



FIVE CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF QUALITY COMMUNITY SERVICE

Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL), an organization in the United States, uses the following areas as a guide for organizing meaningful service projects:

Community Voice

Community voice is essential if we are to build bridges, make change, and solve problems. Any community service organization should make sure the voice and needs of the community are included in the development of the program or project.

Orientation and Training

Orientation and training are important first steps for any service experience. Information should be provided about the community, the issues, and the agency or community groups.

Meaningful Action

Meaningful action is service that is necessary and valuable to the community itself. Meaningful action makes people feel what they did made a difference in a measurable way and that the volunteer time was well utilized. Without this, people will not want to continue their service regardless of whether or not the other four elements are present.

Reflection

Reflection is a crucial component of the community service learning experience. Reflection should happen immediately after the experience to discuss reactions, stories, feelings, and facts about the issues that may dispel any stereotypes or an individual's alienation from service. Reflection should also place the experience into a broader context.

Evaluation

Evaluation measures the impact of the students learning experience and the effectiveness of the service in the community. Students should evaluate their learning experience and agencies should evaluate the effectiveness of the students' service. Evaluation gives direction for improvement, growth, and change.