Methods and Strategies for Institutional Assessment

Developed for the Health Professions Schools in Service to the Nation (HPSISN) Program, a national demonstration program of service-learning in the health professions funded by the Corporation for National Service and The Pew Charitable Trusts

From: Shinnamon A, Gelmon S and Holland B. Methods and Strategies for Assessing Service-Learning in the Health Professions. San Francisco, CA: Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, 1999.

1. Site Visit
Institution

Purpose:

Evaluating a project with multiple sites was a challenge of HPSISN as a national program. Similar challenges can exist for institutions assessing multiple courses or service projects with multiple sites. Among them is constructing an informed understanding of projects and interactions of participants at the local level. Conducting an interactive site visit can serve as a way for the evaluators to have in-person discussions with local participants. Site visits generate a rich body of data illustrating the impact of service-learning across all constituents (community, faculty, students and institutions) through direct observation and interviews.

Preparation:

- Submit site visit protocol to participants.
- Develop a schedule for the visit that includes meeting with all the constituents.
- Two or more visits to a site will provide richer data and a measure of change, if any.

Administration:

Meet with project leadership, academic administration, faculty, students, community partners, and other key players. This array would be adjusted if this approach is used as an assessment method for one institution. Whether assessing one course or multiple courses, a "site visit" should involve meeting with constituents of the service-learning partnership not otherwise being evaluated. For example, if you are evaluating students, faculty, and the institution using methods suggested in this handbook or other, then the site visit method is primarily applicable to assessing community partners and/or their clients in their native setting.

Analysis:

Any tapes and/or notes from the site visits must be transcribed as soon as possible after meetings. Site visits generate a large body of rich, contextual data. Analysis consists of organizing the data into meaningful subsections. One can begin organizing the data according to the questions posed. The analysis can be further narrowed by identifying the key words and themes; highlight and organize these by the study variables or indicators outlined in the research design.

SITE VISIT PROTOCOL

The site visit protocol consists of three parts:
- site visit goals
- proposed site visit schedule
- questions for discussion.

Site Visit Goals

1. To build a stronger relationship between the site visit team and grantees.

2. To learn more about each demonstration site through in–person discussion, including assessing the role and level of participation of faculty, students, and community partners in the grantees' program.

3. To develop an understanding of each project's progress toward their own program objectives as well as the overall HPSISN program objectives.

4. To gain greater knowledge about each institution's commitment to community partnership-building, service-learning and the sustainability of the HPSISN-funded program.

5. To reflect and discuss program accomplishments and challenges in order to develop a plan to guide future program activity.

6. To identify enabling and inhibiting factors as well as early lessons learned that could be rapidly shared with other sites.

7. To identify issues for further discussion and/or technical assistance among grantees (via e–mail, in–person, or teleconference).

8. To provide an opportunity for discussion of the overall program evaluation plan and its applicability at the local level.

Proposed Site Visit Schedule

Project leadership   9:00a - 10:00a
        Program Director
        Service-learning Coordinator

Campus leadership   10:00a - 10:45a
        Department Chair
        Dean
        Provost
        Campus SL experts

Break   10:45a - 11:00a

Faculty involved in HPSISN program   11:00a - noon
        Teaching
        Community work
        Research
        Evaluation

Break   noon - 12:15p

Community partners   12:15p - 1:30p (lunch)

Students involved in HPSISN program   1:30p - 2:30p

Break   2:30p - 3:00p

Project / campus leadership & key faculty   3:00p - 3:30p

Private meeting of project director and
evaluation representative (if needed)   3:30p - 4:00p

Project / campus leadership (wrap-up)   4:00p - 4:30p

Following is a set of questions we would like answered during the course of the site visit. These questions are intended to provide you with a sense of potential discussion content. Some questions may not be relevant to your particular group.

1. We would like to know why you got involved in the HPSISN program.

2. Describe the campus environment for service-learning:
   ▪ prior to your involvement in the HPSISN program
   ▪ now

3. We would like to know more about your community partners.
   ▪ Who are they? (#, agency name, agency name rep and title, etc.)
   ▪ Describe their level of involvement in shaping the program.
   ▪ Describe their level of involvement in decision making.
   ▪ What successes related directly to community partners can you report? Contributing factors?
   ▪ What barriers have presented themselves? Solutions?

4. We would like to know more about the students participating in the program.
   ▪ Who are they? (#, academic year, degree track, etc.)
   ▪ Describe their level of involvement in shaping the program.
   ▪ Describe their level of involvement in decision making.
   ▪ What successes related directly to students can you report? Contributing factors?
   ▪ What barriers have presented themselves? Solutions?

5. Regarding service-learning / the program itself
   ▪ What have you gotten out of your involvement with HPSISN?
   ▪ How do you see your role in service-learning in the future?
   ▪ How would you like this program to develop? What is your future vision of the program?
   ▪ What resources will be required to meet this future vision?
   ▪ How have you managed resistance to change / the incorporation of service-learning into the curriculum? Solutions?
   ▪ Program successes and contributing factors.
   ▪ Program barriers and solutions.

6. Describe your evaluation plan.
   ▪ What are you measuring? Why?
   ▪ What do you hope to learn as a result of your evaluation efforts? What are your evaluation goals?
   ▪ What evaluations have you conducted on your own?
   ▪ What evaluation tools that we have provided have you used?
   ▪ What can you demonstrate as results or impacts of your evaluation efforts?
   ▪ What program improvements have occurred as a result of what you have learned?

7. Lessons learned
   ▪ Why do you feel this work is important?
   ▪ What recommendations would you offer others involved in this type of program?

8. Next steps

9. Observations (site visitor team's intuitive observations)
   ▪ Inhibiting factors
   ▪ Enabling factors