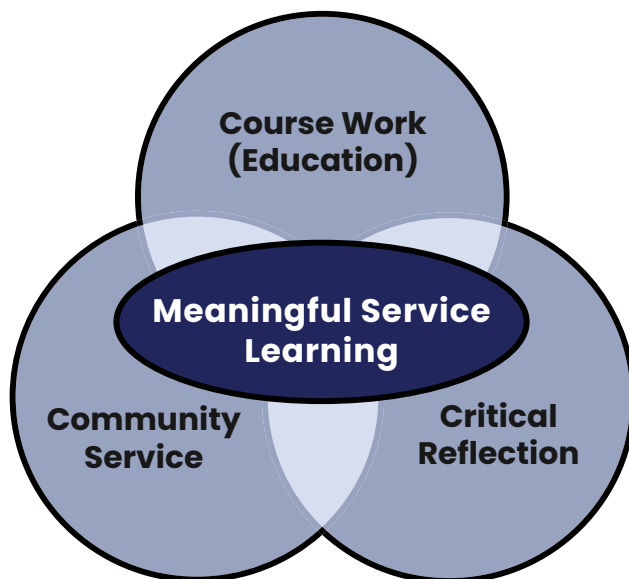


Figure 3, Community Engagement and Transformation Continuum

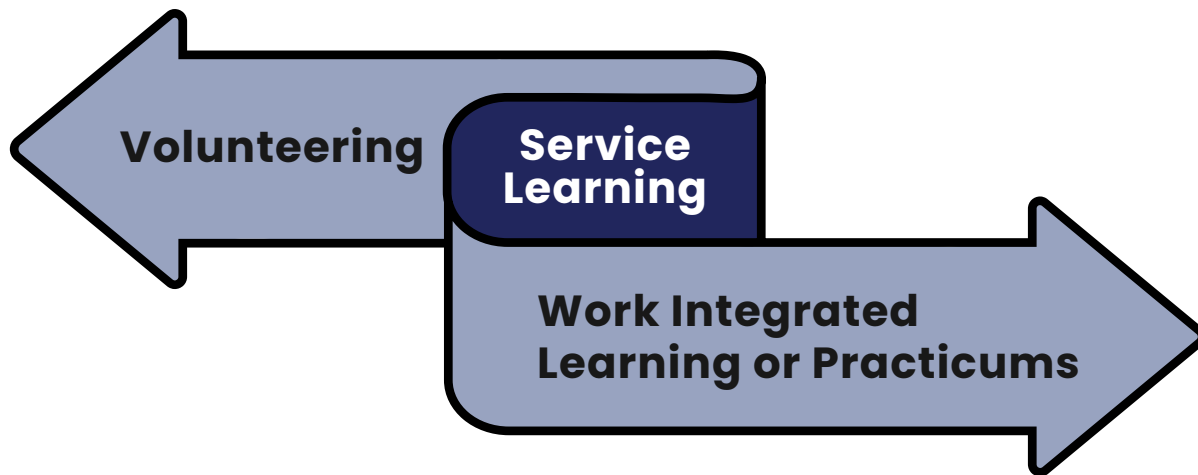


(Adapted from Michigan State University, n.d.)

Although SL has similarities with volunteerism and WIL, there are some key differences:

- **Volunteering** often consists of discreet tasks, few opportunities for collaboration, and power imbalances.
- **Practicums or WIL programs** are often tied to a specific employment sector that learners are preparing to work in; they are often rigid and specific to a particular program.
- **Service Learning** is somewhere in between volunteerism and WIL. It should provide learners with meaningful placements that connect classroom instruction and theory to community practice, emphasize principles of EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion), and be mutually beneficial for learners and organizations.

Figure 4, Service Learning vs. Volunteering and Practicums



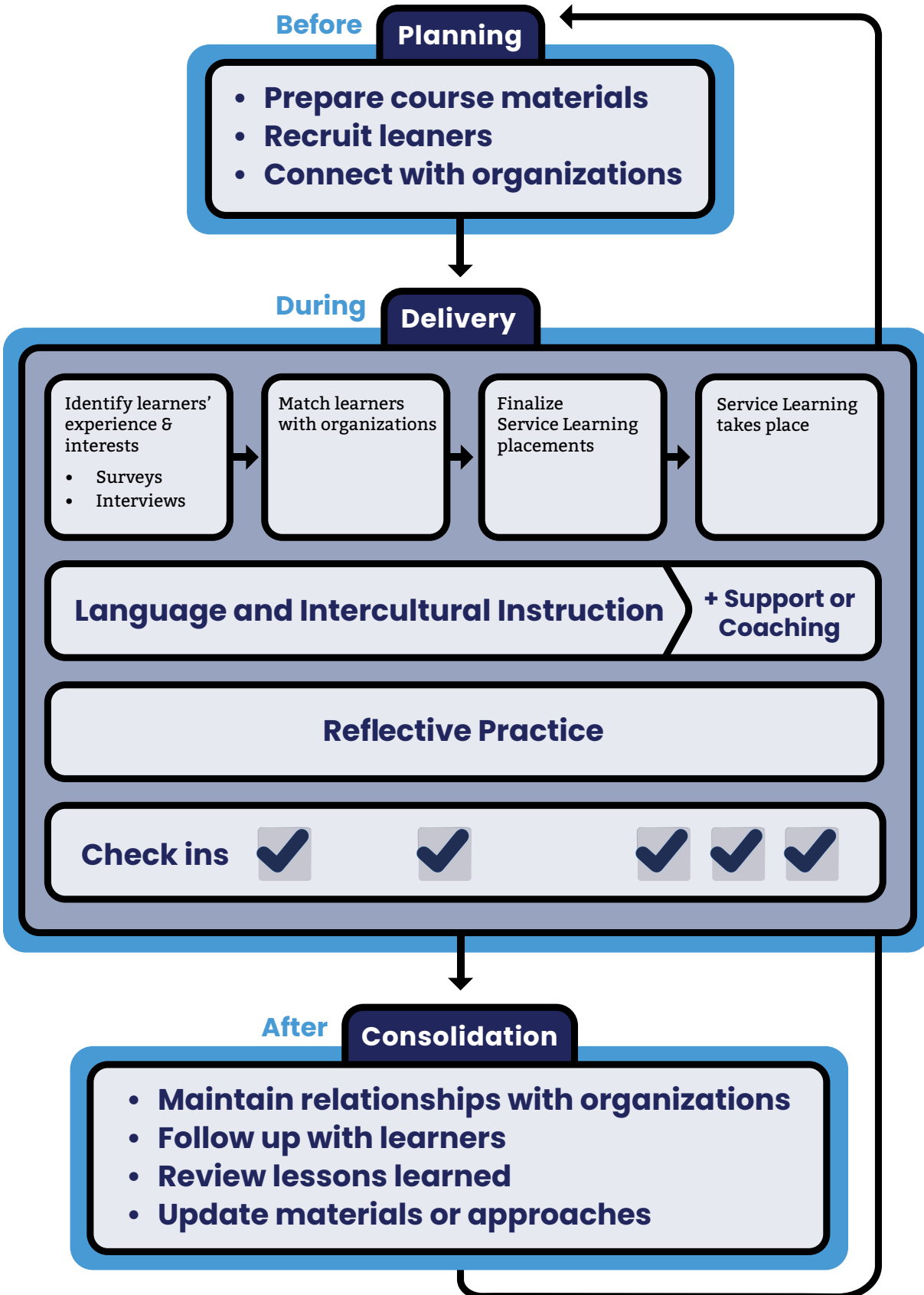
	Volunteering	Service Learning	Practicums
Primary Beneficiary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner • Organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners
Primary Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to organizational needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations receive additional support & expand their reach • Learners receive meaningful work experience & networking opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners learn through practice and real-world experience
Curricular Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully integrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-curricular or supplemental

(Adapted from University of Northern Iowa, n.d.)

A robust SL program should include three phases:

- **Planning:**
 - Designing and preparing course materials
 - Identifying and connecting with community organizations
 - Recruiting learners
- **Delivery:**
 - Identifying learner skills, experience, and goals
 - Matching learners with community organizations
 - Finalizing SL placements
 - SL placements and check-ins
 - Ongoing language and Intercultural Communication (IC) instruction (During their placements, instruction time may decrease, and individual supports, as needed, may increase)
 - Reflective opportunities
- **Consolidation:**
 - Tracking outcomes, challenges, and successes
 - Maintaining relationships with community organizations
 - Recording “lessons learned” for future iterations

Figure 5: Service Learning Phases



Why Intercultural Service Learning for Newcomers?

Although SL opportunities are relatively common in post-secondary contexts, very few of those programs include newcomers or language learners, despite the potential they hold for adult language learners (Riley & Douglas, 2016). When it comes to newcomers, there is a clear gap not only in SL programs, but also in the research about them.

In fact, it is not uncommon for SL opportunities for local post-secondary students to include volunteering with immigrants, and the benefits of such programs are documented; learner participants are provided the opportunity to expand their own awareness of others and take on more pluralistic and culturally aware views (Pasricha, 2008). It stands to reason that the benefits of immigrants providing service is equally valuable and warrants research.

SL programs can offer newcomers meaningful and relevant work experience, community engagement, and language learning opportunities. It has already been demonstrated that newcomers who engage in volunteering reap many benefits (Guo, 2014). Likewise, community organizations benefit from SL projects because participants bring with them skills and can make valuable contributions to organizations, especially when coupled with training and support (Edwards et al., 2001). Despite the clear potential, this approach has been under-utilized and under-explored.

Project Background

Responding to this gap in SL opportunities for newcomer language learners, a structured SL program for professional and skilled immigrants was designed and run in the School of Global Access at Bow Valley College in Calgary, Alberta. Its goal was to provide opportunities for newcomers to make community connections and gain experience in Canadian workplaces, all while improving language and intercultural communication. Our program was premised on the following aspects:

Community Connection: It is often difficult for newcomers to access settlement information and make community connections (Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies [AAISA], 2021) due to language and communication skills, socioeconomic status, or limited local knowledge or connections. AAISA's recommendations include improving settlement access through increased outreach and engagement, collaboration, and joint initiatives. Therefore, our project brought newcomers together with the broader community.

Workplace Experience: AAISA (2021) underscores the importance of market integration through internships, practicums, and job placements for immigrants, coupled with training for both newcomers and employers, mentorship, and one-on-one coaching. SL is structured to connect newcomers to meaningful placements in a variety of workplaces.

Language Skills Development: Newcomers with limited language proficiency and who worked in occupations that require a high-level cognitive skill in their country of origin are more likely to resort to working manual jobs that are not commensurate with their experience than their more proficient counterparts (Imai et al., 2019). This points to the need for English language development as a key component of labour market integration for newcomers. SL included targeted language instruction to help newcomers in their placements and in the workforce.

Intercultural Communication Skills: Research (Deeb & Bauder, 2015) has shown that learning and employing intercultural communication skills helped some professionally skilled newcomers realize their economic potential and move into better paid and managerial positions. Aside from positive economic outcomes, intercultural learning is personally transformative (Lange, 2015). For this reason, IC skills were a key part of this SL program.

Two cohorts, with a total of 23 newcomer language learners (CLB 5-8) and 14 community organization representatives at eight organizations, took part in Service Learning placements during this project. Learners had meaningful opportunities to contribute to community organizations, learn new skills, make connections, and gain workplace experience, thereby potentially improving settlement and employment outcomes.

During this project, a co-design (McKercher, 2020) team of 12 learners and 7 community organization participants was formed. For more information about co-design or co-creation (i.e. these two terms are used interchangeably here), please refer to the Appendix. Developmental evaluation also took place throughout the project to better understand the needs, expectations, and experiences of all players to create an evidence-based framework for SL with newcomers. The information in this document comes from findings from learner reflections and eight focus groups with learners, organization participants, and instructors. The findings were contextualized and validated by a developmental evaluation process and with the support of the co-design team. Although we do not believe it is an SL program requirement, co-design does provide a useful opportunity to get up-to-date feedback from participants to make the program more responsive to learner and organization needs.

Framework for Successful Service Learning with Newcomers

This project’s goal was to develop and pilot a model for SL with newcomers, and one of its outputs is this evidence-based framework that organizations and institutions can use to develop SL opportunities for newcomers and organizations. We recommend that any SL program for newcomer language learners include the following:

Figure 6, Framework for Service Learning Programs for Newcomers



Language instruction: Language should be field-specific and appropriate for work in community organizations. Content-based and thematic instruction should include a range of activities that are relevant to different fields. Instruction should also be responsive, and SL experiences can be used for in-class language learning.

Intercultural communication and/or EDI programming: This component helps prepare students for work in community organizations and fosters civic engagement. Topics might include Indigenous awareness, identity, power and privilege, bias, 2SLGBTQIA+ awareness, mental health and stress management, conflict resolution, and advocacy.

Meaningful SL placements: SL opportunities should be meaningful and connected to learners' experience, skills, and interests. Learners should have an opportunity to contribute their talents and time to benefit other members of the community. However, SL might look different for different learners. Some with less language proficiency or professional experience might prefer placements that are more like volunteering; others may be better suited for highly specific project work.

SL Coaching or support: This cannot be overlooked. It takes time and energy to make appropriate and mutually beneficial placements. It is recommended that there be a central contact person who is not the instructor. This person should check in with learners and organizations on a regular basis and provide support as needed to ensure needs are being met by all parties.

Considerations When Making Placements

This section outlines some of the main considerations to keep in mind when designing and running a SL program for newcomer language learners. While there are many ways to do this, with varying levels of engagement with community organizations, this section reviews key concerns, offers recommendations, and discusses ideas. Woven throughout are quotes from participants.

Logistics and Planning

Prior to starting an SL program for newcomer language learners, it is important to allot sufficient time for preparation. Consider who your learners will be and how you will find them. Take the time to ensure language and classroom materials are connected to and will support learners to succeed at their SL placements. Allot resources to reach out to potential community organizations, share information about the project, and gauge their level of interest.

Our project ran over a 15-week semester, with the first 8 weeks dedicated to classroom instruction and matching learners with community organizations. This timeline was still very tight, as there were a lot of logistics to consider. During these eight weeks, learners and community partners were socialized to the idea of SL and prepared for success. Learners also took part in a couple of discreet volunteer opportunities as a class or in small groups (e.g., serving lunch at a drop in shelter, collecting donations for a community thrift store) and performing small acts of kindness as a class for members of the public.



Idea: If you do not have established relationships with community organizations, consider learner placements in-house. Within your own organization, you might find more freedom and uptake. In this case, you are only limited by your imagination; for example, learners might help instructors, support the IT help desk, assist with admin tasks, create a social media campaign, etc.

The importance of relationships cannot be overstated. It is crucial to make personal connections with someone at the organizations where learners will complete their placements. This might mean dropping in or picking up the phone to connect with people. Relationships take time and patience, but they pay off in the long run.

Communication & Expectations: Ensure that you have a brief and accessible information packet for the community organizations [see Appendix for an example], but most importantly, make sure they know who to contact with questions. There should be one central contact person to avoid miscommunication. For example, you may initially reach out to one person at an organization and then be passed on to someone else who may not have all the details.

When connecting with an organization, find out their requirements. Will they want to see learner resumes? Will they want to interview and select learners? Are there other requirements to this placement such a police clearance or background check? Make sure you are aware of this so that you can decide what is feasible.

It is recommended that the contact person arrange a short meeting for those working directly with learners to review everyone's commitments, answer questions, and set expectations. For example, if they are not accustomed to working with language learners, they might have unrealistic expectations. When learners are first connecting with the organizations, it is important to support them as well. Their instructor or the SL placement coordinator should accompany them on their first day or at least set up and attend a short online meet-and-greet between them and the learner.

Paperwork: To protect all parties, it is recommended that you have an agreement that everyone reviews and signs. Your institution or the organization might have related policies or templates. This agreement may include details about time commitments, types of service, a code of conduct, responsibilities, liability insurance (ensuring that learners are covered for personal injury, death, and property damage), dispute resolution, information privacy and publicity, etc. Your organization or theirs might also require police clearances or background checks depending on the type of work the service learner will complete. Police clearances usually have a small fee and a wait time, so ensure you have considered this prior to the placement.

Making Successful Placements

Service Learning is only as successful as the placements. As such, it is important to find out what learners' experience, skills, and interests are as soon as possible. We surveyed them on their first day and interviewed them in their first week of class to get an idea of what would make an appropriate placement. It is even better if you can do this during the recruitment and registration process, as this information is needed to find placements.

It is recommended that there be a variety of placement opportunities. Some learners might do better with more discreet volunteering activities, while others might thrive with open ended independent tasks. Some organizations might have little room for creativity while others might be very flexible. Take this into consideration when matching learners with organizations. More details about this are in the next sections.



Idea: Start small. The first time you run a course like this, keep the class small (e.g., under eight learners). This makes making placements and building relationships more manageable while you are scaling your program up.

When reaching out to organizations, it is important to have answers to their most common questions, and it is also important to express the benefits of the program. We suggest asking community organizations a question like, **“What is a project that you have been meaning to do but have not had the time or opportunity to do?”** to get them thinking about how they could benefit from Service Learning and see this opportunity to do something that they've been hoping to do.

Learners



“My Service Learning placement provided me with a great opportunity to support women in need and engage with a community. It was a rewarding experience as it made me feel part of a community, allowing me to positively impact the lives of others and grow as a person.”

(SL Participant).

Consider the characteristics of individual learners when making placements. Some learners will be better equipped for project work at an organization while others would do better in something more akin to volunteering. The following qualities should be kept in mind.

Language proficiency: Learners need to have a sufficient level of language proficiency. We recommend that they have at least a CLB (Canadian Language Benchmark) 5, but as their proficiency increases so will their SL options. Learners who are very proficient are less likely to be in language programming.

Length of time in Canada: Those with more time in Canada will typically have a better understanding of the culture and workplace expectations. Learners who are very new to the country might not be sufficiently prepared for SL. Those who have been in Canada for many years may not benefit as much from SL because they may have already established connections in the. Those in our co-design team agreed that SL is ideal for those who have been in the country for 1-4 years.

Professional, educational, or lived experience: Learners with more education and professional experience will typically have more skills to offer to an organization. Likewise, a parent who has run a household might be more resourceful. It makes sense to align placements with learner skills. For example, a learner with a background in finance could help with accounting, a learner with research experience could help with collating or analyzing data, a learner with marketing experience could assist with social media messaging, a learner with an art background could paint a mural, etc.

Personal initiative: Learners who can take initiative and work independently adapt more readily to SL. Because community organizations often find themselves under-resourced, they might not be able to provide high levels of mentorship or support. In this case, learners ought to be able to take initiative and work independently to thrive.

Intercultural awareness: Most SL learners are newcomers from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds. Having intercultural awareness can help learners integrate better into the organization, participate more actively, and potentially build deeper connections with the organization and the community it serves. In our program, intercultural education was embedded throughout the course and taught directly and indirectly.

Social support network: SL placements are a commitment, and a learner's performance there can impact their own reputation as well as that of the school. Learners without a well-developed support network and many other demands might not be a great fit for SL, and they might be better placed in a more traditional volunteering role. For example, a learner who is a single parent with limited access to childcare and transportation should not be placed at an organization that requires travel or work on evenings or weekends.



“As a newcomer, I didn’t think I could help people in a country that I immigrated to. It was a unique experience. I didn’t use to volunteer in my own country, but helping people in Canada, I was able to learn a lot. About Canadian culture, especially people who are underprivileged. It was eye opening. At home, I never connected with people who needed support from the government or organizations. It was good to be a part of it.”

(Service Learner).

Figure 7: Service Learning Learner Spectrum



Note: This figure describes the likelihood of success with Service Learning for different learners. Green represents learner qualities that are likely to lead to meaningful SL placements, yellow represents the possibility of meaningful placements knowing that extra support may be required or that volunteering might be more appropriate, and red represents qualities that are unlikely to lead to productive placements. In those cases, discreet volunteering activities or class-based project work would be preferable.

Partner Organizations

As with learners, it's necessary to consider the characteristics of community organizations to make mutually beneficial placements. Some organizations might have the flexibility to offer project-based opportunities for learners, while other organizations might only be structured to accommodate placements that are more like volunteering opportunities.

Flexibility and openness: Organizations are structured differently, and this often depends on management and individual employees. In general, grassroots organizations may be more open to project-based placements that respond to their immediate needs and those of the learner. We also found that working with individuals in-house also allowed for more flexibility – for example, one learner with an engineering background worked with our institution's sustainability coordinator to identify and assess college sustainability initiatives; another learner with a research background worked with our applied research team to create support and training materials to support new research assistants with understanding Research Ethics and applications.

Organizational capacity: Organizations will have varying degrees of capacity to bring in service learners. It is not uncommon that non-profit organizations are under-resourced, and SL should not create additional strains for the organization and their staff. It is important to find organizations that can support and benefit from the learners. It will not be a good experience if learners show up and do not have a workspace or any guidance.

Employee commitment to mentorship: This is also related to capacity. The best SL placements include someone from the community organization who can provide guidance and mentorship. This need not be onerous, but learners benefit greatly with support from someone who is engaged.

Experience with language learners: Organizations that work with newcomers, or where employees are newcomers, are likely more able to understand the challenges of language learning and settlement. It is important that their expectations be aligned with what is feasible given student language levels and that they be patient and understanding while communicating with service learners.

Inclusivity: We strongly recommend working with organizations that are committed to EDI and see SL as an opportunity to include and benefit from other perspectives. It is very important that learners feel welcome and respected in their SL placement.

Accessibility: Because learners may rely on public transportation, it is recommended that locations be accessible by public transit and safe.



“I loved the focus on meaningful service (meaningful to both the student and the organization). I think this program is a good fit for organizations that are flexible and willing to work with the individual needs of the student. It would be a good fit for many organizations, but not all organizations.”

(Community organization participant).

Figure 8: Service Learning for Newcomers: Organization Spectrum



Note: This figure describes the likelihood of success with Service Learning for different organizations. Green represents organizational qualities that are likely to lead to meaningful SL placements, yellow represents the possibility of meaningful placements knowing that extra support may be required or that opportunities will be more limited, and red represents qualities that are unlikely to lead to productive placements. In those cases, such an organization would not be a good fit for SL with newcomers.

Case Studies

The following are some success stories from SL. We hope they can give you some ideas about how to implement SL with newcomer language learners.

Small Acts of Kindness Activity: This activity was done prior to learners starting their SL placements. They had already completed a few weeks of instruction and had developed a good understanding of community engagement and a sense of trust among their classmates and instructors. First, learners created and printed words of affirmation with the help of their instructor. These affirmations were uplifting messages of hope (e.g. “Thank you for being you”). They also collected some small tokens such as gift cards, swag, and flowers, donated by learners, instructors, and the school. The learners, with their instructor first walked around the school and approached members of the public, asking them, “What does kindness mean to you?” and similar questions. They initiated short conversations about how to encourage kindness and left people with printed words of affirmation and/or a small gift. Once they were comfortable doing this on site, the class went into public and did the same on the street, approaching people from all walks of life. It was a great way to spread kindness, engage with the community in and around the school, practice English, and brighten people’s days. The learners were well-received, and this activity was powerful and meaningful for many of them. Many continued to hand out cards on their way home later that day and placed some of the messages at bus stops and on car windshields. It was a great way to show how community service does not have to be complicated or mediated by an organization.

Kristina¹: Applying Research Skills: One learner in the second cohort had a strong research background and advanced education from her country of origin. She ended up placed in a community organization that served food, which she enjoyed. However, this placement was not connected to her skills and experience. In wanting to provide her with something more meaningful, the SL placement coordinator reached out to our Applied Research department and asked the team lead, “What is a project that you have been meaning to do but haven’t had the time for?” The team lead saw this as an opportunity to develop training materials for research assistants, who often do not come with a lot of experience in the field and require additional support in understanding research ethics and the Research Ethics Board. The team lead and Kristina met weekly, but most of Kristina’s work was done independently on her own time. The team lead reviewed her work, provided her with feedback, and set up a meeting with the chair of the Research Ethics Board. At the end of the SL placement, Kristina finalized her project. She found the experience rewarding because she learned about the research context in Canada and research ethics for working with human participants. The Applied Research team benefited from the training materials that would support new Research Assistants during their onboarding.

¹ All learner names are pseudonyms.

Junmin: Transformative Service Learning: One learner from the first cohort had some experience working with children and had previously taken a course to work as an Educational Assistant. However, she had yet to find work in the field, as she was still developing language proficiency. For her placement, she worked with an English language instructor of low proficiency learners. Before starting her placement, she expressed these concerns in a reflection:

“I believe the most challenging part is my English is not perfect, and I am worried when the students ask me some questions which I don’t know or I can’t solve, I probably need to ask the teachers to help. I feel like I [will] bring more problems to the teachers.”

She was nervous about starting her placement and offering value to the instructor, despite her training. However, she faced her fears and took part in the SL placement. After she completed her placement, she reflected on the experience, saying:

“One thing I didn’t expect is I felt the students really appreciated we were there to help...When I was in the classroom to assist [Name] and other teachers, it made me think about going to my kids’ school to volunteer.”

Not only did she gain confidence in the classroom and experience to put on her resume, but she also saw other opportunities to engage with her own community by volunteering to do this at her children’s school. This is a great example of how SL can be confidence-building, empowering, and transformative.

Conclusion

This document has outlined a framework for Service Learning with newcomer language learners. Although a project like this is not without its challenges, its benefits far outweigh them. There are a variety of ways to integrate SL into existing language programs or to create a language course that focuses on SL. When done thoughtfully and with appropriate resources, SL has the potential to improve language skills, increase confidence, support newcomers’ settlement journeys, expose them to Canadian workplace culture, gain Canadian experience, and contribute to Canadian society. Likewise, organizations benefit from learners’ contributions and perspectives, educational, professional, and lived experiences, while expanding their reach among newcomer communities.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Organization Orientation Package



School of Global Access

Service Learning Orientation for Community Partners

What is Service Learning?

Service Learning is a structured learning experience that combines **community service** with **preparation and reflection**. At its core, Service Learning is **service**, combined with **learning**; it adds value to each and transforms both.



There are three **key players** in Service Learning: Learners, Educational Institutions and Community Partners or Partner Organizations.

Service Learning has similarities with both **volunteering** and **practicums/work integrated learning**, but there are differences:




	Volunteering	Service Learning	Practicums
Primary Beneficiary	Organizations	Learners & Organizations	Learners
Primary Focus	Responds to organizational needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations receive additional support & expand their reach Learners receive meaningful work experience & networking opportunities 	Learners learn through practice and real-world experience
Curricular Integration	None	Fully integrated	Co-curricular or Supplemental



Intercultural Service Learning Program Highlights:

Service Learning Placements

- Unpaid
- Short-term (50-60 hours over 6 weeks)

Learners

- Skilled and professional newcomers
- Take part in language and intercultural training prior to and during placements

Service Learning Organizations

- Receive support from the Service Learning Placement Coordinator

Service Learning Phases



How do organizations benefit?

Community and Settlement Organizations benefit from:

- Receiving additional help at no cost,
- Increased awareness of their programs and services,
- An opportunity to participate in a co-design group to:
 - share experiences,
 - discuss recommendations
 - connect with other organizations
- Enhanced workplace equity, diversity, and inclusion by helping participants gain Canadian workplace experience.

What will participants bring to your organization?

The participants, mostly professional and skilled immigrant newcomers, will bring to you:

- 50-60 hours of unpaid service,
- Professional skills,
- New perspectives to problem-solving, and
- A passion to support equity, diversity, and inclusion.

What could participants help with?

Service Learning should meet your organization's needs. Some examples of service learning include:

- Project support
- Program and administrative support
- Event support
- Technology support
- Data handling and analysis
- Survey coordination

Should you have any questions, please **direct all communication** to the placement coordinator, who can answer your questions.

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To read more information on the project, please visit:
bvc.me/3V4cBJz



Appendix 2: Student Information and Needs Assessment



Intercultural Service-Learning Personal Information & Needs Assessment

The date is: _____

Personal Information

Name: _____

What are you usually called? _____

Email address: _____

What country are you from?

What is your first language?

What other languages do you speak?

How long have you been in Canada?

Describe your previous English education.

Are you working right now? If so, what is your job?



5. What are your professional areas of interest? Please list and describe them below:

6. What kinds of English language skills do you feel you need most for your job or career interests? For example, writing emails, business communication, giving work presentations, etc.

7. Is there any specific language lessons or topics you would like me to include in the course?

8. What are some important skills you have from your previous work or life experience?



9. What are your goals over the next five years? What would you like to achieve over the next five years?

10. Have you ever done any volunteer work? If so, please describe your volunteer experience below?

11. Are there any organizations in Calgary you would like to be a part of or contribute to? Example: Calgary Public Library

12. What are some social/ community initiatives you are passionate about? Please describe below.



List your previous jobs.

What is your highest level of education?

Which of your English language skills do you think is your strongest? Please circle one:

Listening Speaking Reading Writing

Which of your English language skills do you think needs the most work? Please circle one:

Listening Speaking Reading Writing

General Questions:

1. What is your favourite thing to do in class to learn English?
2. What is your least favourite thing to do in class to learn English?
3. Why did you choose this course?
4. What are your expectations in this service-learning course? What do you hope to achieve by the end of this class?



13. Describe, in as much detail as possible, yourself and your life.
Note: You do not need to share anything you would not like to share.



Appendix 3: Sample In-class Reflection Prompts for Students

Pre-placement

- Where will you be doing your service-learning placement?
- How do you think you will be able to use your skills to benefit this organization?
- What do you think you will learn during this service-learning placement?
- What kind of challenges do you think you might experience?
- How will you handle those challenges?

Post-placement

- How did your Service Learning placement go?
- Was it as expected?
- What skills were you able to develop and what did you learn in your placement?
- What challenges did you face, and how did you deal with them?

Appendix 4: Description of Co-Design

Co-design (also called co-creation) was key in developing our Service Learning program and framework. Some learners and partner organization employees were invited to take part in a co-design group to share experiences, interpret findings, and provide feedback and recommendations. While this component of our Service Learning pilot was very informative, it is likely not feasible for an ongoing project. However, should the resources be available, it could be useful for the first iteration of a project.

What is co-design?

Co-design is a research method that includes research participants in the research process, inviting them to analyze findings and contribute to the creation of outputs. It is *“an emancipatory process that seeks to include the voices and experiences of research participants in the problem identification and resolution finding process”* (Fanjoy & Bragg, 2019, p. 6).

Why co-design?

The decision to use co-design arose from the recognition that involving key players directly in the process yields multiple benefits. Co-design *“is designing with, not for, people”* (McKercher, 2020, p. 14). It is about working with the people closest to the solutions, sharing power, prioritizing relationships, being honest, being welcoming, using creative tools, balancing idealism and realism, building and sharing skills (McKercher, 2020). Co-design throughout the program development ensured that diverse voices and perspectives were heard and valued, making the program more responsive to the needs of learners and organizations.

How was the co-design group formed?

Forming the co-design group involved selecting participants from both the learner and community organization groups. To recruit learner participants, an information sheet (see sample attached below) was distributed to invite interested learners to sign up. Instructors also recommended learners who had shown dedication, passion, and insightfulness in class. We also aimed for diversity within the group by including learner participants from different cohorts and backgrounds.

In addition to having learner participants, it was essential to include representatives from community organizations to bring in their perspectives and insights. This diversity of participants enriched the co-creation process, allowing for effective and productive discussions.

The co-design team typically consisted of 6-12 participants, with both learner and organization participants. There was a smaller group in the first cohort, and more learners then joined from the second. Participants were offered an honorarium for their participation to recognize the value of their contributions.

How are co-design sessions run?

Running co-design sessions requires planning and scheduling. The sessions were held at regular intervals, usually once every 3-4 weeks. By establishing a predictable schedule, participants could plan accordingly and prioritize active involvement in the co-design process.

The facilitators guided discussions, encouraged active participation, and ensured that all voices were heard and respected. Our co-design facilitator was a research officer. We recommend this role be filled by other instructors or employees, rather than the class instructor, to ensure that all participants feel comfortable expressing their ideas and perspectives. A research assistant provided support with notetaking and logistics, such as collecting confidentiality agreements, ordering refreshments, and taking attendance.

Before each session, we sent participants discussion questions, or materials for reading or review, when needed.

After each session, we shared the discussion results and notes with the group, allowing participants to reflect on the collective insights and ideas co-created during the session. If discussions were not completed within the session, more input and feedback could be shared afterwards via email or chat.

References:

Fanjoy, M., & Bragg, B. (2019). Embracing complexity: Co-creation with retired immigrant women. *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, 12(1), ID-6342. <https://doi.org/10.5130/ijcre.v12i1.6342>

McKercher, K. A. (2020). *Beyond sticky notes: Co-design for real: Mindsets, methods & movements*. Beyond Sticky Notes.

Appendix 5: Sample Information Sheet for recruiting co-design/co-creation learner participants



Fostering Community and Developing Networks: Intercultural Service Learning

What is this project?

Thank you for taking part in the Intercultural Service Learning course. This [project](#) provides opportunities for you to make community connections and gain experience in Canadian workplaces, while improving language and intercultural communication skills. In addition to classes and service learning, we are also conducting research. We want to understand your experiences in this program, so we are inviting you to take part in co-creation.

What is co-creation?

We are forming a co-creation group to review information about service learning, share experiences, and assist with interpreting findings. The goal is to develop and pilot a model for service learning with newcomers, and make sure newcomers' voices are heard.

Can I get involved?

To take part in co-creation....

- You should be able to commit to one two-hour meeting every 3-4 weeks.
- You must be a newcomer to Canada.

What happens if I take part in co-creation?

You will gain Canadian experience and learn more about social innovation and research. As a thank you for your participation, you'll receive a \$50 honorarium for each two-hour co-creation session you attend, to a maximum of 15 sessions.

Where does it take place?

Co-creation meetings will take place at Bow Valley College.

Contact

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