



Utrecht University

CENTRE FOR  
GLOBAL  
CHALLENGES

# Partnerships in Community Engaged Learning

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE ON ESTABLISHING RECIPROCAL  
PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNITY**



# Partnerships in Community Engaged Learning



In this booklet about partnerships in Community Engaged Learning, you can find information on:

1. Defining CEL partnerships
2. Reasons for societal partners to participate in CEL
3. Finding societal partners
4. Ten Principles of effective partnership
5. Practical considerations for CEL partnerships
6. Recommended guidelines for selecting a societal partner

## Defining CEL partnerships

The aim of CEL partnerships is to achieve *reciprocity*. Together partners identify how the community project can enrich student learning as well as to address specific community needs. CEL is a *shared-learning* experience, in which shared decision making and *co-creation* of knowledge are central components. *Relationship parity* is thus considered crucial for successful CEL.

## Reasons for societal partners to participate in CEL

Societal partners often participate in CEL for various reasons;<sup>1,2</sup>

- Benefit from the extra assistance in the organization
- The fresh outsider perspectives
- Novel ideas and energy of students
- Expertise and resources from faculty staff
- And ultimately the impact that the projects can have for the community members.

## Finding societal partners

Partners can be found in various ways; through existing research or education partnerships, via a broader network, or through an online search. Below you find an overview of UU-services that can be of help in search of societal partners: they know what societal partners are available in the area and/or they have an established relationship with these partners:

- ▶ **PROGRAMME COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING** – They can connect you to parties who already are involved in Community Engaged Learning or have shown an interest for this <https://www.uu.nl/en/education/community-engaged-learning>
- ▶ **WETENSCHAPSKNOOPPUNT** – They connect schools, teacher training programmes and the university. <https://www.uu.nl/onderwijs/wetenschapsknooppunt> (available only in Dutch)
- ▶ **PROGRAMME SUSTAINABILITY** – They can connect you with partners on the Utrecht Science Park and in Utrecht who want to collaborate on sustainability topics. <https://www.uu.nl/en/node/6119/daarom-duurzaamheid/programme>

- ▶ **CENTRE FOR GLOBAL CHALLENGES (CFGC)** – They can connect you to partners for local and global projects that intersect with themes: human rights, conflict & security, sustainability, and equity. <https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/centre-for-global-challenges>
- ▶ **STRATEGIC THEMES** – UU works closely with many partners in research focused on four strategic themes: Dynamics of Youth, Institutions for Open Societies, Life Sciences and Pathways to Sustainability. There are opportunities to connect research and teaching within the Strategic Themes. <https://www.uu.nl/en/research/profile/strategic-themes>
- ▶ Some faculties have an **IMPACT DEVELOPER** working on knowledge valorization.
- ▶ **STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS** – Student interest groups are another potential source of societal partners; student groups may have partnered with societal organizations in community engaged projects.
- ▶ **GUEST SPEAKERS** – Bringing guest speakers into your classroom may also facilitate establishing a partnership between your classroom and a partner. Ask the guest speakers in your course whether they are interested to collaborate in a CEL project.
- ▶ **SCIENCE SHOPS** – The ‘wetenschapswinkels’ may have opportunities for community engaged projects or have connections to potential partners in the community. <http://www.wetenschapswinkels.nl/>
- ▶ **LOCAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OR HIGH SCHOOLS** – Partnerships between your classroom and community elementary or high schools are excellent for getting younger students involved and excited about topics from your course. In addition, your students will gain skills in communicating with younger students and mentoring them. <https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/public-engagement-at-utrecht-university>
- ▶ **NON-PROFIT COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS** – Non-profit community organizations are excellent partners for service engagement. You can do a web search for potential partners in your area. For instance: <https://maex.nl/> for social initiatives. MAEX helps initiatives to make their impact and needs visible and offers opportunities to strengthen initiatives
- ▶ **GOVERNMENT AGENCIES** – They are strong candidates for CEL projects. Two potential benefits shared between both partners are (1) the potential for students to contribute their data to a larger database and (2) the potential for students to further network within the agency to continue to work as a volunteer or as a future employee.

## Ten principles of effective partnership

(From *Community-Campus Partnership for Health (CCPH) Principles of Partnership (1998 – revised 2006)*) retrieved from: <https://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/service/partner.html>

1. Partnerships form to serve a specific purpose and may take on new goals over time.
2. Partners have agreed upon mission, values, goals, measurable outcomes, and accountability for partnership.
3. The relationship between partners is characterized by mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment.
4. The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also works to address needs and increase capacity of all partners.
5. The partnership balances power among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared.
6. Partners make clear and open communication an ongoing priority by striving to understand each other's needs and self-interests, and developing a common language.
7. Principles and processes for the partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners, especially for decision-making and conflict resolution.
8. There is a feedback among all stakeholders in the partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.
9. Partners share the benefits of the partnership's accomplishments.
10. Partnerships can dissolve and need to plan a process for closure.

## Practical considerations for CEL partnerships

### Practical considerations for defining CEL partnerships:<sup>3</sup>

- Visit societal organizations well before the course begins, establish **open communication** and initiate **collaborative planning**.
- During this early contact it is also important to get a good understanding of the organization's **needs and capabilities** to involve in the course design.
- Ask the societal partner about **past CEL experiences**, both good and bad, with similar CEL projects.
- Define boundaries and clarify roles and **responsibilities**.
- Establish how much **time** the societal partner can invest in the project.
- Determine meeting **frequency**.
- Establish **communication channels**, and discuss whether the students will be in direct contact with the societal partner and/or community members.
- Discuss what will happen to the **final product** that is produced. Think about an academic and a public product. Can it be circulated, and to whom?
- Define the **role of societal partners** in the course: presence in the classroom, supervision of the students, communication with the students during the course, and role in the assessment.

## Recommended guidelines for selecting a societal partner

(From Centre for Community Health and Development, University of Kansas: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en>)

### WILLINGNESS TO COLLABORATE

- Available for regular communication (i.e., phone calls, meeting)
- Responsive to mutual problem solving
- Open to meeting both student and community needs
- Ability to supervise and interact with college students

### SOCIETAL PARTNER HAS ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO ORIENT, TRAIN, AND MONITOR STUDENTS

- Designated staff willing to supervise students
- Procedures to orient and train students, if applicable
- Provides necessary space for program needs
- Procedures to track student attendance and contributions, if applicable

### CONGRUENCE OF LEARNING AND SERVICE GOALS

- Interest in learning objectives of class or program
- Flexibility in adjusting service projects to meet learning goals

### IDENTIFICATION OF APPROPRIATE SERVICE ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

- Clearly defines expectations for students
- Provides direction for project implementation
- Identify tasks appropriate to the knowledge and skills of students

### INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY OF SOCIETAL PARTNER

- Demonstrates culture of respect for diversity
- Receptive to working with students of different backgrounds and abilities
- Provides orientation to culture and traditions of agency

### ACCESSIBILITY

- Near public transportation
- Location is convenient for students
- Appropriate compliance with European Accessibility Act or similar statutes

*The Community Engaged Learning Toolbox was developed as a collaboration between the Centre for Global Challenges, the Centre for Academic Teaching and the Community Engaged Learning Taskforce.*

#### Resources:

1. Blouin, D. D., & Perry, E. M. (2009). Whom does service learning really serve? Community-based organizations' perspectives on service learning. *Teaching Sociology*, 37(2), 120-135.
2. Salam, M., Iskandar, D. N. A., Ibrahim, D. H. A., & Farooq, M. S. (2019). Service learning in higher education: a systematic literature review. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 1-21.
3. Blouin, D. D., & Perry, E. M. (2009). Whom does service learning really serve? Community-based organizations' perspectives on service learning. *Teaching Sociology*, 37(2), 120-135.