

LEAVE YOUR MARK

Service Learning Kit for Sports Teams



UR2US
SPORTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Why Service Learning Matters: Sports, Teams, and Service Learning

“I am a huge believer in giving back and helping out in the community and the world. Think globally, act locally I suppose. I believe that the measure of a person’s life is the effect they have on others.”

- Steve Nash (Basketball)

2. How do you identify a project for your team and community?

“The trials on the road to world harmony are no greater than the courage of those who accept the challenge.”

- Carl Lewis (Track and Field)

3. What do you need to do to make your project a reality?

“Be positive and work hard. I think it’s possible to overcome anything, if you’re willing to work at it.”

- Sheryl Swoopes (Basketball)

4. How do you secure what you need for your project?

“You got to try and reach for the stars or try and achieve the unreachable.”

Cathy Freeman (Track and Field)

5. How do you bring your project to life?

“I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion.”

- Mia Hamm (Soccer)

6. How do you reflect on your project?

“True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost.”

- Arthur Ashe (Tennis)

7. How do you share your project with your community?

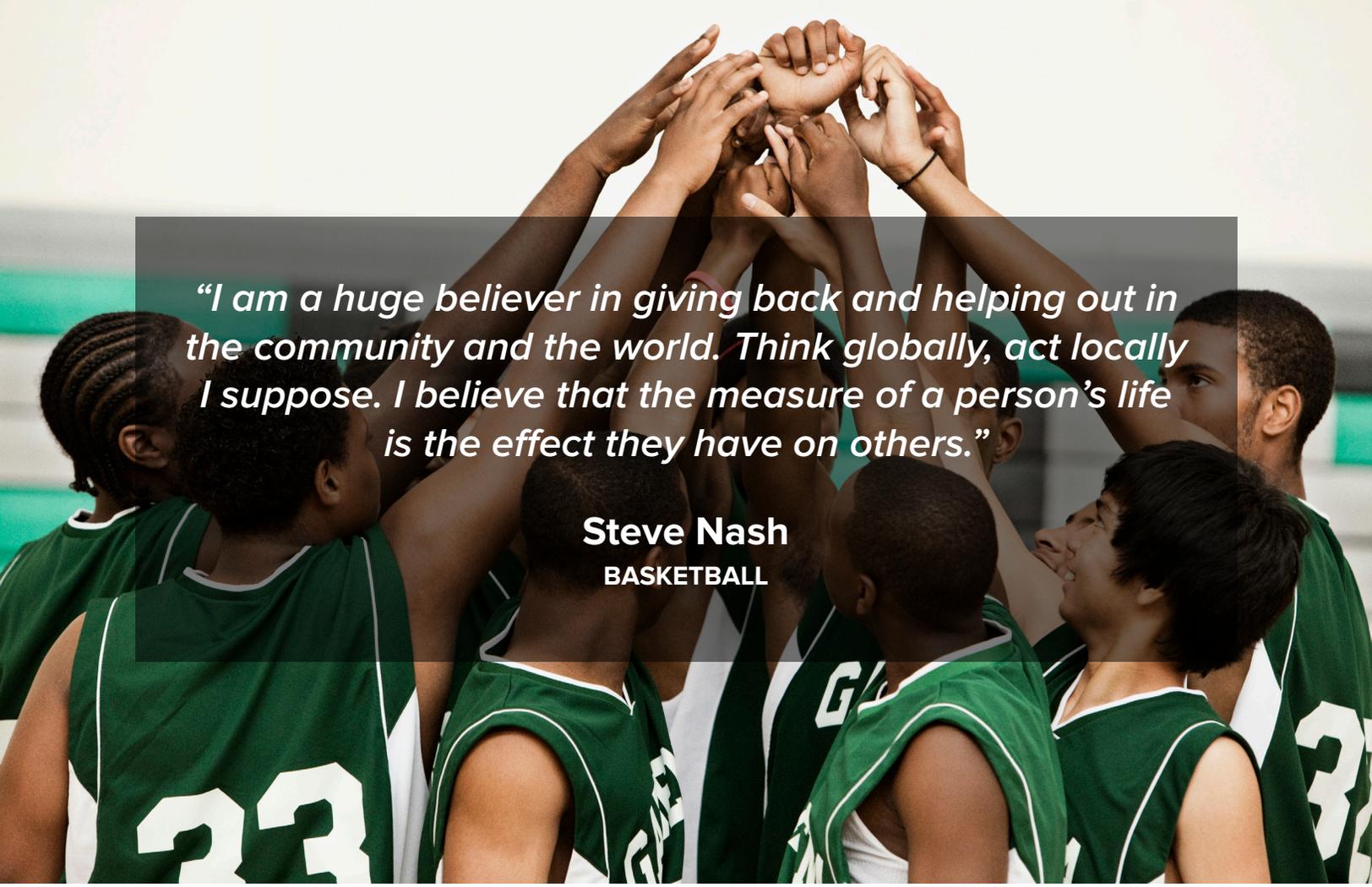
“I think in general if you have the ‘we’ mentality instead of the ‘me’ mentality, you’re more likely to win and win in ways which inspire people. And that’s what this team is doing.”

- Abby Wambach (Soccer)

8. What other resources exist to help you? Interested in more service learning?

“Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen.”

- Michael Jordan (Basketball)



“I am a huge believer in giving back and helping out in the community and the world. Think globally, act locally I suppose. I believe that the measure of a person’s life is the effect they have on others.”

Steve Nash
BASKETBALL

1

WHY SERVICE LEARNING MATTERS: SPORTS, TEAMS, AND SERVICE LEARNING

Sports teams have an amazing ability to achieve great things on the field, court, track, and pool. Each member of the team contributes their own individual strengths, and the combination of these assets results in a stronger, more diverse final product.

The power of teams need not be confined to athletic endeavors; instead, it can be translated into community service activities that help others. By channeling skills, energy, and resources towards service, teams can expand their positive impact and solidify their legacy outside the realm of sports. This is especially important for teams that represent their communities—either schools or neighborhoods—because the process of making a difference sends a message about what the community itself stands for.

Service learning is a process that integrates traditional community service with educational activities, resulting in well-informed, powerful projects that have long-lasting effects on both the planners and recipients. While a regular service project might be to donate old uniforms—

undoubtedly a worthy endeavor!—a service learning project would learn about the causes of athletic equipment shortages, educate the community about them, and then collect and donate used uniforms. This extended process deepens impact and learning, since participants have an understanding of the underlying causes of the issues around them.

The service learning process is made up of five stages: **INVESTIGATION, PLANNING/PREPARATION, ACTION, REFLECTION, and DEMONSTRATION/CELEBRATION**. Arguably the most crucial characteristic of service learning is that it is youth-led; it is the young people themselves who come up with the ideas, do the research, take action, and then reflect on their experiences. Adults form a powerful web of support behind all of these activities, but do not take center stage. Through the service learning cycle, young people not only make a difference, but also gain valuable skills and experiences that they can apply to many different facets of their lives.

The purpose of the LEAVE YOUR MARK curriculum is to guide teams through the service learning process and to provide all participants with the tools and inspiration to harness the power of sports for the good of the community.

It is aimed at 14-18 year-olds, though we encourage younger teams to use it as well with additional coach support.

Each chapter contains the following elements:

- Inspirational quote from a distinguished athlete
- Connection to the world of sports
- Step-by-Step guide to the specific service learning topic
- Examples of successful service learning
- A special “For Coaches” section

We hope that this guide will help you—whether you are an athlete, coach, administrator, parent, or supporter—make the commitment to use sports to make change. Best of luck with your projects, and get ready to LEAVE YOUR MARK!



“The trials on the road to world harmony are no greater than the courage of those who accept the challenge.”

Carl Lewis
TRACK & FIELD

2

HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY A PROJECT FOR YOUR TEAM AND COMMUNITY?

THE SPORTS CONNECTION: No team, regardless of how good they are, goes into a practice or competition without a plan. Identifying what you are going to do, and how you are going to do it, is crucial for success at any level.

The same can be said for service learning. This is the beginning of the INVESTIGATION phase, during which the participants—coaches, players, and team supporters—decide upon the nature of their service learning project. It is especially important during this phase to allow the team to lead the process. At the end, the chosen topic and related project should inspire the athletes themselves.

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

A Step-By-Step Guide

1

DECIDE TO COMPLETE A SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT AS A TEAM

Congratulations, you've already completed this step! You're well on your way to expanding your team's positive impact on the community around them. Nevertheless, there still might be some players on your team that aren't 100% bought into the idea of service learning. Here are some things to keep in mind if you find yourself in this situation:

1. Why are the team members resistant to the project? Is it about how it has been presented to them? Are they worried about it taking time away from the other parts of their lives? Are they concerned about some element of doing service?
2. Are there other players on the team who can help bring other teammates on board? Sometimes peers are the best cheerleaders and can be convincing in ways adults can't!
3. A few unwilling team members should not derail your project! By building buy-in amongst the rest of the team, you will create a critical mass of those who are excited about serving, and the rest should follow.

2

IDENTIFY WHAT A COMMUNITY IS

Community is a common word, but sometimes it's hard to know exactly what it means. Your team should make sure that everyone is working with the same definition as you begin your project:

1. Look up the word in a dictionary. Try a few different sources to get multiple perspectives.
2. Have a brainstorm about the various communities your team is a part of; some of these might include schools, neighborhoods, recreation centers, clubs, churches, and families, to name a few.
3. Whenever you question something about your project, return to this conversation to ensure that you are targeting the community you set out to in the beginning.

3

TAKE A GOOD LOOK AROUND YOUR COMMUNITY

Every place has both positive and negative characteristics, and when you're starting a service learning project it is crucial to consider both. If you can, go for a walk as a team around your neighborhood and ask yourself the following questions:

1. What makes the community special? What are the places that hold it together? Who are the important people that get things done, hold positions of power, or make a difference everyday? What makes your team proud to be members of this community? What specific role do sports play—both in terms of space and people?
2. What could be changed about the community? Where are the places that have seen better days? Who are the people that need a helping hand? If your team could, what would you spend your time and resources improving?

4**DEEPEN YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WHAT THE COMMUNITY ITSELF SEES AS NEEDING TO CHANGE**

Even though your team may be members of the community, it's still important to find out what other people think is important. There are many ways to do this, the most important of which is simply to ask around:

1. If your team practices at a local community center, ask the manager or the custodian what they think.
2. During the school day, your team can ask teachers, classmates, and administrators.
3. When you go to pick up equipment or snacks, ask the store owners about their opinions.

5**HAVE A TEAM MEETING TO DECIDE UPON YOUR ISSUE**

No matter what you've collected through your walks, research, and conversations, now is the time to pick something that really means something to all of the team members. There are a variety of ways to do this, and your team may have a method for making decisions already in place:

1. Players can give speeches in support of their chosen topics, followed by voting.
2. Team members can come to a consensus through discussion and compromise.
3. The team captains can get input from their teammates and then pick an issue that will appeal to everyone.

6**ONCE YOU HAVE YOUR ISSUE, START THE REFLECTION PROCESS RIGHT AWAY**

Ask yourself some questions about what you are about to embark on:

1. What do you already know about this topic? What do you want to learn? What are your assumptions? Where do you think this project will take you?
2. Don't forget to return to these questions throughout your work to ensure that you learn everything you set out to discover!
3. If you need more ideas, check out the reflection chapter of this guide!

7**FIGURE OUT HOW TO TRANSLATE YOUR ISSUE INTO A PROJECT**

Now that you have your issue, it is time to think about how you can build a project around it. It isn't necessary to come to a final decision here, but it is vital to have a solid idea about what your actual "action" is going to be. This is the time to think creatively and allow each team member a chance to share their unique ideas:

1. Start with a brainstorm: If you had unlimited resources (time, money, people, space, etc.) what would you do for your project? Don't be afraid to really stretch here: the sky's the limit!
2. Continue the discussion with a few more parameters: given our team's resources and limitations, what can we achieve? Since you're already a team, don't forget to talk about how you can use your athletic skills for good!
3. Come to a decision about the nature of the project, with the understanding that you can be flexible depending on how the next steps of the process go.

SAMPLE PROJECTS



HOMELESSNESS

A team saw that homelessness, especially among young people, was prevalent in their neighborhood; they decided to leverage their love of soccer to hold clinics and a round-robin tournament for themselves and youth in local transitional housing facilities. By learning about homelessness and planning an event from start to finish, the team not only provided much-needed leisure opportunities for themselves and their peers, but also became experts in how homelessness impacts families in their city.



ENVIRONMENT

A team saw that their school didn't have a recycling program, and that a lot of recyclable or reusable materials were getting thrown away. They learned about what can and cannot be recycled, and raised money to purchase recycling bins for each classroom in their school. Then, they educated teachers and classmates about recycling do's and don'ts, followed by a school-wide competition to see which class could recycle the most.



SAFETY

A team noticed that cars passed by their local playground at high speeds, resulting in pedestrian injury and, in one case, death. They lobbied their local government to install a stoplight at the intersection, and planned and executed a run/walk event around the playground to celebrate and provide information about safe driving and pedestrian behavior.



HEALTH

During a neighborhood walk and conversations with friends and family, a team noticed that there were not many fresh fruit and vegetable options in their community. They worked with their school to turn a side yard into a garden and held a health fair to educate their peers about the importance of eating healthy food.



PLAY SPACE

As they walked around their neighborhood, a team realized that there were numerous vacant lots, but not many safe spaces in which to play. They partnered with a local nonprofit and the city government to identify which of these spaces would be most suited for a basketball court, and then held a clean-up day to prepare the lot for paving. When it was complete, they hosted a 3v3 tournament for local teams to celebrate!

*Many of these issues come from Cathryn Berger Kaye's seminal book on service learning, *The Complete Guide to Service Learning*. Please see this book for more in-depth explanations of these topics and others.*

FOR COACHES

As a coach, your job is to create powerful sports experiences for young people that will positively impact them in their development as athletes and, more importantly, as human beings. You plan practices, arrange competitions, drive vans, wash uniforms, and do a multitude of other thankless jobs that make your team function successfully. The one thing that you don't do, though, is go out on the field, court, ice, course, or pool during a competition to "do it yourself." Instead, you prepare your athletes to be able to complete the task—sometimes successfully, and sometimes not—themselves.

**Service learning is like this competition phase:
it's your job to be there as a support system, but not out there yourself.**

The service learning process is only truly successful when it is youth-driven, and it may be challenging for you to step back and allow your young athletes to take charge here. However, you will maximize their experience by letting them figure it out themselves. It is especially important to do this during this first stage, as the process of identifying the issues and picking one that speaks to the team gives the young people ownership over the entire project.

That does not mean that you cannot have a say or make your opinion known, though. As an educator, you have the skills to guide a conversation and to highlight the elements of a discussion that your players may miss. Additionally, your number one concern is always your team's safety; if they decide on a topic that will potentially put them in dangerous situations, step in! Just like competition experiences, though, the service learning process will be most impactful if athletes have to problem solve along the way; don't stand in the way of a safe topic that may be challenging.



“Be positive and work hard. I think it’s possible to overcome anything, if you’re willing to work at it.”

Sheryl Swoopes
BASKETBALL

3

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO TO MAKE YOUR PROJECT A REALITY?

THE SPORTS CONNECTION: After you have a game plan in place, it’s time to practice and prepare. This is the time when the team learns plays and strategies, figures out how to do new skills, and comes together around shared goals.

In the service learning process, the **PLANNING/PREPARATION** phase focuses on education about the team’s chosen topic. It is this stage that separates regular community service from true service learning; in order to make the greatest difference possible, all team members must be experts in whatever issue they have picked. Just as a team would never try to play without practicing, no service learning project happens without lots of education!

MAKING THE PROJECT A REALITY

A Step-By-Step Guide

1

LEARN ALL THAT YOU CAN ABOUT THE TOPIC

Without education, service learning is just service (which is very valuable, but not what we're concentrating on here!). It is important to understand the issue and how it impacts your community—this will help determine the nature of your final project. Depending on the age and experience level of the team, there are a variety of ways to complete the research you need:

1. The library is always a great place to start, since these facilities house so many different kinds of resources. Here are some good places to check out:
 - Newspapers – an amazing source for current events.
 - Books – can provide a more historical view.
 - Online Databases – gather a great deal of information, both past and present, in one place.
2. The Internet is another valuable research method, though it's important to ensure that you are being safe on the web and finding legitimate sources of information. Watch out for Wikipedia entries (since they can be edited by anyone) and any sites that ask for personal data.
3. If your team doesn't have access to these kind of materials on your own, be sure to ask your coach for help. Adults can be a big help in this stage of the process.
4. Your team can put all of this research together into a guide about your topic. This is a great takeaway for participants in your day of action, and will extend your project into the realm of advocacy. They will be able to refer to your mini-guidebook for future reference and share it with their friends and family!

2

START TO BUILD PARTNERSHIPS IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND WITH EXPERTS ON YOUR TOPIC

As your team was picking an issue, players may have had a chance to speak with community members about the project. Now is the time to solidify those connections and make new ones. Combined with your library and Internet research, this is a great way to learn more:

1. Invite a guest speaker who is an expert on the topic to a game or practice, and then ask them to tell the team more about how they are connected to what you are studying. Make sure your team brainstorms a list of questions to ask your guest; additionally, keep this person involved in your team's work and don't forget to invite them to the day of action or community celebration!
2. Visit a local organization that also works on your topic. This will give your team a first-hand understanding of what other people are doing to make a difference. It is worthwhile to spend time before the visit talking about the team's expectations, concerns, and questions.

3. Interview community members who may have experience with the issue; even if they aren't experts, these people will be able to share their opinions about the topic with players. While it is important to be able to differentiate between fact and opinion, knowing how ordinary citizens feel about your issue will help the team create a project that the community embraces and sustains.
4. All of the partnerships you make should also serve as publicity for your day of action. Since you are putting on your project for the community itself—even if you are targeting one specific group with your actual service—you will want a good number of supporters out to see what you are doing! Now is the time to start alerting people to when you will be displaying the results of your research and actually bringing your project to life.

3

CONTINUE TO SOLIDIFY YOUR PROJECT PLAN

Every time your team learns a new skill or play, you test it out in a scrimmage to see if it works. Make sure to do the same thing with the new pieces of information that you collect during this phase! When players come back from a research trip, hear from a guest speaker, or complete an interview, they should sit down as a team and add more detail to the project plan. This not only promotes project-long reflection, but also ensures that the action your team takes will be informed by what they learn along the way:

1. A project plan can take on many different formats; maybe your team likes lists and spreadsheets, or perhaps a web outline works best. There is even a sample plan in the appendix of this guide. Regardless of how your team structures it, all project plans should include the following elements: project name, brief project description, one sentence overarching goal statement (perhaps with related sub-goals underneath), and concrete action steps for implementation and reflection. Other optional items include sources for research, a list of potential partners, and a budget.
2. Now is the time to start focusing on logistics: pick a date to bring your project to life, find a host site that makes sense for your topic and community, invite people to attend, and think about whether you will need food, security, permits, and other related items.
3. You will need to have a back-up plan, especially if your project is outdoors and might be impacted by the weather. Start thinking about it right from the start!
4. A well-constructed project plan will inform the rest of your project and can serve as the basis for many steps further along in the process. It is worth your team's time to put a lot of effort into making it as detailed as possible!

SAMPLE RESEARCH



HOMELESSNESS

The team invited both the director of a local homeless shelter and a school administrator who was responsible for helping homeless youth get services to speak to them about the topic. Additionally, they read and discussed a landmark study completed in their city about the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population.



ENVIRONMENT

The team did Internet research on recycling and read books on the different ways to reduce waste. Then, they interviewed classmates, teachers, and custodians about their opinions on introducing recycling at the school. After a game against a school that already recycled, the team talked to their opponents to find out how it worked and how people liked it.



SAFETY

Players on the team interviewed people at the park to hear their views about the dangerous street situation, and also invited a neighborhood police officer to talk about how to be safe when crossing the street. The team also found accident statistics for their playground at the public library.



HEALTH

A professor at a nearby university came to talk to the team about making good nutritional choices, especially for athletes. Later, they attended a college game, where a few of the student-athletes shared their daily menus and tips for staying healthy. The team visited a local community garden to see what efforts were already being made to improve access to fruits/vegetables, and also did a neighborhood walk during which they mapped the number of places to get fast food vs. healthy food.



PLAY SPACE

Team members researched the materials and resources required to build safe play spaces, and spoke with staff at a local nonprofit group that helps construct these areas. They also wrote letters to a government official and later visited her office to help solidify their plans.

FOR COACHES

Just like your practices lead to success in games and competitions, the research your team does in this stage will stand them in great stead as they move through the service learning process. At the beginning, some players may be slightly apprehensive or reluctant to do research; after all, this is something they do in school and that isn't always fun! Your challenge as a coach is to message the value of the education process, and to differentiate it from what they may already be familiar with.

The education and preparation phases are a great time to engage your team in active learning. Instead of just reading about the topic, have them ask questions of their guest speakers, go on site visits, and interview people around the neighborhood. They can do role plays to better understand the issue, have debates where they have to argue for and against different ways to improve what they see around them, and make lists of questions to ask, additional people to talk to, and much more.

Active learning and speaking to new people can be challenging for some young people, especially those who are naturally shy. As a coach, you know what motivates each of your athletes, and when the best time is to encourage them to broaden their comfort zones. The service learning process is a great time for one of your quieter players to complete a solo interview, or for a louder, more outgoing player to take notes during a guest speaker's talk. You may be surprised by what you find out about your players' off-the-field skills!



“You got to try and reach for the stars or
try and achieve the unreachable.”

Cathy Freeman
TRACK & FIELD

4

HOW DO YOU SECURE WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR PROJECT?

THE SPORTS CONNECTION: Regardless of the sport you compete in, there are necessary materials and equipment that you need to have. Some activities require more than others, and it is important to differentiate between what you really need and the extra stuff that makes you look cool. In some cases, your team may purchase what you need, and in other situations you have to borrow, ask for a donation, or fundraise.

During the PLANNING/PREPARATION phase, service learning projects require the same effort to ensure that the actions your team takes are well-supported. Just as you can't play a basketball game without a ball or basket, it is difficult to create a school garden without seeds, shovels, and watering cans. Being creative about obtaining your materials will be a challenging—but also rewarding—part of your service learning experience. Don't forget, start early and stay the course, and always send thank you notes afterwards, whether you get something or not!

GETTING WHAT YOU NEED

A Step-By-Step Guide

1

START WITH A LIST OF EXACTLY WHAT YOU WILL NEED

Getting what you need to bring your project to life is not always easy, and requires creativity and a plan. By starting with a list, you can prioritize items (absolute necessities over wants) and concentrate your efforts on obtaining the most important things. This list should be informed directly by your research, and can expand and contract as your project becomes more solidified as well. Your list will be most helpful if it includes:

1. Item names, with exact quantities, colors, sizes (or other specific characteristics)
2. Possible sources of the item (store, borrow, donation, etc.)
3. Cost (if applicable)
4. Point person or small group who will be responsible for securing the item.

2

IDENTIFY YOUR PROJECT BUDGET

Service learning projects do not have to be high cost. In fact, some of the most valuable and lasting projects are completed with very few monetary resources! As you move through the process, it is important to figure out exactly what you will need and how much you can afford to spend. Depending on the age of the team, a few players can manage the budget or the coach can oversee it in consultation with youth.

3

LOCATE SOURCES OF FUNDING

Once you have your list and budget, it is time to figure out exactly where you can go to secure the funds you need to complete your project. Before you start, it is important to be ready to tell people about your project; a meaningful explanation of what you are trying to do will go a long way in building support and getting others on board to help. Some places to start include:

1. **Existing team supporters:** If your team has sponsors or a booster club, it makes sense to involve them in your project. Instead of just asking them for funds, invite them to get involved as well...they might be itching to provide more than just a monetary donation!
2. **Online resources** like <http://www.ysa.org> (homepage for Youth Service America) have amazing lists of mini-grant opportunities specifically for service learning projects and young people. Many of these grants have early application deadlines and lengthy wait times, so it is crucial to begin early!
3. **Individual donations:** Depending on the nature of your team and community, it may be possible to enlist individual donors, like families, friends, and local community members. Just as with all the potential supporters on your list, make sure to have information available about your project and always say thank you, no matter what!

- 4. Fundraising efforts:** Your team may put on bake sales, car washes, and other activities to fundraise for your athletic activities, so why not do the same for your service learning project! Be creative and work with the strengths of your team and community as you plan these events. They can provide amazing opportunities to share your newfound knowledge about your issues with others, building support for your project in a variety of places.

4

FIGURE OUT WHO TO ASK FOR OTHER KINDS OF HELP

Money is not the only kind of support that people can provide. In fact, sometimes the other things—time, connections to others, or in-kind support—can make a deeper impact on your project. Be sure to target your ask to what you know someone may be able to give. As always, provide a complete explanation of your project; when people understand what you are doing, they may offer their resources before you even have to ask! This is when the creativity of your team will really make a difference:

1. In-kind donations are items that get donated in lieu of money. For example, your team could ask for a local restaurant to donate a meal for your project, instead of money. Think about what types of in-kind materials come from which kind of establishment: shoe stores have cardboard boxes in bulk, grocery stores have bags, a pizzeria could have plates/cutlery, a sporting goods manufacturer could have extra equipment or t-shirts, and so on. Be sure to check with your state and local regulations about which kind of tax forms, if any, you will need to give the donor so that they can get a tax deduction. Thank you notes are also crucial!
2. Borrowing items may also work well for your project, especially if there are pieces of equipment that are reusable and unrealistic for you to purchase. For example, if you are doing a painting project, you may be able to borrow brushes, rollers, and other items, leaving you only responsible for purchasing the one-time use items like paint. Players on your team, along with friends, family, and other members of your extended support network may have items in their homes and workplaces that you could use!
3. Locating people to lend their time or expertise is a crucial way to build a larger audience for your project. The most valuable thing that anyone has to give is their time, so finding volunteers, advocates, and other champions should be central to your efforts. Remember, part of a service learning project is building awareness about your topic, so the more people you can get on board the better...just as you want to have stands full of people cheering you on in games, there should be a crowd for your project too. Build on the relationships you established in the education stage to create buzz around the great work you are doing!
4. Just as in previous stages of the process, the partnerships you build will be crucial: local government officials, recreation centers, schools, libraries, and other organizations in your field can help you or serve as an audience to deepen your impact and engage more people.

SAMPLE MATERIAL PROCUREMENTS



HOMELESSNESS

Players wrote letters detailing their project to local grocery stores and were successful in obtaining reduced price snacks for their project day. In addition, they leveraged the time and resources of the local adidas office in their community and got volunteers and scrimmage jerseys for the tournament. A local community center donated their space for free as well, and because it was located in the neighborhood all participants could walk, cutting down on transportation time.



ENVIRONMENT

The players on the team applied for a grant through Youth Service America specifically for an environmentally focused service learning project, and their application was chosen. With this money, they were able to purchase recycling bins for every classroom in their school, as well as the other materials required to get their project off the ground.



SAFETY

The team leveraged the resources of the public library, as well as the expertise of the local police community. They wrote letters to local government officials to raise awareness about their issue, and were able to help convince—in part using their research—the government to pay for the new stoplight in their community.



HEALTH

After researching local places to get fresh produce, the team located a nonprofit nursery that donated plants and seeds to service projects, and were able to get all of the materials for their garden through this source. The local parks department and the science teacher at the school came out to the service day to help plant, and the players also invited their friends, family, and school administrators to donate their time to on-going garden maintenance. A local food store gave a significant discount on lunch for the day.



PLAY SPACE

The team partnered with a local nonprofit who already had funding to build play spaces in the community, and then formed close relationships with government and the parks department to help move their project forward. Additionally, they worked with their booster club to provide lunch for the event celebrating the opening of the play space.

FOR COACHES

Figuring out how to get everything your team needs for their service learning project can be an extremely challenging part of the process. However, it is also the time when you will be most surprised by the people who come out of the woodwork to help you and support the team's work!

Your players may be intimidated about asking people for help, especially when money is involved. Helping them prepare a thoughtful and exciting explanation of their project, including who will be served and how the potential donor can be involved outside of giving money or items, is the first step to assuaging some of their fears. Additionally, doing role plays as a team about these situations can be great practice. Regardless of how someone answers, it is crucial to send a thank you note or follow up with a call to express appreciation for the chance to speak with them.

As soon as you know what your project will be, get started on pulling together your materials. For every "yes" the team gets, they will most likely get multiple "no's", making it crucial to have enough time to explore the backup plans. Your encouragement through this process will be central to keeping your players in for the long haul!



“I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion.”

Mia Hamm
SOCCER

5

HOW DO YOU BRING YOUR PROJECT TO LIFE?

THE SPORTS CONNECTION: After long hours of preparation—practices, strategy sessions, fitness work—your team is ready for game time! This is when you put all of your newfound knowledge and skills to the test in a real-world situation, and when you get to prove yourselves to the larger community.

Bringing a service learning project to life is all about taking ACTION—as informed by your plan, education, and partnerships. Just like your athletic competitions, this is when your team really gets to shine. On this day, your project comes to life. When you get the chance to make this kind of difference, you will want the community to be there to see it. Your team will grow, not only in size but also in impact, when you leverage the skills, support, and passions of everyone around you.

PROJECT ACTION

A Step-By-Step Guide

1

SOLIDIFY ALL OF THE LOGISTICAL DETAILS OF YOUR ACTUAL PROJECT

By this point, your project plan (either following the model of the sample in the appendix of this guide, or your own design) should be completely filled in with a collection of partners, educational/research-based resources, materials, attendees, and activities. Now is the time to ensure that all of these items are fully in place on the chosen day:

1. Confirm with all host sites, participants, and partners that you are set for the project day. Ensure that you know where places like the bathrooms, water fountains, and trash cans are...these can make or break the day!
2. Create a schedule for the day that everyone is aware of and delegate roles for each segment of the event. Depending on how your team works, it might make sense to follow established team roles and have the captains take point on the day; there are many ways to do this, though, so don't feel boxed into one way.
3. Order any last minute items (snacks, sunscreen, hand sanitizer).
4. Have a backup plan for any events held outdoors!
5. Continue to remind people about the event to increase your attendance – flyers, calls, email blasts, social media posts (Twitter, Facebook, your team's website, etc.), and newspaper ads are all effective means of communication.

2

BRING YOUR PROJECT TO LIFE

The day has arrived, your team is prepared and excited, and now it's time to show off your hard work! Though the day, like some athletic competitions, may be chaotic and a bit stressful, make sure it stays fun; your team has worked hard and you will make a positive impact with your actions. Remember to take care of yourself, just as you would at a game:

1. Drink enough water and eat enough food, even if you are running around organizing things and helping people. You will be more able to perform at a high level if you're well-nourished.
2. Cleanup starts as soon as the event does. If you do the dirty work as you go along, it won't seem so bad at the end. Aim to leave the space better than you found it.
3. Be proud to share off your knowledge and tell people about what you've learned and why it is important.
4. Become an advocate and champion of your cause, your project, and your team. On this day, you have added an additional element to your already impressive title of student-athlete. Now you are student-athlete-changemaker. Congratulations.

3

INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY IN EVERYTHING YOU DO

Since the first stage of this process, your team has built partnerships and relationships with people from all walks of life—nonprofit employees, local government officials, civil servants, schools, community members, and the population directly impacted by your issue. Now is the time to leverage those relationships:

1. Invite everyone you ever talked to throughout the process to your event, including anyone who helped you during the research phase and all the people you asked for money or donations.
2. Make sure that you've alerted local newspapers and government officials about your project. If they know it's going on, they will usually be excited to attend!
3. Document the event anyway you can: take photos and videos, write blog entries, and interview people about participating. Once you have this entire collection, create an event summary, complete with photos and quotes. This can be shared with everyone involved, and with those who were not able to attend.
4. Say thank you – sincerely, out loud, in front of others, right away, and more times than you need to.

SAMPLE PROJECTS IN ACTION



HOMELESSNESS

The team invited youth from two local transitional housing facilities, and they attended along with their teachers and family members.

Additionally, volunteers came out from the local adidas office and from the community center where the event was held. There was a videographer to film the day, and this film was shown at the team's school and at an MLS game.



ENVIRONMENT

The team was able to invite the entire school to their day of action, during which the new school recycling program was unveiled and celebrated. Students, teachers, and families learned about recycling, picked up tips for recycling in their own homes, and made pledges for how much they would recycle in the coming months. A local TV station covered the event and it appeared on the nightly news. Additionally, representatives from other schools came to learn how they could implement similar programs at their schools.



SAFETY

A local government official was present for the official unveiling of the traffic light, and the team invited community members to their day of action to learn about safety and celebrate the hard work of the students. Several players were interviewed for their school paper and the neighborhood magazine.



HEALTH

The team invited everyone that had helped them in the planning process—from the experts from the local nursery and the school's science teacher to the professors and college athletes that helped them learn about nutrition. Additionally, players' families and friends attended for a chance to eat free healthy food and to learn about where to get fresh produce in their neighborhood.



PLAY SPACE

The team, local government officials, parks department workers, and nonprofit representatives were all present for the opening of the new basketball court, along with friends, families, and community members. A local newspaper interviewed players about their accomplishment and it also appeared on the community's online portal.

FOR COACHES

It's game time! Your team has already achieved so much, and now it's time to put the hard work into action. Just as you would during a competition, you can provide vital support to your team members during this phase of the service learning process. In fact, some of the behaviors they may display during this phase will mirror their pre-game emotions!

This may be the first event that your team members have every planned and executed without the significant help of adults. Be prepared for nerves, worry, outbursts, and all of the other signs of stress from your players. Remind them to stay safe, have fun, eat and drink, get enough rest, and take pride in their accomplishments.

In the midst of the challenges of the day of action, this will likely also be the most exciting and enjoyable part of the process! Your players have become experts in a topic that they identified, and have implemented an event relatively independently. This is a major accomplishment for young people! Celebrate your players and be their advocate to the community. You can ensure that others recognize their work by being the same kind of cheerleader you are on the sideline.



“True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost.”

Arthur Ashe
TENNIS

6

HOW DO YOU REFLECT ON YOUR PROJECT?

THE SPORTS CONNECTION: You just finished the big game, and, win or lose, it's easy to just sit back and relax after all of your hard work. To combat this, most successful teams have some kind of post-game speech or session, during which they talk about the successes and challenges of their competition and work to learn from their mistakes. This is a time to identify what went really well, what the team will never do again, and what needs to be changed for next game. It also gives the team a chance to recognize outstanding individuals and team units.

The service learning process is no different. Your day of action was probably a huge success. Your team made a difference and received publicity and thanks from many different community members. However, the project is not over until all team members get to reflect on all the elements of what happened. REFLECTION reinforces learning, highlights successes, and deepens the long-term impacts on everyone involved.

REFLECTION

A Step-By-Step Guide

1

REFLECTION STARTS THE MOMENT YOU DECIDE TO DO A SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

Reflection shouldn't be a switch that you turn on and off throughout your project; additionally, it can take countless different forms. Creativity is key here! Regardless of the format, reflection should be something present throughout:

1. Maybe all of your team members keep journals in which they record their thoughts, excitements, and fears about the process. Journals can have writing, poetry, drawing, collages, and a myriad of other forms of expression!
2. If you have access to video cameras, your team can create a documentary about the project, including player interviews throughout.
3. Team members can blog throughout the course of the project.
4. Full-group discussions after interviews, site visits, and other major project milestones can help players put these events into context.
5. Other ways to reflect include: creating a mural, making lists, fill-in-the-blank activities, and letter writing.

2

PLAN A REFLECTION AS PART OF YOUR PROJECT PLAN

Waiting until after the day of action to schedule a reflection session can greatly decrease the likelihood of it ever occurring. This isn't an optional part of your project; it is just as important—or even more crucial—than anything else you do!

3

PROVIDE MANY OPPORTUNITIES AND AVENUES FOR REFLECTION

Each member of your team will have a different way of reflecting on the project as a whole. No matter how you choose to reflect, there should be key elements in place:

1. Revisit the answers to your questions from your initial reflection – Where did you start? What did you know at the beginning about your issue? What were your assumptions? Where did you think this project would take you? What did you want to learn about?
2. Start thinking about the process – What did you do to formulate your plan? How did you turn your plan into reality? What did you learn? What surprised you? What challenged you?
3. Look critically at the event itself – What was great about it? What could be better? What change did we make? How can we continue to sustain our impact?

4. Consider the impact of the team – How did you work together? When was there conflict? How did this change your relationship in your sport? How is your team different than when you started?
5. Be forward-looking – How are you different than you were at the beginning? What skills do you have now that you didn't before? How have your assumptions changed? How will you continue to be involved in service?

3

Document reflection, either privately or publically: The record of your service learning project is only complete when it includes a formal event summary and the reflections of your team members. While this second category can remain private, it should be kept to document what happened during the process.

FOR COACHES

Reflection is hands down one of the most crucial elements of a service learning project; unfortunately, it is also probably the most underrated and easily skipped part! It is tempting to let the event serve as the crowning moment and move on directly from there. However, this negates much of the learning process that has taken place throughout your team's project.

In order for team members to emerge as stronger, more skilled young people dedicated to civic engagement and service, they must think back about the process and their experiences. Even if your team wins a game in a landslide, there is still a post-game talk, because something can always be learned from the effort.

Just like they have different playing and learning styles, each of your players will most likely have difference reflection styles. Some may have to discuss and process everything out loud, others will write a short novel, and still others will draw, paint, and sculpt. All of these are valid and should be encouraged! Giving players freedom and ownership over their learning and reflecting experiences will make this process uniquely theirs.

Start reflection at the beginning and continue it throughout. This can be one of your most lasting and impactful jobs as a coach during the service learning process. By being a champion of reflection—and encouraging players to step back and look at where they have come from, where they are, and where they are headed—will help them keep their wits about them. When players have the chance to look through the record they have created of their own project, they will marvel at what they were able to accomplish. And, in many cases, it is the times when a young person expresses this kind of empowerment and pleasant surprise, that are the reason why you became a coach in the first place. Congratulations.



“I think in general if you have the ‘we’ mentality instead of the ‘me’ mentality, you’re more likely to win and win in ways which inspire people. And that’s what this team is doing.”

Abby Wambach
SOCCER

7

HOW DO YOU SHARE YOUR PROJECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY?

THE SPORTS CONNECTION: At the end of the season, many teams have an awards ceremony, during which they celebrate the accomplishments of their time together and recognize outstanding achievement. The service learning process is no different, and it is important to allow time for team members and supporters to share their experiences and inspire others to get involved. This is also an important way to look towards the future and establish goals and best practices for service learning projects moving forward.

DEMONSTRATION & CELEBRATION

A Step-By-Step Guide

1

CELEBRATING YOUR PROJECT SHOULD BRING TOGETHER ALL OF THE OTHER STAGES—INVESTIGATION, PLANNING AND PREPARATION, ACTION, AND REFLECTION

From the start, your team should always be thinking about how they can spread the word and educate others about their service learning project. Involving community members in each step of the process only strengthens the work that you do because it gives people the chance to share their talents, energy, and resources with your team.

2

CELEBRATION SHOULDN'T BE AN AFTERTHOUGHT, BUT AN INTEGRAL PART OF YOUR TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

Just like in the sports arena, demonstrating new skills and celebrating hard work are crucial to getting young people excited about service learning. As you put together your project plan, make sure be specific about how you are going to share and celebrate your project with the community. This should include a specific date/time/location for your celebration, a plan for collecting information to share, and a list of people to include in the event.

3

DEMONSTRATING AND CELEBRATING YOUR PROJECT SHOULD BE A TIME TO LOOK BOTH BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS

Not only should you look back at your project and share the ups and downs with the community, but your team can also leverage this time to look towards the future and identify future projects to be completed, how their current project can be sustained, and how they would improve the process in the coming seasons.

4

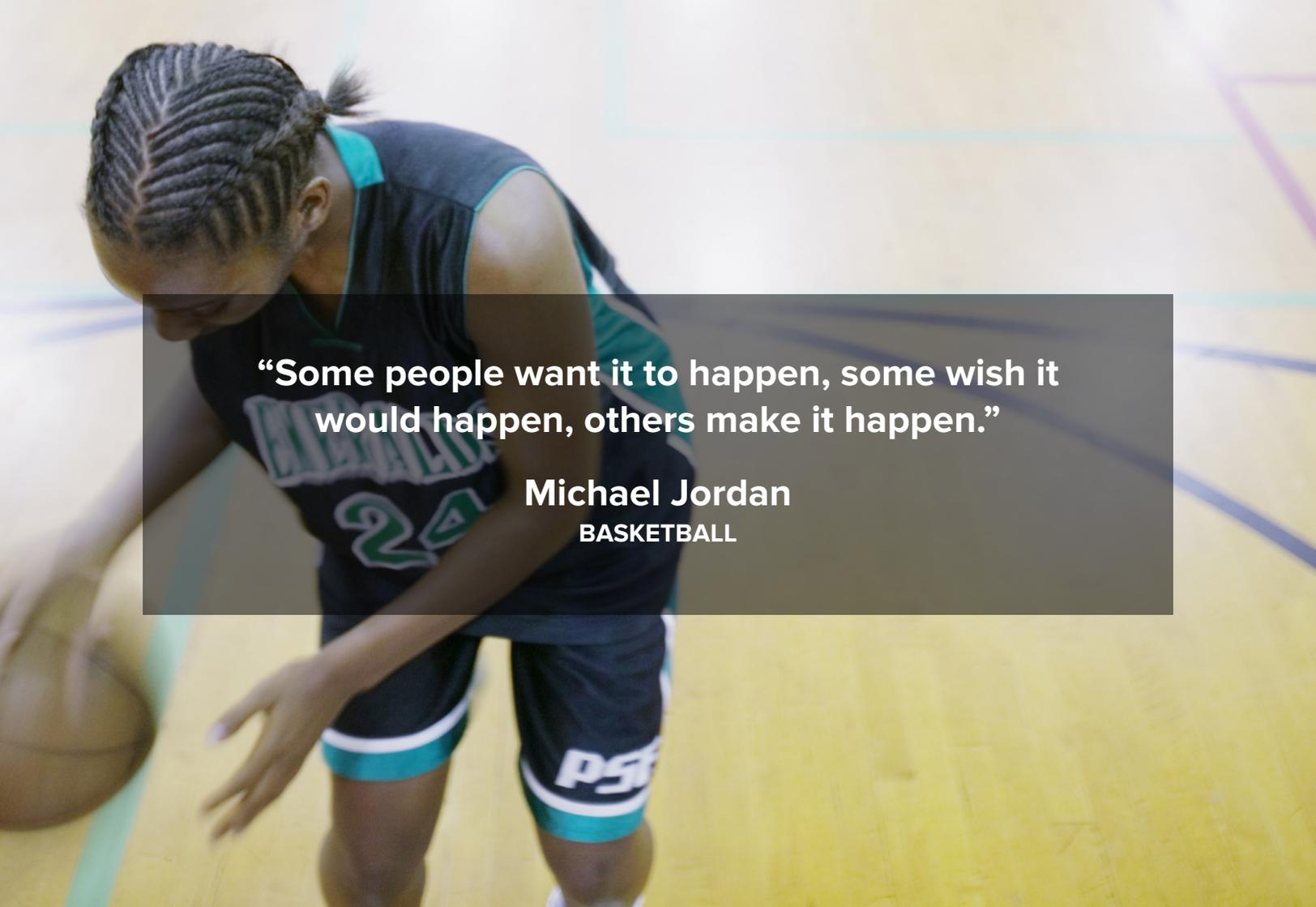
CELEBRATIONS CAN INVOLVE WORK—MAKE SURE YOUR TEAM IS ENGAGED IN PLANNING HOW THEY ARE GOING TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH OTHERS

After a long service learning project, it can be easy to let adults plan the entire celebration event in honor of the kids. However, it is important that they lead this stage just as they have the others. Young people thrive when given responsibility, especially when they are supported in their efforts, and the process of sharing what they have learned and teaching others about the issue they picked is extremely valuable in the learning process.

FOR COACHES

Demonstrating knowledge and celebrating hard work are crucial parts of any youth experience. This part of the process allows young people to take a close look at what they've accomplished, to package their work so that other people can understand it, and to "teach back" the new knowledge they've gained. While the reflection stage is very inward looking and personal for each individual and the team as a whole, the demonstration and celebration stage is externally focused; team members should aim to engage the larger community and conclude their project in the company of local supporters, stakeholders, and leaders.

There are many ways to structure a demonstration/celebration event; one of the most common is an open house that allows the team to mingle with invited guests and share their project. Teams can make a poster that summarizes their work, or they could create a slideshow, powerpoint presentation, or video. Similar to the reflection process, there are many ways to demonstrate and celebrate impact, and what your team decides to do should be their decision and represent their style and project.



“Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen.”

Michael Jordan
BASKETBALL

8

WHAT OTHER RESOURCES EXIST TO HELP YOU? INTERESTED IN MORE SERVICE LEARNING?

Service learning is increasingly becoming an integral part of the complete educational experience. Hopefully, the LEAVE YOUR MARK curriculum will help define how service learning can also be an incredible value-added to the youth sports world as well. Turning young student-athletes into student-athlete-changemakers will not only give them the power to make constructive change in whatever field they chose, but can also help build a new, positive image of sports around the world.

As your team continues to explore service learning, there are many resources to help you. This section is organized by type of resource, and includes many of the cutting-edge service learning guides. However, more is published every year, and there are many more outstanding places to get service learning advice, share best practices, and understand this process more deeply. Keep looking, and let us know what you find so that we can add it to the next edition!

NATIONAL SERVICE LEARNING-FOCUSED ORGANIZATIONS



LEARN AND SERVE AMERICA

As part of the Corporation for National Service, Learn and Serve is specifically responsible for getting young people involved in service learning. It is a great place to start for a variety of different resources and also includes grant opportunities.

<http://www.learnandserve.gov/>

NATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING CLEARINGHOUSE

The Clearinghouse is an offshoot of Learn and Serve, and is the e-warehouse of all related service learning materials. It is an absolute treasure trove of definitions, lesson plans, research, and project ideas.

<http://www.servicelearning.org/>



NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The National Youth Leadership Council is a network of young people, families, teachers, and communities dedicated to using service learning to change the world. They have a large resource library and bookstore; additionally, they offer programming, opportunities for youth to serve, and national conferences.

<http://www.nylc.org/>



YOUTH SERVICE AMERICA

This organization's mission is to increase the number of young people involved in service around the country. Their website has a large collection of service learning-related press, a list of upcoming events, and a section entitled "YSA Can Help You," where you can find grants, newsletters, and trainings.

<http://ysa.org/>



NATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

This is another network of educators and advocates around the country who work together to advance the cause of service learning and facilitate the process of making service learning a part of every young person's education. Their website offers a comprehensive library of research about service learning, as well as teaching resources and programming links.

<http://www.service-learningpartnership.org/site/PageServer>

Many states also have individual centers for service learning. Some of these are housed at the state university, or under the auspices of the state government. Be sure to search for resources near your location.

ORGANIZATIONS USING SERVICE LEARNING



AMERICA'S PROMISE ALLIANCE

The America's Promise Alliance is the largest coalition of youth-serving organizations in the country. Founded by General Colin and Alma Powell, the America's Promise Alliance is "devoted to improving the lives of young people" and setting them on the road to success in high school and beyond.

<http://www.americaspromise.org>



AFTER SCHOOL ALL STARS

The mission of After School All Stars is to "help kids succeed in school and in life," and the organization runs after school and summer programs that involve middle and high school students in positive learning activities. ASAS is increasingly using service learning to engage participants in their communities on a deeper level.

<http://www.afterschoolallstars.org>



AMERICA SCORES

The mission of America SCORES is "to empower students in urban communities using soccer, writing, creative expression, and service learning." The organization runs after-school programs that promote teamwork through soccer, poetry, and service learning projects at 14 sites around the country.

<http://www.americascorers.org>



CITY YEAR

City Year "unites young people of all backgrounds for a year of full-time service, giving them the skills and opportunities to change the world." In addition to their full-time programs for 17-24 year olds, City Year also runs part-time youth corps for elementary, middle, and high school students that are based on experiential and service learning-based activities.

<http://www.cityyear.org>



HANDS ON NETWORK

Hands On Network "inspires, equips, and mobilizes people to take action that changes the world." They operate Action Centers around the world that link people to the social engagement projects that will allow them to make a positive difference in their communities.

<http://handsonnetwork.org>



ROOTS AND SHOOTS

Roots and Shoots is a “youth-driven, global network of more than 8,000 groups in almost 100 countries. Together, youth of all ages are taking action to improve our world through service learning projects.” As a part of the Jane Goodall Institute, Roots and Shoots focuses on the environment, animals, and the human connections to the earth.

<http://www.rootsandshoots.org>



UP2US SPORTS

Up2Us Sports is a coalition of sports-based youth development providers that has united over 1,200 organizations behind the idea that sports can be used to teach life skills, combat childhood obesity, and prevent gang activity amongst youth. They offer training, research, networking opportunities, and a coaching program aimed at creating a highly skilled coaching workforce across the country.

<http://www.up2ussports.org>



4-H

4-H originally began as a way to connect rural youth to active and hands-on learning experiences. Now, it is a national organization focused on “leadership, citizenship, and life skills.” In partnership with land-grant universities, 4-H incorporates service learning into its programs to create active civic leaders.

<http://4-h.org>

BOOKS

Cathryn Berger Kaye, *The Complete Guide to Service Learning: Proven, Practical Ways to Engage Students in Civic Responsibility, Academic Curriculum, and Social Action*. Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis, 2004.

Barbara A. Lewis, *The Kid’s Guide to Service Projects: Over 500 Service Ideas for You*. Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis, 1995.

Additionally, Free Spirit Publishing puts out a huge collection of other books, including many that are issue-specific. Check out their website at www.freespirit.com.

APPENDIX

LEAVE YOUR MARK

Project Work Plan



PROJECT NAME: _____

PROJECT OVERVIEW: _____

PROJECT GOAL: _____

ACTION PLAN:

TASK	DUE DATE	POINT PERSON	COMMUNITY RESOURCES

REFLECTION PLAN: _____



THIS WORK PLAN IS BASED ON THE ONE FROM THE AMERICA SCORES LEADERSHIP IN ACTION CURRICULUM.