

SEAL-EARNING UNIT

Unit 4: The Service Focus Project (Service-Learning, 25 Hours)

Subject	Service-Learning, Civics, Project Management, Reflection
Grade Level	9-12
Possible Seal Credit	New York Service-Learning Project, 1 point (Civic Participation; may be repeated). Connecticut: can document the required civic engagement project (community service is one of the law's examples). Hours also count toward Youth and Government service recognition.
Time Allotment	One semester. Five class or delegation sessions of 45 minutes plus a minimum of 25 hours of documented service and a demonstration event.
Youth and Government Process Practiced	The Lieutenant Governor's service focus, the delegation's Service-Learning Liaison role, the program's own service-learning model (learning objectives, action, reflection, evaluation), and the roundtable reflection format.
The Project Standard	New York requires a minimum of 25 hours of demonstrated service on a community-based problem or need, structured as investigation, preparation, action, reflection, and demonstration or celebration, with a reflective civic learning essay, presentation or product, and approval by the District Seal Committee. This unit follows that structure exactly and uses the Youth and Government service focus as the organizing theme, so the hours a delegate already gives can be submitted for the seal once the Seal Committee approves the plan.

Learning Objectives:

- ▶ Students will be able to investigate a community need with data and with the people who experience it, and connect it to the year's service focus.
- ▶ Students will be able to write learning objectives for themselves before acting, not after.
- ▶ Students will be able to plan and carry out at least 25 hours of service with a partner organization, with hours verified.
- ▶ Students will be able to reflect in writing and in a roundtable on what the service revealed about the underlying civic problem.
- ▶ Students will be able to demonstrate the project to an audience and evaluate it against the objectives they set.

Materials:

- ▶ Handout: "Investigation Guide" (Supporting Document 1)
- ▶ Handout: "Service-Learning Plan" (Supporting Document 2)
- ▶ Handout: "Service Hours Log and Site Supervisor Verification" (Supporting Document 3)

- ▶ Handout: "Reflection Prompts" (Supporting Document 4)
- ▶ Handout: "Service-Learning Rubric" (see Assessment section)
- ▶ The Lieutenant Governor's service focus announcement for the year

Pre-Planning:

- ▶ **Seal Committee approval before service begins.** New York requires the committee to approve the project. Submit the Service-Learning Plan from Session 2 and do not count hours served before approval unless the committee agrees.
- ▶ **Partner organization.** Identify one before Session 1 where possible: a food pantry, library, senior center, youth program, environmental group, voter registration effort, or the local YMCA's own community programs. The partner supplies a site supervisor who signs the log.
- ▶ **Service-Learning Liaison.** The delegation's liaison coordinates group projects and collects logs. Individual projects are fine; group projects need individual logs.
- ▶ **What counts.** Direct service, indirect service (building something for a group), and advocacy service (a voter registration drive, a public education campaign) all count if they address a documented need. Fundraising alone does not. Hours on Y-Corps (the summer service program) count toward this project only if the Seal Committee approved the plan in advance.

▲ Session 1: Investigation (45 minutes plus fieldwork)

1. **(10 minutes) The service focus:** Read the Lieutenant Governor's service focus for the year. Discuss what it looks like in this community.
2. **(25 minutes) Investigation Guide:** Students choose a need within or near the focus and complete the guide: who is affected, what data says about it (local, county or state), who is already working on it, and what the gap is. Homework: talk with two people who experience the need or work on it, and record what they said.
3. **(10 minutes) Partner match:** Students name a partner organization and the contact they will make.

▲ Session 2: Preparation and the Plan (45 minutes)

1. **(10 minutes) Learning objectives first:** The program's model puts learning objectives ahead of action. Each student writes two: one skill (organizing, public speaking, data collection, teaching) and one civic understanding (how a policy produces this need, who decides about it).
2. **(25 minutes) Service-Learning Plan:** The need and its evidence, the partner and supervisor, the action (what, when, where, with whom), the schedule to reach 25 hours, materials and permissions, the reflection plan, and the evaluation measures (one number, one quality). Advisor review.
3. **(10 minutes) Submit for Seal Committee approval.** Log the submission date.

▲ Action: 25 Hours (6 to 12 weeks)

Students serve on the schedule in the plan. Every session is logged with date, hours, task and the supervisor's initials. Midway, the advisor holds a 10-minute check-in with

each student: hours on track, objectives still right, any problem with the partner. A student who falls behind revises the schedule rather than padding hours.

Advocacy variants that fit Youth and Government well: a voter registration and pre-registration drive at the school (New York allows pre-registration at 16 and 17); a public information campaign about a service the community underuses; a community listening session whose findings go to a local official; a Youth and Government recruitment and civic education day at a middle school.

▲ **Session 3: Reflection Midpoint (45 minutes)**

1. **(15 minutes) Roundtable:** Rose and bud (one thing going well, one thing still growing), then two prompts: What has surprised you about the people you are serving? What policy or decision upstream is producing this need?
2. **(25 minutes) Written reflection, part one (300 words):** Using Supporting Document 4, connect what you have seen to the civic problem behind it and to your two learning objectives.
3. **(5 minutes) Hours check** by the liaison.

▲ **Session 4: Evaluation and the Product (45 minutes)**

1. **(15 minutes) Evaluation:** Fill in the measures from the plan with real numbers (meals packed, voters registered, hours tutored, people reached) and the quality measure (a partner's statement, a before-and-after observation). State plainly whether each learning objective was met.
2. **(30 minutes) Reflective product:** Choose one: an essay of 750 to 1,000 words; a 10-minute presentation; or a product (a short video, a photo essay with captions, a guide the partner will keep using). Whichever form, it must cover the need and its evidence, the action, the hours, what the student learned about the civic problem behind the need, and what they would do next, including any policy change they would now recommend.

▲ **Session 5: Demonstration and Celebration (45 minutes or an evening event)**

1. Students present their products to an audience beyond the class: the delegation and families, the partner organization, the Seal Committee, a YMCA board or the Youth and Government conference's service recognition.
2. Hours logs with supervisor signatures, the plan with Seal Committee approval, the reflections and the product are assembled into the portfolio. The advisor completes the rubric.
3. Celebrate: Youth and Government recognizes service and learning hours with its own pins; the liaison submits the delegation's totals.

▲ **Assessment: Service-Learning Rubric (100 points)**

- **Investigation (20):** Need is specific; data cited; two people consulted; gap identified; tied to the service focus.

- ▶ **Preparation and Plan (15):** Two learning objectives written before action; partner and supervisor named; schedule realistic; Seal Committee approval obtained.
- ▶ **Action and Hours (25):** 25 or more hours logged with dates, tasks and supervisor initials; midpoint check-in completed; service addresses the need as planned.
- ▶ **Reflection (20):** Midpoint and final reflections connect the service to the civic problem and to the objectives; honest about difficulties.
- ▶ **Evaluation and Product (15):** Measures reported with real numbers; objectives judged; product complete and clear.
- ▶ **Demonstration (5):** Presented to an audience beyond the class.

▲ **Differentiation:**

- ▶ **Support:** Pair the student with a group project the liaison is already running; provide the partner and supervisor; use the presentation option with a slide frame.
- ▶ **Challenge:** Require the advocacy variant with a measurable civic outcome (voters registered, a recommendation delivered to an official) and a 40-hour target that can also support Unit 6 if the Seal Committee agrees to count the same hours twice.

▲ **Supporting Documents**

1. Investigation Guide

Service focus this year: _____

The need I am investigating: _____

Who experiences it (be specific): _____

Data that shows it (source, figure): _____

Who already works on it, and what they do: _____

Two people I talked with (role, date, what they said): _____

The gap my service can address: _____

2. Service-Learning Plan

Student: _____ Advisor: _____ Service-Learning Liaison: _____

Need and evidence (from the Investigation Guide): _____

Learning objective 1 (skill): _____ Learning objective 2 (civic understanding): _____

Partner organization and site supervisor (name, role, contact): _____

Action (what, where, with whom): _____

Schedule to 25 hours (dates and hours per session): _____

Materials, permissions, transportation: _____



Reflection plan (midpoint roundtable, written reflections, final product type):

Evaluation measures (one number, one quality): _____

Advisor signature: _____ Seal Committee approval (signature, date): _____

3. Service Hours Log and Site Supervisor Verification

Columns: Date. Start and end time. Hours. Task performed. Site. Supervisor initials.

Totals: Service hours ____ Learning hours (planning, training, reflection sessions) ____

Site Supervisor Verification: I confirm that [student] completed the hours above at [organization]. Name, title, phone or email, signature, date.

Advisor Verification: I confirm the log is complete and the plan was approved on [date].
Signature, date.

4. Reflection Prompts

Midpoint: What did you expect, and what did you find? Who are the people you are serving, in their own words? What decision, policy or budget upstream is producing this need? Which of your two learning objectives is harder than you thought?

Final: What changed because of your hours, and what did not? What did you learn about the civic problem behind the need? If you could put one recommendation in front of an official, what would it be, and to whom? What would you do next?

5. Rhode Island and Connecticut Notes

Service alone does not satisfy Rhode Island's civics project requirement; a student who wants both should choose the advocacy variant and pair this unit with Unit 2 or Unit 7. For Connecticut, the hours log, plan, reflections and product form the community service entry in the seal portfolio.