

REPAIR
THE WORLD

The Worth of What They Do

The Impact of Short-term Immersive
Jewish Service-Learning on Host Communities

An Exploratory Study



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Host Communities: An Exploratory Study

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Preface

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our sincere appreciation to the staff of Repair the World, particularly Ilana Aisen, Director of Program and Education, and Dr. Wendy Rosov of Rosov Consulting for their guidance and support in this study. We are grateful for the assistance of American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, American Jewish World Service, Hillel International, Jewish Funds for Justice and Yeshiva University in identifying host communities for inclusion in this study. We also thank all of the key informant interviewees who shared their experiences to inform this research.

ABOUT BTW *informing change*

At BTW we are driven by our purpose of *informing change* in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. We partner with our clients to improve their effectiveness and build a culture of learning and continuous improvement. We produce high-quality, easy-to-understand products that present useful information designed to be readily applied to practice. Our information-based services include:

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- Organizational Effectiveness;
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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Study Purpose

In 2010 Repair the World commissioned BTW *informing change* to conduct an exploratory study about the impacts of short-term immersive Jewish service-learning (IJSL) on the organizations and communities that host these groups. The short-term IJSL program model combines full-time direct service for one to two weeks in response to genuine and unmet community needs, with structured learning and time for reflection placed in a rich context of Jewish education and values.

The study was designed to capture how a host community's experience with short-term IJSL programs affected the community from the perspective of the leaders of the community based organizations/non-governmental organizations (CBO/NGO) in those communities. To date, relatively little research has examined the benefits and unintended consequences on a community from groups of youth and young adults visiting to conduct short-term service-learning projects. While this study is not designed as an evaluation of IJSL programs, Repair the World expects that the findings of this study will spur further research of the practice.

Study Design

Staff from five organizations with substantial experience offering short-term IJSL programs selected the host communities and the individuals within those host communities to interview about their perception of the community's experience. In most cases these individuals were CBO or NGO representatives who were closely involved with the IJSL project in their communities.

Repair the World and BTW were aware of the potential for bias in collecting data for this study due to the power dynamics inherent in relationships between IJSL organizations and host community NGOs/CBOs. In many cases the IJSL organization is a major source of financial and other resources for a project in a host community. The interview protocol and

IJSL Organizations Participating in Study

- American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)
- American Jewish World Service (AJWS)
- Hillel International
- Jewish Funds for Justice (JFSJ)
- Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future (YU)

interviewer training were designed to help mitigate against this bias, and as a result, the researchers believe that these particular host community informants did feel comfortable sharing their true experiences.

BTW conducted a total of 18 confidential interviews in English, Hebrew, Spanish or Russian. Thirteen interviews were with host community representatives and in-country representatives of IJSL organizations—five U.S., three in Israel, five international—and five interviews were with staff of IJSL organizations participating in this study.

This study was designed to focus on host communities that have had excellent multi-year relationships with experienced IJSL organizations. As such, the findings represent current practices in use in successful programs and are not generalizable to all short-term IJSL programs. The findings apply equally to domestic, international and Israel-based programs that provide a range of services.

IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

Overarching Finding

The key finding of the study is that when the host communities in this study have had positive experiences hosting short-term IJSL projects, their **success was tied to practices and partnerships put into place by IJSL organizations.**

When short-term IJSL projects are done right—meaning that the potential negative impacts are anticipated and proactively addressed—**positive impacts predominate.** Despite widely held beliefs among observers of service-learning that short-term immersive service projects leave the door open to incomplete projects and negative impacts, the host communities in this study were very clear that impacts at the community level over the long term have been only beneficial to the community. While many host community representatives in this study can cite examples of specific negative individual experiences, when considering the impact on the community as a whole, these representatives report no lasting negative effects on their communities from short-term IJSL projects.

Short-Term Outcomes

The host communities included in this study experienced a number of immediate positive outcomes as a result of hosting IJSL volunteers. The IJSL projects met host community expectations for **completing concrete, discrete tasks** such as renovating a classroom or constructing a latrine. Communities also found other immediate, yet unanticipated, benefits, including **jumpstarting residents** into participating in community service, developing **community leaders**, receiving **resources** that would otherwise

“Is the trip a good investment or [should they] just give this money for poor people here? I would host two or three trips during the year instead of taking the money. What happens from the trip is more important than just giving another \$10–\$20 to a poor family.... It is not charity that you give and then it's gone. We are planting a seed, it will grow and will become bigger in many ways.”

—In-country
IJSL Representative

“We have general rules here in [this country]— we don’t expect ladies or girls to work on village projects. And then we see the American girls—they mix the mortar, they are doing the hard work just like the men.. After the Americans leave, the community knows that women can do more. They are seeing their women and girls with different eyes. The [IJSL volunteers] have given our women a new place of honor.”

—Host Community
CBO/NGO
Representative

“It is not enough for an organization to have the will for this work. An organization also needs human resources, a proper team with knowledge, and a strong organizational structure.”

—Host Community
CBO/NGO
Representative

have been unavailable to the community and providing an opportunity for a **rich cultural exchange** between community members and volunteers.

Longer Lasting Impacts

A longer lasting positive impact, which may or may not have been anticipated by the host community, was the expansion of the **communities’ capacity** to address ongoing needs; short-term IJSL projects expanded some community assets that could be sustained in the community after the volunteer’s returned home. Among the indicators of enhanced community capacity cited were new knowledge, strengthened intra-community communications and more effective leaders.

CURRENT PRACTICES

Successful Current Practices

In the high-performing partnerships between the host communities and IJSL organizations in this study, the partners have a shared understanding of what it takes for a project to be successful. Successful projects are characterized by **shared vision and values** of the host site organization and the IJSL organization, **shared realistic expectations** of what can be accomplished in a short-term IJSL project, consistent **communication** and personal connection between the host community and an individual staff member at the IJSL organization, and **shared decision making** processes.

Host Community Readiness

To reap the most positive benefits, host community representatives included in this study identified that the host NGO/CBO, along with others in the host community, need sufficient time and staff capacity for **advance planning** and a **stable structure** for the project’s implementation. Host communities need an understanding of the **limitations of volunteers**, as well as a good **relationship between the on-the-ground NGO/CBO and community residents**.

The IJSL practitioners included in this study agreed with these characteristics and identified a few additional elements needed by the host community for success, including flexibility in working with schedules of volunteers, a person in authority in the community to be involved in projects, adherence to safety criteria, an understanding of service-learning and familiarity with the mission of the IJSL organization.

IJSL Organization Readiness

The host communities included in this study also identified what IJSL organizations need to have in place for short-term IJSL projects to have

positive community impacts. They report that IJSL organizations need a commitment and adequate resources to thoroughly **prepare student volunteers** prior to the trip. Ideally the student volunteers are open, reliable, willing to learn and work hard, and eager to connect with the host community. IJSL organizations also need to provide **well trained, well prepared group leaders** as well as a good curriculum built around learning goals for the group leaders to implement. In addition, host communities identified the need for **sensitivity to the financial constraints** of host communities and **flexibility** and **humility** on the part of the IJSL organization.

The IJSL practitioners included in this study agreed with these factors and identified three additional indicators of organizational readiness for operating short-term IJSL programs: clear, enforced safety policies; a thorough screening process to identify the right participants; and a process for ongoing organizational reflection about how to meet needs of the host communities.

CHALLENGES

Host communities choose to continue to engage in short-term IJSL projects because of the benefits they experience, but the projects and partnerships are not without challenges. Some challenges inherent to short-term IJSL will remain no matter how well IJSL practitioners and host community partners work together. Other challenges can be significantly minimized by good practices.

Challenges inherent to short-term IJSL programs include a steep learning curve in the first year of a project, time limits on what can be finished or accomplished, difficulty in parting at the time of the volunteers' departure, and shifts in priorities or funding decisions within the IJSL organizations.

Other challenges of short-term IJSL projects can be addressed by good planning and management and by paying attention to the lessons learned by other IJSL programs. These challenges include providing accommodations for volunteers, addressing language barriers and building the cultural competency of the volunteers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD

The findings of the study raise some important implications that extend beyond any single program or organization and instead speak to the nature and capacity of the short-term IJSL program model. The full report includes implications for the field of IJSL and for Repair the World, along with suggestions for further research on the impact of IJSL on host communities.

“The only thing it would be best to avoid—but how?—is the difficulty of separation at the end of the week of volunteering.”

—Host Community
CBO/NGO
Representative

Introduction

When people talk about service, service-learning or immersive Jewish service-learning (IJSL) in particular, what comes to mind about the nature of the experience for those serving and those served? What is the potential and actual impact of these programs? What does it take to make high-quality programs possible? What is their real contribution to repairing the world?

This study begins to look into some of these questions. Commissioned by Repair the World, the study explores the impacts of short-term IJSL programs on the communities that host and are served by these programs, and identifies some emerging practices that support positive community impacts.

ABOUT REPAIR THE WORLD

Repair the World's mission is to make service a defining element of Jewish life, learning and leadership. Through mobilizing Jews of all ages and backgrounds to serve with integrity and authenticity, the organization seeks to achieve its vision of an inspired Jewish community fully committed to and engaged in repairing the world. Repair the World focuses on building the field of Jewish service-learning through grant-making, leadership, support for educators, research and program evaluation, in addition to mobilizing individuals to serve and creating capacity and commitment in Jewish organizations for Jewish service-learning.

SHORT-TERM IJSL PROGRAM MODEL

IJSL is a program model that combines direct service in response to genuine and unmet community needs with structured learning and time for reflection, placed in a rich context of Jewish education and values. IJSL engages participants in full-time, direct service for at least seven days in a community separate from their daily lives.

Short-term IJSL programs for young adults—often called alternative winter or spring breaks—last from one to four weeks and are offered by a variety of organizations with a correspondingly wide variety of program models. In a large organization IJSL may be a very small part of their work, with as many as seven steps of connection between the organization’s leadership and the members of a host community (from the organization’s leaders at headquarters, through various staff focused on particular content and geographic areas, to a direct liaison at a host community based organization (CBO) or non-governmental organization (NGO), to community members). In contrast, IJSL can be a primary focus of a smaller organization’s work, with a more direct link between the organization’s leadership and their host community partners.

STUDY PURPOSE

In 2010 Repair the World commissioned BTW *informing change* to conduct an exploratory study about the impacts of short-term IJSL on the organizations and communities that host these groups. Numerous studies have been conducted about the impact of service-learning on individual participants, but relatively little research has examined the benefits and unintended consequences on a community from groups of youth and young adults visiting to conduct short-term service projects, whether Jewish service-learning or service more generally. Repair the World’s value of authentic service—service freely given that meets real community needs in ways that respect recipients’ culture and individual dignity—is at the root of its interest in this study.

Through this study Repair the World is seeking to gain a better understanding of the positive, negative and unintended impacts of short-term IJSL programs on host communities, as well as practices currently in place in IJSL programs that create and maintain relationships with host communities, and promising practices for creating and maintaining relationships going forward. In addition, the study includes a review of research and writing done on the impact of short-term immersive service on host communities in the secular and faith based fields of service-learning.

It is important to note that this study was not intended to be an evaluation of IJSL programs but rather an initial effort to explore the value of IJSL for host communities. Repair the World expects that the findings of this study will spur further research and evaluation.

STUDY DESIGN

This study is designed to capture how a host community's experience with short-term IJSL programs has affected the community as a whole over time from the perspective of CBO/NGO leaders in those communities. Findings are aggregated across all organizations participating in the study. The study was not designed to focus on specific program models or the experience of individual community members.

Repair the World invited five grantee organizations with substantial experience offering short-term IJSL programs to nominate host organizations and host communities to include in the study. Criteria for nominated host communities included having an excellent working relationship with the IJSL organization and having worked with the IJSL organization with for at least two years. Domestic, international and Israel based programs were included. The five organizations selected by Repair the World to identify host community organizations and individual key informants to participate in the study include¹:

- American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)
- American Jewish World Service (AJWS)
- Hillel International
- Jewish Funds for Justice (JFSJ)
- Yeshiva University, Center for the Jewish Future (YU)

The selected IJSL organizations were asked to identify the most appropriate person in the host community to speak about their perception of the community's experience, in most cases a representative of a CBO or NGO who was intimately involved with the service project. Interviewees were guaranteed confidentiality, and examples shared in the findings are generalized to protect the identity of the informant or community involved.

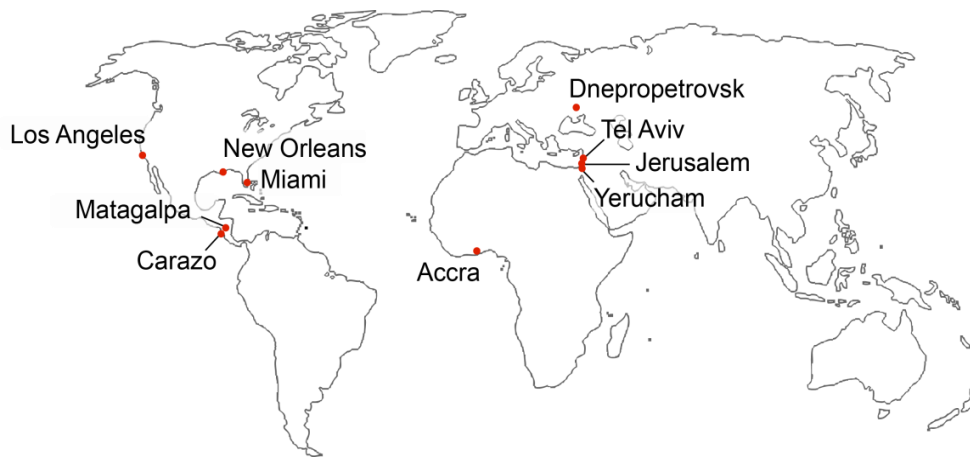
Repair the World and BTW were aware of the potential for bias in collecting data for this study. Even in the most reciprocal of partnerships, IJSL practitioners are in a position of power—in many cases they are a major source of financial and other resources for a project in a host community. There was legitimate concern that this imbalance would prevent host community representatives from identifying challenges or negative impacts. The interview protocols were carefully designed to try to avoid this issue, and the experienced interviewers selected for this study were all trained in how to mitigate against this bias. As a result, the researchers believe that these particular host community informants did feel comfortable sharing their true experiences.

¹ In the remainder of this report these groups are identified collectively as "IJSL organizations".

BTW conducted a total of 18 confidential interviews in English, Hebrew, Spanish or Russian:

- 13 interviews with host community representatives² and in-country representative of IJSL organizations³
 - ◆ 5 domestic (4 in New Orleans)
 - ◆ 3 Israel
 - ◆ 5 other international (Nicaragua, Ghana, Ukraine)
- 5 interviews with staff of IJSL organizations participating in this study: AJWS, Hillel, JDC, JFSJ, YU

Host Community Locations



This study was designed to focus on host communities that have had excellent relationships over time with experienced IJSL organizations; as such, the findings represent current practices in use in successful programs. Because IJSL is a relatively young field, rather than measuring broader outcomes across all IJSL programs, this study takes an exploratory approach to understanding what is working in IJSL programs that are the “best of the best.” It takes significant time, effort and expertise to do IJSL well, and starting with strong host community relationships to see what IJSL looks like in the best-case scenario provides the field with data that will build towards an outcomes study in the future. By design the study did not include interviews with individuals or organizations that had negative or failed experiences or partnerships. Therefore, it is important to note that these findings only apply to a select group of successful programs and are not generalizable to all short-term IJSL programs.

² Appendix A contains a list of the host community organizations included in this study.

³ In-country representatives oversee service-learning for North American based IJSL organizations that country.

THIS REPORT

This report presents high-level research findings aggregated across the five IJSL organizations and 11 host community organizations included in the study. The findings apply equally to domestic, international and Israel-based programs that provide a range of services. Where there are distinctions between program location or type, this is clearly noted.

The report is organized in four sections:

1. Impacts on host communities
2. Current practices in IJSL projects
3. IJSL in the context of other immersive service-learning research
4. Implications of the findings and considerations for moving forward

Appendix B contains an annotated bibliography of research/writing on the impact of short-term immersive service on host communities in the secular and faith based fields of service-learning.

“Is the trip a good investment or [should they] just give this money for poor people here? I would host two or three trips during the year instead of taking the money. What happens from the trip is more important than just giving another \$10–\$20 to a poor family.... It is not charity that you give and then it's gone. We are planting a seed, it will grow and will become bigger in many ways.”

—In-country
IJSL Representative

Impacts on Host Communities

As noted earlier, the research that has been done on short-term immersive service-learning has focused primarily on the benefits to participants, and less is known about the lasting impact on host communities.

Yet based on their experience, veteran service-learning practitioners in any setting, not just IJSL, know that only some CBOs/NGOs are able to welcome a group of young volunteers or students and receive significant, lasting benefits from their short-term service. When a student group plans a multi-day service project that involves months of planning as well as direct expenses of travel and accommodations, it's enough to make these practitioners pause to ask, “Will all this be worth it? Is this what the community really wants or needs?”

OVERARCHING FINDING

Based on the results of this study, which focused on high-performing IJSL programs, the answer to that question is that if there is a strong and frank partnership that adheres to best practices, then yes, it will be worth it for the host community.

When host communities have had positive experiences hosting short-term IJSL projects, success is tied to practices and partnerships put into place by IJSL practitioner organizations.

The IJSL organizations included in this study understand the strengths and weaknesses in the short-term immersive service model and have developed practices that maximize strengths and compensate for weaknesses. This is not an easy task—it takes consistently thoughtful and thorough practices to deliver a positive result in the host community along with a positive experience for volunteer participants. It also takes time to develop the cross-organizational partnerships and work out the operational systems for the most beneficial projects. Host organizations and their IJSL practitioner

partners report that partnerships take time to mature, and the on-the-ground operations improve exponentially after the first year.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

Host communities did not report experiencing overall negative impacts.

When short-term IJSL projects are done right and the potential negative impacts on a host community are anticipated and proactively addressed, positive impacts predominate. Despite widely held beliefs among observers of service-learning that short-term immersive service projects leave the door open to negative impacts and incomplete projects, the host communities in this study were very clear that impacts at the community level over the long term have been only beneficial to the community.

While many host community representatives could cite examples of specific negative individual experiences that happen in the course of a short-term IJSL program (e.g., a trip leader who had unreasonable demands about baking kosher bread for the Jewish sabbath, a student who threw away food prepared for them by host community members because they didn't like it, a student who was more interested in talking on the cell phone than connecting with community members), when considering the impact on the community as a whole, host communities do not report experiencing lasting negative effects from short-term IJSL projects. They believe that their hard work in conjunction with that of their IJSL program partners to minimize bad experiences is effective.

It is important to remember that the study sample made it less likely that we would find negative impacts since each IJSL organization provided contacts with whom they had strong, multi-year partnerships for inclusion in the study. Therefore, evaluating the full field of short-term IJSL programs regarding the impact of service on host communities is a fruitful area for further study.

“The reaction of the community is positive. The [IJSL project] has resolved a problem, economic and social, in the community.”

—Host Community
CBO/NGO
Representative

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Host communities experience immediate positive impacts in their communities as a result of hosting IJSL volunteers.

Short-term IJSL projects meet host communities' expectations about the completion of concrete, discrete tasks identified by host communities as a need that volunteers can help address. For example, IJSL participants contribute to building houses, schools and latrines; they paint murals, clean up parks and deliver fuel.

Host communities also find that there are other immediate benefits that they did not initially expect as described below.

“Kids from the neighborhood don’t want to make a garden. They don’t want to move horseshit around to fertilize it. But if they’re doing it with college kids from New York, that’s different.”

—Host Community
CBO/NGO
Representative

Projects can jump start residents into participating in the service. The young volunteers bring energy and excitement to the community and help local residents realize that the work they are doing is both fun and important to their community. The volunteers’ presence is an incentive for residents to get involved, especially community residents who are in the same age group as the volunteers. In one community, for example, IJSL volunteers are helping spur a whole movement of volunteerism by young people in a way that had not happened there before.

Projects are opportunities for host communities to develop local leaders. Community members identified by CBOs/NGOs or intermediary organizations to lead/guide IJSL related work in their neighborhood or village often retain the skills and momentum for change that were spurred by participation in the IJSL project even after volunteers leave. For example, in one community local master tradesmen were included in planning the project and training a corps of unskilled workers and volunteers to be the project work crews. This experience showed the tradesmen a new way of using their expertise and gave them practice in leadership.

Host communities receive resources that they would not otherwise have. The building and construction tools and surplus materials supplied specifically for use in the IJSL project usually remain in the community after the project is over. In some cases, resources related to cultural and educational components of the project (e.g., equipment and supplies for music, art, youth sports) also remain in and enrich the host community.

“The community is joyful to have visitors. Community members are always willing to teach what they know and to share what they have, their struggles, their accomplishments and the life situation that are so different.”

—Host Community
CBO/NGO
Representative

Host communities enjoy and feel they benefit from cultural exchange with volunteers. This is particularly true in international sites; learning about the lives of American young people was described by one as “world-opening.” Host community residents, both in the U.S. and internationally, also found unanticipated benefits in educating others about their community and their lives. Community members were empowered by teaching others through the facts of their everyday existence, something they had not done before and would not have had the resources to do without a partner organization sponsoring the exchange. This is also true in domestic IJSL projects—representatives of these host communities report the residents liked having an opportunity to share their lives and stories with young people from other parts of the country and who are very different from them.

Host community members build individual relationships and make meaningful connections with the volunteers. Through electronic and social media communications like e-mail and Facebook, many young people in host communities maintain their connections with their IJSL volunteer

counterparts after the volunteers have returned home. In host communities where a majority of community members are Jewish the sense of personal connection to the Jewish volunteers is especially poignant. Jewish community members express feeling more connected to the Jewish diaspora as a result of meeting and working alongside the Jewish young adult volunteers.

What difference does it make that the volunteers are Jewish?

For non-Jewish host communities, exposure to Jewish ideas and practices was interesting, although it was not of primary importance to their experience.

CBO/NGO representatives reported that most of the host community residents involved in the service projects did know that the volunteers were Jewish; those representatives with a faith-based approach to service found working with Jewish organizations/individuals to be meaningful. Some host community CBO/NGO representatives made it clear that for IJSL organizations to provide authentic service in communities, service needs to come first, and creating a “Jewish experience” for volunteers is a secondary goal.

For primarily Jewish host communities, the fact that the volunteers were Jewish was an important aspect of their experience. In these communities there was a heightened sense of connection and a desire to participate in Jewish rituals and activities (e.g., Shabbat) with the volunteers.

“We have general rules here in [this country]— we don’t expect ladies or girls to work on village projects. And then we see the American girls—they mix the mortar, they are doing the hard work just like the men.. After the Americans leave, the community knows that women can do more. They are seeing their women and girls with different eyes. The [IJSL volunteers] have given our women a new place of honor.”

—Host Community
CBO/NGO
Representative

LONGER LASTING IMPACTS

Short-term IJSL projects make a contribution to host community assets that can be sustained at the community level even after the project is over and volunteers have gone home.

Among the often cited indicators of a community’s increased capacity for positive change are new knowledge, strengthened intra-community communications and more effective leaders. These are among the benefits that host community representatives reported following short-term IJSL service projects.

For example, two different host community CBOs/NGOs reported greater community willingness to confer leadership roles on women after experiencing women’s abilities—in these cases physical strength and the ability to be economic providers for their families—through these programs. Other host CBOs/NGOs improved their ability to reach and teach community members because of the excitement and new skills generated by the presence of the student volunteers.

“[Community residents] see how the apartment building is being transformed. They care about what the volunteers are doing and can join in something that is a work in progress. It’s very empowering.”

—In-country
IJSL Representative

Participation in short-term IJSL projects can also contribute to a shift in community self-identity—an enhanced belief among community members that they have the inherent capacity to be strong and vibrant moving forward.

Several host community representatives described a greater sense of pride and confidence among the community residents who participated alongside the IJSL participants during the service projects in low-income and underserved communities. This boost to civic pride helped the host community CBOs/NGOs continue or expand their own work after the IJSL project ended.

Current Practices

A key piece of this research was to understand the practices that lead to positive host community impact. This chapter documents how high-performing partnerships between host communities and IJSL practitioner organizations are leading to a shared understanding of what it takes for a project to have a positive impact on the host community, as well as the common challenges that must be addressed.

“Their commitment to the learning end of service-learning is the key. Building community involves a learning process. There’s a lot of service that is just help, but not real learning ... The [IJSL volunteers] do it right. The relationship between faith and service and community organizing really shows.”

—Host Community
CBO/NGO
Representative

Successful partnerships and projects are characterized by:

- Shared vision and values of the host organization and the IJSL organization
- Shared realistic expectations of what can be accomplished
- Consistent communication and personal connection
- Shared decision making processes and general agreement that the host community takes the lead in identifying the community need to be addressed

SUCCESSFUL CURRENT PRACTICES

Shared vision and values

IJSL organizations and host community CBOs/NGOs need to have missions and approaches to service that align and have a mutual understanding of one another’s goals and motivations. While IJSL best practices already articulate the need for service to be authentic (i.e., serving a real need as identified by the community), these organizations have taken the issue of reciprocity to something bigger. The host community CBOs/NGOs included in this study strongly believe that *service* leads to greater positive community impacts than funding alone—bringing volunteers to host communities is worth it despite the time, effort and money it takes to do it well.

Shared realistic expectations of what can be accomplished

IJSL organizations and host community NGOs agree that in addition to a shared understanding of the benefits of service, there should also be a shared practical understanding that short-term IJSL projects can usually only accomplish one small piece of work that contributes to bigger goals. This requires both the host community and IJSL organization to do an honest self assessment of what they can and cannot provide and mutually define parameters for what can and cannot happen in a project.

In New Orleans, for example, short-term IJSL volunteers often contribute to construction projects that require expert, technical work by professionals. The limit of the volunteer work is understood by both the IJSL practitioner and the host organization. For the host CBO/NGO, this means finding appropriate work and supervision for the volunteers at the time that they arrive in the community, and for the IJSL practitioner it means setting the right level of expectations among the volunteers and reinforcing both the limits and the importance of their contribution in the service-learning curriculum.

Consistent communication & personal connection

Each IJSL project involves many layers of people and relationships, unique to that partnership, requiring clear and consistent communication practices at many levels. Each successful IJSL project in this study had someone within the IJSL organization in a liaison position who ensured that this happened. This is an absolutely crucial person who served as the fulcrum/pivot point between the IJSL organization and the CBO/NGO. It is also important for the liaison to have in person, on-site time with the CBOs/NGOs. This is a worthy investment.

“When we are developing a project, we are constantly in contact with [the IJSL liaison]. And after a project is complete, there is also communication. [The IJSL liaison] visits our community regularly.”

—Host Community
CBO/NGO
Representative

The individuals in this liaison position hold different titles and responsibilities, depending on their IJSL organization structure. In most cases involvement with IJSL programs is only one aspect of their responsibilities. They may reside in the host community or elsewhere. What they hold in common is a knowledge of and sensitivity to the on-the-ground details of what makes their host community unique as well as good matches for short-term IJSL groups. The IJSL staff liaisons maintain very close connections with the host CBO/NGO staff through frequent communications and some degree of in-person visits. The liaisons stay informed about the political and civic issues in the host communities; they follow local issues related to their short-term IJSL projects, including internal dynamics of the host CBO/NGO, local government or other key partner for their projects. Their supervisors acknowledge the important role these liaisons play as the key communicator and problem-solver within the critical IJSL/community partnership.

As complex as it is, from the perspective of host communities, at ground level, IJSL organizations have done a good job of letting the CBO/NGO know who the go-to people are who can answer questions. IJSL organizations have taken responsibility for making sure this is happening. It also requires the right form of communication (e.g., for some host community leaders a phone call is more effective than email).

Shared decision-making processes

In successful projects, IJSL organizations and host communities make decisions about the scope and logistics of a project together, but once the service begins, the host community representatives take the lead. Shifting the lead role to the CBO/NGOs makes it more likely that the needs of the host community will be prioritized.

READINESS FACTORS

Host Community Readiness

In addition to the characteristics of strong relationships among partners described in the preceding section, host community representatives identify some factors that improve the prospects for success. To reap the most positive benefits and positive community impacts, the host CBO/NGO and host community needs:

- **Sufficient time and staff capacity** within the local community group for advance planning, and a **stable structure for implementation** with effective leadership to carry the project through to the finish. A host community needs to have a point person responsible for organization and planning, including making sure that the right leaders and right community volunteers are on board and are knowledgeable about goals, roles and responsibilities in the project. It is extremely helpful to have skilled community volunteers or CBO/NGO staff teach pertinent skills to volunteers and then oversee their work. It is also critical to ensure that materials and resources needed for the project are in place (e.g., paint, clean water, etc.).
- **An understanding of the limitations of volunteers** and the context of volunteers. Host communities need to be aware that volunteers will have basic skills, probably a low level of technical ability and not expertise. Host communities also need to be aware of the accommodation needs of volunteers (e.g., water; healthy, kosher food; etc.).

“It is not enough for an organization to have the will for this work. An organization also needs human resources, a proper team with knowledge, and a strong organizational structure.”

—Host Community
CBO/NGO
Representative

“We need partners who show understanding by being flexible. If we have to leave a site early because that’s our only chance to hear an amazing speaker and they don’t understand that, we run into trouble.”

—IJSL Practitioner

“When the volunteers are told ahead of time what to expect, it’s so good. They need to have in mind that it’s hard work. The homeowner has lost everything—be careful, this is somebody’s home, their bedroom. They need to understand the worth of what they do.”

—Host Community
CBO/NGO
Representative

- **A good relationship between the on the ground CBO/NGO and community residents.** Community members are more interested in participating in service projects when they know and trust the CBO/NGO leading the work.

IJSL practitioners agreed with these and identified a few additional elements host communities’ need for success, including: flexibility in working with schedules of volunteers (e.g., time for meals, reflection, breaks, etc.); a person in authority in the community to be involved in projects (e.g., the mayor or a family central to community leadership); adherence to safety criteria; and an understanding of service-learning in addition to familiarity with the mission of the IJSL organization

IJSL Organization Readiness

Host communities also identified what IJSL organizations need to have in place for short-term IJSL projects to have positive community impacts.

- **Commitment and resources to thoroughly prepare student volunteers prior to the trip.** Before arriving in the host community, student volunteers need to understand the context of the community and its needs. Students should understand what they will be doing and be primed to work alongside community member. Students need to know what to expect about accommodations and that they are expected to exhibit good behavior and work well together as a group. It is also helpful for students to understand the ethos of service and why they volunteer, with a personal and group commitment to service being first and foremost.
- **Student volunteers with the right attributes.** Host communities want to work with students who are open and have a willingness to learn and work hard, who are reliable and who want to connect with the community. One informant described this as “pure desire to give and be part of the community.”
- **Well trained, well prepared group leaders** who give student volunteers good supervision while they are in the host community—both the right leaders and enough leaders—as well as a **good curriculum built around their learning goals** that will be implemented by group leaders.
- **Sensitivity to the financial restraints of host communities** and a willingness and ability to put in money up front to cover costs or to pay for last minute expenses.

- **Flexibility and humility on part of the IJSL organization.** Host communities appreciate working with IJSL organizations who do not see themselves as saviors swooping in to rescue the community but partners who are willing to meet the needs of the host community.

IJSL practitioners agreed with these and identified three additional indicators of readiness for IJSL organizations: clear, enforced safety policies; a thorough screening process to identify the right participants; and a process for ongoing reflection about how to meet needs of the host communities.

CHALLENGES

Host communities choose to continue to engage in short-term IJSL projects because of the benefits they experience, but the projects and partnerships are not without challenges. Some of these challenges are inherent to short-term IJSL and will remain no matter how well IJSL practitioners and host community partners work together. Other challenges can be significantly minimized by good practices. Below are the most common challenges encountered by the IJSL organizations and host communities included in this study.

Challenges inherent to short-term IJSL programs

Several characteristics of the short-term IJSL program model, as it is most commonly practiced, contribute to its market appeal to young adults. The short duration matches the needs and interests of young adults; they are able to leave their university studies or jobs for the seven to twenty days required by the program. The peer learning nature of IJSL and traveling with a group to a distant, interesting location also appeals to young adult participants. These inherent characteristics of IJSL also create the key challenges within the practice. Other challenges result from the internal pressures and decisions of the larger organizations that sponsor IJSL programs.

➔ Steep learning curve in the first year of a project

Finding and developing authentic service projects in locations that match the interests of participants is an ongoing task of IJSL practitioners. Once the projects and host communities are identified, it takes time to establish working relationships and establish practices that lead to positive community experiences. The host communities in this study made a number of adjustments to their programs after the first year of the partnership, including making sure that volunteers spent more time on actual service work, improving communication channels between the host

community CBO/NGO and the IJSL in-country representative or identifying projects better suited for short-term volunteers with basic skills.

→ Time limits on what can be finished or accomplished

The short time frame of these IJSL programs means that only some projects are appropriate. Within these time limits, host community representatives say it is important for both the volunteers and the community to be able to see the result of their work. IJSL organizations and host communities are mindful of this when planning a project. Some service is designed so that an entire project can be completed in the time that volunteers are there, (e.g., building a school classroom, painting a mural). Other service projects give volunteers responsibility for one piece of bigger projects where seeing results can be less immediate, (e.g., painting or installing drywall). Key to making this work is helping volunteers understand that they are contributing to something bigger than their particular service project.

→ Difficulty in parting when volunteers leave

It can be hard for host communities to say goodbye to volunteers. Even when host communities know that the volunteers will be with them only for a short time, they sometimes felt abandoned when the volunteers returned home. This is held in tension with host communities feeling that their connection to the volunteers is meaningful because they are not forgotten—it is still sad and hard to feel left behind whether the volunteer is going home to the next state or halfway around the world. IJSL organizations did make an effort to make people aware of how long volunteers would be in their community and the short nature of relationships to try to reduce the discomfort experienced when volunteers leave.

→ Handling changing priorities or funding decisions

In designing their service projects in host communities, IJSL practitioners usually anticipate a finite time period for their participation. They do not see themselves continuing to support the same service project or the same host CBO/NGO indefinitely. Still, unanticipated reductions in levels of support or volunteers can cast a sense of gloom over host CBOs/NGOs and community members, requiring more attention to the partnership and the planning of any continuing IJSL presence. It is important to remember that even in the most reciprocal of partnerships, IJSL practitioners are in a position of power—in many cases they are a major source of the money and resources for a project. If an IJSL project must be suspended or a grant reduced, it is usually a single-sided decision by the IJSL organization. Planning for and communicating this

“The only thing it would be best to avoid—but how?—is the difficulty of separation at the end of the week of volunteering.”

—Host Community
CBO/NGO
Representative

kind of decision requires a commitment of time by the IJSL organization. If this is not done or not done well, the IJSL organization risks losing a significant amount of the intangible positive impact accrued in the community in earlier years.

Challenges that have been/can be minimized by good practices

Other challenges of short-term IJSL projects can be addressed by good planning and management and by paying attention to the lessons learned in other IJSL programs.

→ Providing accommodations for volunteers

Arranging food, lodging and transportation for volunteers once they arrive at a host community is a time and resource intensive effort. There are a variety of models for providing accommodations for volunteers. Some CBOs/NGOs arrange accommodations for volunteers; for other groups the IJSL organization arranges all accommodations, including transportation; other projects have a hybrid of the two. In almost all cases IJSL organizations cover the cost of accommodating volunteers. Host communities have a preference for smaller groups because they are more manageable. Volunteers have been lodged in schools, on university campuses, at summer camps, at a community hostel, in community members' homes and other places.

All host communities and IJSL organizations have to address the same issues when arranging accommodations for volunteers:

- Safety
- Food (this includes providing kosher food, but also quality/kind of food available) and water
- Lodging (taking into consideration availability of bathrooms, showers, adequate light, distance from work site, etc.)
- Transportation from lodging to worksites
- Weather
- Space for reflection activities, time to relax with community members and time to have fun outside of service activities

In addition to addressing these basic necessities, groups have found that it is important once volunteers arrive to do some kind of orientation to the community.

Accommodating volunteers is one of the few areas where there is a marked difference between domestic projects and international/Israel

“There are some things about us and our work that aren’t always easy for partners. We require accommodation for kosher meals, time for Shabbat, space to stay, space to meet. Our timeline can be a challenge.”

—IJSL Practitioner

projects. The New Orleans area, in particular, has a kind of volunteer “industry” post-Katrina that is used to providing accommodations for large groups. There are many ready to go options for accommodations at places like university campuses or summer camps. International/Israeli sites require more time and resources to arrange for appropriate accommodation, sometimes developed over many months or even years.

→ **Language barriers**

In non-English-speaking locations, host communities and volunteers are more likely to have positive experiences when a project includes an experienced translator who is familiar with local culture and able to communicate well with both community members and volunteers. In a few instances, this has not been the case and host communities felt this stifled individual interaction or led to misunderstandings of what people were saying. Ideally volunteers will have some facility with the language of the host country, and some host NGO representatives will have some English proficiency.

→ **Cultural competency**

In both international and domestic projects, it is important that volunteers are aware of and sensitive to the local culture. Most of the negative individual experiences reported by CBO/NGO representatives were related to cultural or interpersonal insensitivity, for example volunteers misunderstanding a local resident’s joke about marriage or volunteers describing substandard housing in a disrespectful way. Volunteers should be educated in advance of a project about community norms and practices such as gender roles, communication style and work habits, along with knowledge about the economic realities of the host community. Ideally, pre-trip training in cultural awareness extends beyond an overview of local history, art, food and religion to include cultural mores, for example attitudes about raising children, roles of elders, and ways of demonstrating respect for individuals or positions of authority.

IJSL Current Practices in Context

This study was designed to not only investigate current practices in short-term IJSL, but also to place short-term IJSL in the context of other research about immersive service-learning programs. To this end, BTW conducted a literature review of research on short-term immersive service-learning programs, with a particular emphasis on the potential impacts on host organizations and communities, as well the best practices that lead to positive experiences for communities.

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

BTW consulted leaders in service-learning regarding the current landscape of research on service-learning's impact on host organizations and host communities to identify the most commonly used or recognized research within the secular service-learning arena and to locate any possible emerging or as-yet-unpublished research in this area. With this starting point, we gathered and reviewed the available research using online data sources, individual contacts and recommended bibliographies.

Confirming our assumption, we found that there is very little research or writing that directly addresses the impact of short-term immersive service-learning on host communities. We expanded the scope of our review to include national and international service-learning in K-12, higher education and missionary programs, with an emphasis on short-term immersive projects.

It is important to note that our review did not include looking at impacts of longer-term programs, which primarily last between nine months and two years. As BTW documented in our earlier landscape study on Jewish service-learning, the most rigorous and well-respected studies of immersive national

service focus on long-term programs.⁴ Overall the findings from these studies show that participants can provide useful and necessary service to communities, increase organizations' capacity to serve more clients, provide additional services and resources, and have a positive impact on the individuals with whom they work. In addition, community members have positive perceptions of the young adults who serve in their communities and appreciate their efforts. The question remains, however, of whether these types of community impacts from longer-term programs translate to the much different short-term, immersive program model.

With a specific focus on short-term immersive service-learning, we identified eight sources that address host community experiences directly, four of which are focused on short-term immersive programs, and seven resources that speak to host community impact in some way. While most of these resources are research-based, a few are based on experience/anecdotal evidence. An annotated bibliography of relevant research can be found in Appendix B.

FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE

In the literature reviewed for this study, most researchers suggest that service-learning programs have positive impacts on participants and they have mixed impacts on host organizations and host communities. Host organizations and host communities are often not properly engaged or involved in planning, implementation and/or evaluation of short-term service-learning trips. Host organizations and host community members do receive some monetary and non-monetary benefits from these service programs (e.g., income, strengthened partnerships, access to resources). Some of the negative impacts identified include strain on time and resources of staff/community residents, volunteers taking away employment from community residents, harm to the environment and difficult emotional impacts when volunteers leave a community.

This literature review also generated some best practices for pre-, during-, and- post-trip preparations and partnership building strategies that could reduce the negative impacts of short-term immersive service-learning programs on host organizations and host communities.

EMERGING BEST PRACTICES

Current practices of the IJSL organizations included in this study—the best of the best—are closely aligned with best practices identified in our literature

⁴ BTW *informing change* (March 2009). Jewish Service Learning: What Is and What Could Be, pp.F1-F10.

review. The overlap of these practices identifies the following attributes of short-term immersive service-learning programs that are critical for positive impacts on host communities.

- **Good match between the volunteer/service (IJSL) organization and the host community organization**

Organizations have aligned mission and goals, shared realistic expectations and choose projects that can be accomplished given the time frame and cultural norms.

- **Well-prepared volunteers and trip leaders**

Trip leaders and volunteers know what to expect, and trip leaders have the skills and training to support host community leaders in using volunteers in helpful ways.

- **The right resources in place prior to the service trip**

The resources needed for a service program—whether accommodations for volunteers or supplies needed for service activities—are thought through well in advance.

- **Prioritization of community needs**

Partner organizations carefully consider the impact of a project on CBO/NGO staff and finances and expect volunteers to be focused on serving the community, not meeting their own needs (including the desire for a Jewish or other faith-based experience).

- **Attention to relationships**

Projects include opportunities for real connections and integration with community members, as well as a transition plan to help volunteers leave gracefully and plans for volunteers to follow up with the community after leaving. Ideally projects are part of a long-term commitment to a community.

- **Regular Evaluation**

Service-learning organizations regularly measure the impacts they are having on host communities and engage their host community partners to reflect on how they can improve their practices.

Implications & Considerations

The findings from this exploratory study represent a first step in understanding the impact of short-term IJSL programs on host communities. We hope it will lead to further research that will build on what was learned.

We believe these findings have implications for the Jewish service-learning field—including existing and potential IJSL practitioners, the field overall, as well as Repair the World. We also believe that this work can help inform the practice of secular and other faith-based immersive service programs to the extent that there is overlap in program design and opportunities for partnership. We provide the following implications as a jumping off point for consideration.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- **Long-term Commitment:** The community impacts described in this study are the result of multi-year, intensive investments in relationships with host communities. Building partnerships and putting practices into place that lead to positive impacts for those served by short-term IJSL programs requires a true commitment to an understanding of the Jewish value of tikkun olam—human responsibility for fixing or repairing the world—that puts host communities first. Even though the programs last for only a week or two, it can take years to establish solid relationships. As a result, it is important for practitioners doing or interested in this work to recognize the long-term nature of the engagement—both in terms of what it takes to do the work well and how long it takes to see intended results.
- **Capacity:** Organizations that are interested in providing opportunities for volunteers to engage in short-term IJSL need to seriously consider their ability to meet the best practices and proactively address the challenges of creating IJSL projects in order to have positive impacts

on host communities and participants. Given the effort required to develop partnerships that are respectful, inclusive and mutually beneficial, choosing to enter this work should be undertaken with great care. Is leading a short-term IJSL program the right match for the organization's skills and capacity? While the short-term IJSL model can be appealing for organizations, it may be important to look for partnerships with experienced IJSL programs or other service-learning organizations to provide the capacity needed to achieve positive results for host communities.

- **Mission Alignment:** Short-term IJSL programming is a particular strategy designed to achieve a particular type of outcome for participants and host communities. This work is not for every Jewish organization and should be considered in light of an organization's overall mission.
- **Emerging Best Practices:** Organizations currently offering short-term IJSL programs can use the best practices identified by their colleagues and host communities to identify areas for improvement in their own practice. These findings can be particularly useful in developing new community relationships. For example, how can IJSL practitioners communicate with partners about the potential unexpected positive impacts, like developing leaders, and about the potential challenges? Practitioners can also begin to hone in on the practices that are most crucial for positive impact in host communities and how these compare to what they know about best practices for positive impact on participants.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD

This study suggests some important implications that span beyond the reach of individual programs or organizations and speak to the nature and capacity of the short-term IJSL program model.

- **Partnerships:** Because of the capacity and resources needed to create and sustain effective short-term IJSL programs that can positively impact host communities, this research suggests considering how to explore partnerships across organizations to achieve the same ends. There are opportunities to share certain programmatic components across organizations (e.g., recruitment, staff training, etc.—and some of this is already happening). There is also the potential to partner with other organizations to plan and deliver programs, including Jewish communal organizations that want to expand their program offerings, secular and other faith-based service programs that could be partners in program delivery,

community development and aid organizations with strong connections to community needs that could develop host community interest and engagement.

- **Standards of Practice:** With guidance from Repair the World, IJSL practitioners are currently engaged in a process of developing standards of practice for the field. This research should contribute to the conversations about criteria for authentic service and the characteristics of successful projects. What role should positive host community experience play in developing IJSL programs and evaluating their effectiveness?⁵
- **Professional Development:** Because of the critical importance of the individuals who make these short-term IJSL programs possible—from trip leaders to the IJSL community liaison and other staff in between—it will be important to ensure that there are opportunities to provide effective and efficient training for staff in these positions. At the field level, this speaks to the need for developing and sharing best practices and evolving professional standards.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The primary research implication from this study is that further research and evaluation is warranted. By examining short-term IJSL programs identified as “best in class,” this study answered one key question, namely, **can** high quality IJSL programs have a positive impact on host communities served. While the answer to this basic question is **yes**, there is much more to be learned, including the following:

- Which IJSL programs in existence are meeting a standard of positive community impact?
- What does community impact really look like at the community level? How does this impact play out for various members of a community?
- At what point does a drop in program quality produce an overall negative impact from the community perspective?

IMPLICATIONS FOR REPAIR THE WORLD

As the convener, supporter and leader of the Jewish service-learning field, Repair the World plays an important role in promoting, supporting and

⁵ The IJSL Interim Standards of Practice can be found in Appendix C.

enhancing IJSL. The implications for Repair build upon and support the implications for others.

- **Disseminate and Stimulate Discussion Around the Research Findings:** Given the dearth of research on the impact of short-term IJSL on host communities served, it will be important for Repair to disseminate these findings to both share what has been learned and promote further investigation. Interested audiences include IJSL practitioners, funders, secular and other faith-based service programs, and the Jewish community broadly. It will be important to use these findings to stimulate discussion and action around how to define and improve quality programming and how to increase support for effective programs.
- **Support a Research Agenda:** This research was one of the first items on Repair the World's research agenda, and it clearly should not be the last. Repair can continue to play a role for the field in clarifying the importance of further research, defining those research needs, and supporting the research, directly or indirectly, itself.
- **Support Short-term IJSL Program Development:** As IJSL practitioners are working to develop programs and improve their practice, there is an opportunity for Repair to provide training, technical assistance, convening and reflection for individual programs and/or across programs—all in service of program development.

CONCLUSION

We welcome readers to expand upon these implications in their own work and to support and promote the work of others in service of repairing the world.

Host Community Organizations

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)

- JDC Local Office, Dnepropetrovsk Region, Ukraine
- Dnepropetrovsk Hillel, Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine
- JDC Israel Office, Jerusalem, Israel
- Mishol Project, Haifa and other Israeli communities

American Jewish World Service (AJWS)

- Cooperativa de Proyectos Agropecuarios de Diriamba (COOPAD), Nicaragua
- Fundación Denis Ernesto Gonzáles (FDEG), Nicaragua
- Institute for Cultural Affairs (ICA), Ghana

Hillel International

- City Year, Care Force, Miami
- Rebuilding Together, New Orleans
- St. Bernard Project, New Orleans

Jewish Funds for Justice (JFSJ)

- Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement, New Orleans
- Rebuilding Together, New Orleans
- School at Blair Grocery, New Orleans

Yeshiva University, Center for the Jewish Future (YU)

- Community Center of Yerucham, Yerucham, Israel

Annotated Bibliography

INTRODUCTION

BTW consulted leaders in service-learning regarding the current landscape of research on service-learning's impact on host organizations and host communities to identify the most commonly used or recognized research within the secular service-learning arena and to locate any possible emerging or as-yet-unpublished research in this area. With this starting point we gathered and reviewed the available research using online data sources, individual contacts and recommended bibliographies.

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In the literature reviewed, most researchers suggest that service-learning programs have positive impacts on participants and they have mixed impacts on host organizations and host communities. This literature review also generated some best practices for pre-, during-, and post-trip preparations and partnership building strategies that could reduce the negative impacts of short-term immersive service-learning programs on host organizations and host communities.

RESEARCH ON IMPACT OF SERVICE PROGRAMS ON HOST COMMUNITIES

Abravanel, R. (2003). Building Community Through Service-Learning: The Role of the Community Partner. *Education Commission of the States*, 1-16. Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/44/03/4403.pdf>

Abravanel uses the service-learning experience of Nestucca Valley Middle School students' in Beaver, Oregon to understand the relationship between a school and a community organization and provide recommendations on improving this partnership. Using school-based service-learning as a lens, Abravanel recommends alignment of mission and goals among partners (e.g., host organization and volunteer sponsoring organization), assessment of staff capacity and resources to implement and sustain a short-term service-learning program in the host organization, and buy-in from internal staff on the purpose of the program and the role of the

volunteers. According to the author, it is also essential to have cooperation, coordination and collaboration among partners.

Armstrong, S.A. (2006, November). The Role of Short-Term Missions in a Long-Term Missions Strategy. Retrieved from

http://www.nazarenemissions.org/Stories/docs/Resources/NMI_Convention/WS18ArmstrongRole%20of%20STM%20in%20LTMStrategy.pdf

Armstrong discusses the various negative impacts of short-term, international missionary trips. In North America, 1 to 4 million individuals go on short-term missionary trips annually. Approximately 29 percent of all 13 to 17 year-olds in the United States have “gone on a religious mission’s team or religious service project.” According to Armstrong, post-service reflection focuses on the actions of the individual, rather than the collaborative work of the host communities. Upon return, many volunteers speak or write about what they did to or for the host communities, rather than with them. The author cites an example of a North American service trip to Honduras that missed opportunities to build a strong relationships and positively impact the host community by failing to integrate, interact and socialize with the local community (e.g., attending church service, eating meals together). The author argues that there should be additional emphasis on communication between short-term and long-term missionaries and between sponsoring organizations and host organizations. He also promotes working with the local residents to solve problems and/or complete projects rather than doing it for them. Armstrong suggests that the relationship between volunteers and locals should be seen as that of a student and friend.

Furco, A., Goss, M., Leiderman, S., & Zapf, J. (2004). Building Partnerships with College Campuses: Community Perspectives. [Brochure]. Retrieved from

www.cic.edu/caphe/grants/engaging_brochure.pdf

Furco, Goss, Leiderman and Zapf studied the partnership between higher education institutions and community based organizations (CBOs) and provide recommendations on how to build a solid relationship. The authors use focus groups from the evaluation of the Engaging Communities and Campuses grant program and discussion with 21 community organizations representatives at the Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education (CAPHE) 2002 summit to gather data on effective higher education-community partnerships. According to the authors, a CBO can experience any or all of the following benefits from its partnerships with higher education: further advancement of the CBO’s mission, credibility, exposure, access to knowledge and research, an expanded resource base and additional grant opportunities. CBOs can also experience the following risks and costs of being host organizations: the opportunity cost of not doing billable work when creating work or supervising student volunteers, use of limited staff resources to work with volunteers, loss of organizational identity and privacy and possible tension between staff members. The authors provide several recommendations to help reduce the negative impacts of partnerships between higher education institutions and CBOs: a system of accountability for each partner, routine interactions between partners, mutually determined goals on how to select and train volunteers, share and justify rewards as well as resources and risks among partners, and how to assess the community organization’s capacity and resources to determine their roles and responsibilities in the project.

Galiardi, S., Koehn, J., Schroeder, K., & Wood, C. (2009). First Do No Harm: Ideas for Mitigating Negative Community Impacts of Short-term Study Abroad. *Journal of Geography*, 108 (3), 141-147. Retrieved from <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a913824732~db=all~jumptype=rss>

This article evaluates the impacts of one-week long, university-sponsored international study abroad program on host communities. The authors claim that host communities may experience some positive impacts such as economical benefits. However, these are accompanied by negative impacts and consequences to host communities that can only be mitigated, not eliminated. The authors highlighted the following types of negative impacts of short-term service: 1) differences in spending power between volunteers and host communities, 2) negative social, cultural, economical or environmental impacts such as inequitable distribution of gifts and 3) poor behavioral conduct on part of the volunteers. This article provides the following recommendations to mitigate the negative impacts: 1) selective recruitment, 2) pre-planning and debriefing students and host community members on behavioral expectations, cultural differences and responsibilities, 3) developing penalties for misbehaviors, 4) organizational commitment to evaluating and mitigating the negative impacts, 5) developing long-term relationship with a host community and 6) avoiding places where the negative, environmental, social and cultural costs of hosting volunteers are too high. In terms of evaluation, the authors recommend surveying and/or interviewing host communities and project leaders as well as direct observations of students in host communities. The authors agree that there is little reliable data on the impacts of service-learning programs on host communities.

Hilgendorf, A., Martin, A., Nellis, M., Seblonka, K., Stoecker, R., & Tryon, E. (2008). The Challenge of Short-Term Service-Learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 16-26. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cqi/t/text/text-idx?type=simple&c=mjcs&rgn=full+text&q1=tryon>

This article explores the impact of short-term service-learning, defined as semester or less, on host organizations in the United States. The authors rely on interviews with 64 community organizations to learn about these organizations experience with service learners and to make recommendations. They highlight general benefits of short-term service such as altruism and completion of a project. The authors' primarily focus on the negative impacts for the host organizations such as use of staff time and capacity to train and supervise the volunteers, the incompatibility of service-learning with direct client services and, the financial costs of planning and implementing projects. Other issues include the interference of the academic calendar with continuity of volunteer service, poorly trained volunteers, poor quality of performance (especially if the volunteer service is mandatory), workflow disruptions and negative emotional impacts on host communities once the volunteers leave. The authors recommend a project based service-learning model and long-term commitment of same number and quality of volunteers to the host organizations.

Van Engen, J.A. (2000). The Cost of Short Term Missions. *The Other Side*, 20-23. Retrieved from <http://www.ajshonduras.org/joannsarticle.pdf>

Van Engen explores the impact of one-week long, international missionary trips on host communities. According to Van Engen, the volunteers benefit from this experience because

they become more self-aware of their blessings and advantages and gain insight into solving global problems such as poverty and food security. However, short-term missions are associated with negative outcomes such as volunteers taking employment away from locals; volunteers failing to assimilate or integrate into host communities; creating a gap in continuity and competency of service once they leave; and destroying a sense of cohesion and empowerment in the community. The author highlights trade-offs between philanthropy and service, and between sending a foreign trained professional versus training native professionals. The author recommends that service trips should be converted into learning and research trips so volunteers can learn about the host communities, their culture and the problems they face rather than performing basic work that the locals themselves can perform. Van Engen provides the following recommendations to prepare volunteers for their short-term learning trips: 1) pre-trip reading to learn about the people and culture, 2) acquisition of basic language skills prior to the trip, 3) interaction with the locals during the trips, 4) donation of money to project and 5) and upon return, lead efforts to address the problems witnessed in host communities.

Ward, K., & Vernon, A. (1999). *Community Perspectives on Student Volunteerism and Service Learning*. [PDF document presented at the 24th Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, San Antonio, TX]. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED437876&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED437876

Ward and Vernon explore communities' perception of students and faculty members' involvement in service-learning in a two-phase study. In phase one of the study, authors surveyed 65 directors of community service agencies in four towns in a rural Northwestern state using both open-ended and Likert-type scale questions. In the second phase, authors conducted 30 semi-structured follow-up interviews with agency personnel from one community. These researchers found that communities in their study had positive perceptions of campuses in their area. However, organizations' staff and personnel reported some challenges of working with service-learning students such as inconsistency, unpreparedness, and the need for additional coordination and communication with professors. They provide the following recommendations to improve the service-learning experience of host organizations: 1) increase communication between all parties, 2) increase community partners' access to campus, 3) increase collaboration on recruitment, training and retention of service providers and 4) develop guidelines that clearly outline the purpose and expectations of different campus-based service initiatives.

Webb, A.K. (2008). *Background Report on Short-term Missions: In Consideration of the Development of a Catholic Relief Services U.S.-Mexico Border Program*. Retrieved from http://crscollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/short-term_missions_background_report_crs_31408a142.pdf

This report focuses on the impacts of short-term, international missionary trips (i.e., Catholic Relief Services) on host communities and how to improve these trips. Webb conducted a literature review, surveyed 24 individuals from sending and receiving organizations (19 from

“sending” organization and 6 from “receiving” organizations) and interviewed three key informants to gather data.

In 2005, 1.6 million Americans went on short-term mission trips and this number is increasing each year. However, “receiving groups”—also known as host communities—are not sufficiently or purposefully included in the design or the implementation of these trips. The host organizations are aware of the link between short-term mission visitors and funding for the organization or a specific project, which inhibits them from voicing their opinion about volunteers. In addition, the financial and opportunity costs of short-term mission trips sometimes equals per capita income in the country, which begs the question of whether it might be better to give that money directly to communities rather than fund a mission trip. There are some tangible positive impacts of short-term mission trips for host communities including improvement in housing, water and sanitation, and monetary contribution to other projects. Furthermore, volunteers and host community members build connection and relationship, exchange of stories and experiences, and develop a feeling of being loved and accepted. Webb concludes that the following factors need to be considered when designing short-term missions and/or border programs: culture and socio-economic issues, logistics (i.e., meal planning), advocacy, and relationship building and maintenance between “sending” and “receiving” groups.

This report also provides some pre-, during- and post-trip preparations to reduce the negative impacts of short-term missionary trips. The pre-trip recommendations are grouped by following topics: project’s goals, relationship with the receiving, invitation to faith community, discernment, community building, understanding mission, cultural awareness and commissioning. The recommendations for “during” the trip focus on the following topics: building relationships, daily prayer, reflection and processing, personal and project evaluation and closure. Lastly, the post-trip recommendations include: group reflection and processing, telling the story, living the mission here and planning for the future.

RESEARCH ON GENERAL SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMS

The following research and/or evaluation studies do not primarily focus on the impact of short-term immersive service programs on the host communities but do include some mention of the experience of host communities and organizations.

American Democracy Project National Meeting. (2007). *Introduction to International Service-Learning: Engaging Students with the World*. [PowerPoint Slides]. Retrieved from www.aascu.org/programs/adp/07_adp_pa/Brown.ppt

This presentation covers the various components of international service including the impacts on students, sponsoring organizations (e.g., colleges/universities) and host organizations. The presentation outlines the various types of international service-learning programs: intensive short-term, semester long or year-long; faculty-led, in partnership with local institutions or fully embedded in host institutions; and home-stays. Irrespective of the type of international service-learning program a participant engages in, it mostly benefits students. It provides students access to faculty expertise, develops their civic responsibility, and enhances their academic development and life skills. Service-learning also benefits the sponsoring organizations because

it expands the role of the higher education. Lastly, the presenters argue that service-learning provides a wide-range of benefits to host organizations such as cultural diversity in staff, additional staff support, long-term relationships with volunteer and/or sponsoring organizations, and access to special skills and experiences of the volunteers. The presenters provide four key elements of service-learning: 1) pre- and post-service reflection on the activities and structure of service and learning through personal journals, class assignments, presentations, experiential research paper or minute papers, 2) respect for host communities' cultural traditions, 3) reciprocal partnerships that include discussion on structure and service-learning components and 4) return through global citizenship. This presentation provides key designing principles for international service in higher education which includes establishing criteria for volunteer placement, providing pre-service orientation about the community and issuing academic credit for learning rather than service.

Driscoll, A., Holland, B., Gelmon, S., & Kerrigan, S. (1996). An Assessment Model for Service-Learning: Comprehensive Case Studies of Impact on Faculty, Students, Community, and Institutions. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 3 (1), 66-71. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=mjcs;cc=mjcs;rgn=full%20text;idno=3239521.0003.107;didno=3239521.0003.107;view=image;seq=00000001>

These researchers use a comprehensive case study model and pre-and post-surveys to measure the impact of service-learning among four groups: students, faculty members, community agencies and institutions, and to determine the most effective and practical tools for measuring the impacts of service-learning. This pilot study included a sample of four service-learning courses. These researchers found that service-learning affects students in following areas: 1) awareness and involvement in the community, 2) personal development, 3) academic achievement and 4) sensitivity to diversity. The impact on community agencies includes perceived capacity to serve clients, economic and social benefits, and satisfaction with interactions with students. Finally, faculty members perceived that community service experiences could benefit their research and other scholarly work.

Eyler, J.S., & Giles. D.E. (2001). *At A Glance: What We Know About the Effects of Service-Learning on College Students, Faculty, Institutions, and Communities, 1993-2000: Third Edition*. Retrieved from <http://servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/aag.pdf>

Eyler and Giles provide an annotated bibliography of research on service-learning in higher education from 1993-2000. They divided their annotated bibliography into five parts: 1) effects of service-learning on students (e.g., personal, social, learning, career development outcomes for student), 2) effects of the program design on students, 3) impacts of service-learning on faculty, 4) impacts of service-learning on universities and 5) impacts of service-learning on the community. The research and literature that focuses on impacts of service-learning on community and cited by Eyler and Giles includes: Clarke, 2000 (dissertation); Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Bringle & Kremer, 1993; Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996; Gelmon, Holland & Shinnamon, 1998; Gray et al., 1998; Henderson & Brookhart, 1997; Nigro & Wortham, 1998; Ward & Vernon, 1999; Western Washington University, 1994. After a review of these resources, we have included the following works in this annotated bibliography as they focused more on

service-learning and its impact on host communities and/or host organizations: Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996; Gelmon, Holland & Shinnamon, 1998; Gray et al., 1998; and Ward & Vernon, 1999.

Gelmon, S. B., Holland, B. A., & Shinnamon, A. F. (1998). Health Professions Schools in Service to the Nation: 1996-1998 Final Evaluation Report. Retrieved from <http://www.servicelearning.org/library/resource/2370>

Gelmon, Holland and Shinnamon conducted an evaluation of Health Profession Schools in Service to the Nation Program (HPSISN), a multi-site, multi-year program which was created to explore the possibilities of service-learning as a tool for curricular reform for schools educating health professionals. The evaluators of the HPSISN explored the impacts of service-learning on: 1) university-community partnerships, 2) readiness of students for a career in the health professions, 3) faculty response to service-learning, 4) institution's capacity and 5) impact on community partners. This evaluation relies on progress reports from grantees, site visits, interviews, focus groups, observations, surveys and document reviews to gather data. These researchers found positive impacts of the HPSISN project on university-community partnerships, faculty and institutions. This evaluation could not answer the question about students' readiness for a career in the health profession. The community partners, on the other hand, had mixed experience with the HPSISN project. Their knowledge about the university increased, however, they were dismayed by institutions' bureaucratic and political natures.

Gray, M.J., Ondaatje, E. H., Fricker, R., Geschwind, S., Goldman, C. A., Kaganoff, T., Robyn, A., Sundt, M., Vogelgesang, L., & Klein, S. P. (1998). Coupling Service and Learning in Higher Education: The Final Report of the Evaluation of the Learn and Serve America, Higher Education Program. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED421926&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED421926 The

This report analyzes the impacts of Learn and Serve America, Higher Education (1995-1997) on community organizations, service recipients and on participants. These researchers conducted an annual Community Impact Survey between 1995-1997 with 847 community organizations, 930 Learn and Serve America Higher Education Institutions, and 3492 students. Another student survey was conducted in the spring 1997 to compare 725 service-learning students to 597 non-service-learning students. Each student participant provided 300 hours of service to community during his/her academic year. The researchers also used LSAHE grant information to learn about LSAHE impact on communities, conducted interviews with staff at community organizations and with students who volunteered at these organizations, and observed students performing service. They found positive impact of service on the participants and recipients. These researchers provide the following recommendations for improving the experience of host organizations: 1) having a reliable, committed contact person between the sponsoring and host organizations, 2) communicating realistic expectations to student volunteers and community organizations, 3) connecting students to community organizations as soon as possible, 4) having mutually beneficial placement for the community agencies and students and 5) resolving any outstanding logistic issues such as scheduling and transportation.

RMC Research. Best Practices in High Quality Service Learning. Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. Retrieved from <http://servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/bpexercises.pdf>

This document provides a list of best practices in high quality service-learning for students in the following topic areas: 1) integrated learning, 2) evaluation, 3) reflection, 4) civic responsibility, 5) student voice, 6) collaboration and 7) high quality service. High quality service is defined as age-appropriate, well-organized and achieves benefits for students and community members. There is a slight mention of community-based organizations and host communities in the collaboration and evaluation sections of the report, but this is not included as a core component of the best practices as outlined by the author. According to this document, integrated learning encompasses a service-learning project that is informed by academic learning content and acquisition of practical skills. The document recommends before, during and after service reflections in order to ensure students understand the connection between their service and academic curriculum.

Roehlkepartain, E. C. (2009). Service-Learning in Community-Based Organizations: A Practical Guide to Starting and Sustaining High-Quality Programs. Scotts Valley, CA: Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. Retrieved from www.servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/cbo_toolkit

Roehlkepartain divides K-12 service learning into six phases: 1) investigate, 2) prepare, 3) act, 4) reflect, 5) demonstrate and celebrate, and 6) sustain. The author explores the impacts of service-learning on sponsoring organizations, host organizations and the participants. Some of the benefits for sponsoring organizations includes: expansion of mission, services and outreach without sustainable increase in costs; access to youth energy, skills and ideas; and increase in public support and visibility. The volunteers can support host communities and host organizations needs by adding to staff capacity, while providing the communities an opportunity to build a meaningful and long-term relationship with the youth. Roehlkepartain supports the standards of quality for service-learning that are recommended by the National Youth Leadership Council and RMC (e.g., youth voice, meaningful service, link to curriculum, reflection, diversity, partnership, progress monitoring, duration and intensity).