

Service Learning

Commitment

Role	Commitment
Student	Moderate to substantial commitment; ongoing participation and reflection activities
Educator	Moderate to substantial commitment for planning, coordination, and facilitation
Employer	Flexible involvement depending on project scope

Arrangement Information

What

Service learning is a career preparation experience in which students participate in organized community service activities connected to academic content, technical skills, and career-ready learning goals. Unlike volunteerism alone, service learning intentionally integrates instruction, meaningful service, and structured reflection activities that help students connect their experiences to classroom learning, career interests, programs of study, and community impact.

Students help design and carry out projects in collaboration with external organizations, community groups, nonprofits, schools, government agencies such as the [Serve New Mexico Commission](#), healthcare providers, businesses, or other partners aligned with their career interests and/or programs of study. Students complete work aligned with identified learning objectives while demonstrating mastery of academic content standards, technical skills, and career-ready practices.

Service learning projects may address local community needs while helping students develop skills. Examples may include environmental projects, public health campaigns, community improvement initiatives, technology support, youth mentoring, or projects connected to specific Career Technical Education (CTE) programs of study. For example, health science students may organize a community wellness event, while engineering students may design and build a prototype solution to a school or community problem.

Structured reflection is an essential component of service learning and may include journaling, presentations, discussions, interviews, or portfolio development. Reflection activities help students connect their experiences to classroom learning while examining both the impact of their service and the skills they developed and applied throughout the experience.

Educators and external partners will also assess student learning and skill development throughout the experience, using established learning objectives aligned with academic content standards, technical skills, and career-ready practices.

When

Service learning can occur across grade levels from elementary through postsecondary education and is often embedded within academic coursework, CTE programs of study, leadership programs, or community-based initiatives. These experiences may take place during the school day, after school, on weekends, or through longer term projects connected to community partners.

Time Commitment

The time commitment for service learning varies with the scope and duration of the project. Students participate in the service activity itself, structured reflection, and classroom instruction connected to the experience. Projects may range from short-term activities to sustained engagements over weeks or months.

Educators often invest significant time in designing meaningful projects; coordinating with community partners; aligning activities with learning outcomes; facilitating reflection; supporting students throughout the experience; and helping students apply academic content, technical skills, and career-ready practices in the experience setting.

Employer or community partner involvement may vary widely. Some organizations may simply host or support a short-term project. Others may collaborate closely with educators and students over an extended period of time to co-design activities, provide mentorship, assess student skill development, and offer technical expertise.

Benefits

For **students**, service learning strengthens academic, technical, and career-ready skills while helping them develop civic responsibility and leadership, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving abilities. These experiences help students see the relevance of their education by applying knowledge and skills in authentic community settings connected to their career interests and programs of study. Reflection activities also help students deepen their understanding of career pathways, community impact, and the transferable skills they developed through the experience.

For **educators**, service learning creates opportunities to deliver applied, real-world instruction while strengthening student engagement and community connections. These experiences can support interdisciplinary learning, reinforce technical and academic content standards, promote student voice and leadership, and help students develop career-ready practices that transfer across career pathways.

For **employers and community partners**, service learning offers an opportunity to contribute to community improvement efforts while helping students build necessary skills. These experiences can strengthen relationships with schools, increase awareness of community needs, support authentic learning opportunities, and contribute to the development of future civic and workforce leaders.