

Create your own  
**Service-Learning  
 Independent Study**



Help your Community  
 Build your Resume  
 Earn College Credit

*Service-Learning is "a method of joining academic theory with service to enhance student learning while addressing collaboratively identified community needs."*

-UW Madison faculty

When the service-learning model is applied to the directed/independent study model, the student uses **working in the community** as a primary text for his or her own credit-bearing course, contributing to **career development**, building **stronger faculty relationships**, and advancing **personal growth**.

This brochure provides a step-by-step guide to help you develop your own service-learning independent study.

**PART ONE**

**Identify a social issue that is of interest to you**

- Reflect on both your personal and academic experiences.
- Consider your community's needs. Read the local newspaper, talk to formal and informal community leaders and examine local agencies' community needs assessments.
- Consult professional literature.

**PART TWO**

**Identify agencies that already work with the social issue you choose.**

- Consider agencies with whom you are already familiar through volunteering or other experiences.
- Reference agency listings located at the Morgridge Center or search by issue/interest on our volunteer opportunities database: VolunteerYourTime.org.
- Once you have narrowed your agency choices, familiarize yourself with the history and the mission of each agency.
- Contact those agencies and inquire about their needs in relation to the social issue you have identified.
- Present the agencies with your interests and background.
- Discuss how you may, or may not, be able to help and learn from one another through a service-learning independent study.

**PART THREE**

**Identify faculty members who are well-versed on the social issue you have chosen.**

- Consider faculty members with whom you are already familiar.
- Identify the disciplines with which you will be working. See

Expertise.cos.com for a list of the faculty members in each discipline.

- Approach the best-suited faculty members with your idea. Choose the faculty member you believe will be of the most assistance to your project.

**PART FOUR**

**Meet with the faculty member.**

- Together, identify which of the agencies you have already researched will be the best fit for your course.  
 Contact the agency and set up a meeting with an agency representative, the faculty member and yourself.

**PART FIVE**

**Meet with the faculty member and the community agency representative.**

- Discuss the agency-related details of the course, such as:
  - ~ Orientations and trainings.
  - ~ The hours/week you will work within the agency.
  - ~ Who your agency supervisor will be, and how often you will meet with/contact your supervisor.
  - ~ The course timeline, taking into consideration all academic breaks.
  - ~ What structured reflection will be worked into your time at the agency.
  - ~ Your precise role, and what is specifically expected of you, within the agency.

- Discuss academic details of your course.
  - ~ How many credits you will earn?
  - ~ How many hours you will spend doing work for the course?
  - ~ How you will be evaluated?
  - ~ How often you will meet with/contact the faculty member?
  - ~ What research/reading/writing will be required of you?
  - ~ What structured reflections will be required outside of the agency?
  - ~ What does the faculty member expect of you academically?
  - ~ How you will make your work sustainable?
  - ~ Additional ways in which you may demonstrate your learning upon the project's end. For example, you may choose to present your project at the Undergraduate Symposium or to develop a presentation open to all of the agencies working on the social issue you identified.
  - ~ Whether you will need funding for your project.
- Discuss any emotional or physical risks you may be taking in your work.
- Develop a Statement of Intent for the project, to be signed by all three parties.

**Please be aware that this guide offers only one way to organize a service-learning independent study. The sequential steps you find here will more likely be cyclical and will require a great deal of time and energy to cover completely.**



**Please notify the Morgridge Center for Public Service about your decision to create a service-learning independent study. We would be happy to offer any assistance or simply to act as a sounding board for your ideas.**

**Thank you,  
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