

Community Engagement

Draft Course Syllabus Summer 2018

Course Overview

Community Engagement is a seven-week facilitated online course that will support VISTAs in strengthening their community engagement skills for their year of service and beyond. The course design includes assignments in which VISTAs build community engagement skills, while receiving personalized feedback from the facilitator. To help learners immediately practice skills learned in this course and to provide a rich context for learning, assignments involve a fictional VISTA project. This approach allows VISTAs to gain experience in the course that they can then apply at their sites (and in any future service or workplace projects) when appropriate.

Prerequisites

Students must be officially sworn-in as VISTA members and have completed Virtual Member Orientation.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course you will be able to:

- Articulate how community engagement ensures project effectiveness and supports VISTAs' goals of capacity building and sustainability.
- Identify skills and attitudes needed to enter and exit a community respectfully.
- Practice culturally responsive approaches.
- Assess your organization's capacity for deepening community engagement.
- Unearth your organization's history of community partnerships and relationships.
- Determine which community engagement strategies best address the current needs of the site community.
- Conduct a needs assessment.
- Create an inventory or map of community assets.
- Plan and facilitate community meetings.
- Create a community engagement plan.
- Apply input from community engagement activities to inform project activities.

Course Features

This course features:

- **Video from Instructor:** Each week, the instructor summarizes the previous week's content and provides an overview for what's to come.
- **HTML Page:** This indicates material designed to be read on screen, without interactivity or learner input. These sections may include graphics, video, audio, or other multimedia elements.
- **Reading Assignment:** During some weeks, we provide reading assignments, such as articles, book excerpts, or blog posts, with permission obtained from publishers. We have included links or icons to download content.
- **Captivate:** This indicates material designed to be interactive, which may include Captivate elearning software features such as click-to-reveal graphics or multiple-choice scenarios with online feedback.
- **Fictional Org Assignment:** Each week we include an assignment related to the fictional organization that will be submitted to the instructor. We designed these activities to align with the week's content. As they complete each activity, learners will build their knowledge about the organization's mission, communities, and constituents and will practice using tools to help the organization resolve challenges.
- **Project Site Reflection:** This indicates an activity that VISTAs can use at any time within their own projects. These are meant to help VISTAs apply tools and techniques they're learning about in our course to their own work.
- **Offline Activity:** This indicates an activity designed to be completed outside the online environment.
- **Optional Forum Question:** Each week we provide prompts or questions designed to invite lively discussion. Note: As of now we're estimating between 20 minutes and 60 minutes each week, but we may adjust this timing depending on how this works in the pilot.

Course-at-a-Glance

Week 1: What is Community Engagement?

Reading:

- [What is Community Engagement?](#) an online article written by the Minnesota Department of Health

Activities and Content Presentation:

- Course Introduction (instructor video)
- Springfield Economic Development Organization Background (HTML page)
- VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)
- Week 1 Overview (instructor video)
- Defining Community Engagement (video with Shannon Stober)
- Benefits of Community Engagement (HTML page)
- Respectful Community Entry (HTML page)
- Check Your Understanding: Community Entry and Engagement (quiz)
- Forum Questions Week 1

Week 2: Get to Know the Project and Community You're Serving

Readings:

- [Examining Cultural Competency in the Nonprofit Organization](#), an online article written by the Social Innovations Journal
- [Culture, Inclusion, and Nonprofit Competence: The Unbreakable Links](#), an online article written by Nonprofit Quarterly

Activities and Content Presentation:

- Week 2 Overview (instructor video)
- Cultural Perspectives (project site reflection)
- SEDO's Community Involvement History & Capacity (HTML page)
- Determining Capacity for Deepening Community Engagement Activities (quiz)
- Forum Questions Week 2

Fictional Organization Assignments:

- Culturally Responsive Approaches (RTF file upload)

Week 3: Assess Community Assets and Needs

Activities and Content Presentation:

- Week 3 Overview (instructor video)
- Assessing a Community's Needs and Assets (HTML page)
- Five Steps to Assessing Community Needs (video)
- Introduction to Asset Mapping (HTML page)
- Assessing Your Community's Needs (project site reflection)
- Forum Questions Week 3

Fictional Organization Assignment:

- Assessing the Needs of the SEDO Community: What are the Next Steps? (RTF file upload)

Week 4: Explore Community Engagement Strategies

Activities and Content Presentation:

- Week 4 Overview (instructor video)
- Levels of Community Participation (HTML page)
- Communication and Outreach Strategies (HTML page)
- Choosing the Best Outreach Strategy (Captive)
- Increasing Awareness of Your VISTA Project Goals (project site reflection)
- Forum Questions Week 4

Week 5: Plan and Facilitate Community Meetings

Activities and Content Presentation:

- Week 5 Overview (instructor video)
- Leading Effective Meetings (HTML page)
- Planning a Community Meeting (video)
- Managing Conflict During Meetings (HTML page)
- Forum Questions Week 5

Fictional Organization Assignment:

- Designing a Meeting Agenda (RTF file upload)

Week 6: Develop a Community Engagement Plan

Activities and Content Presentation:

- Week 6 Overview (instructor video)
- Clarifying Your Purpose for Engaging the Community (HTML page)
- Engagement Strategies by Participation Level (HTML page)
- Demystifying Stakeholder Engagement (video)
- Demystifying Stakeholder Engagement [quiz]
- Developing a Community Engagement Plan (project site reflection)
- Forum Questions Week 6

Fictional Organization Assignment:

- Creating a Community Engagement Plan (RTF upload)

Week 7: Course Reflection

Activities and Content Presentation:

- Week 7 Overview (instructor video)
- Course Reflection (HTML page)

Fictional Organization Assignment:

- Final Course Reflection (RTF upload)

Course Completion and Grading Criteria

This course is offered on a pass/fail basis. Successful participation and completion of this course will be assessed in the following ways:

- Quizzes (3 total) – 5 points each (15% of total grade)
- Fictional Organization Assignments (4 total) - 15 points each (60% of total grade)
- Final Reflection - 25 points (25% of total grade)

A total of 100 points are available in this course. To pass this course, you must earn a minimum of 70 points, or 70%. The *Course Activity Checklist* details the individual point values and due dates for all activities. In addition, you will receive detailed criteria outlining how the written assignments will be assessed.

Course Expectations

As a participant, you are expected to:

- Read all required articles and other materials.
- Complete and submit all activities by the due dates.
- Contact the facilitator if you have questions about the materials or assignments that keep you from completing them.

You can expect the course facilitator to:

- Read all your assignments and questions carefully and thoughtfully and respond as promptly as possible.
- Answer any specific questions within 48 hours.

Communication

There are two ways to interact with your facilitator:

- Via the forums
- Via the messaging system

Please use the messaging system to contact your facilitator, instead of personal email, Facebook, or other forms of messaging.

Course Rules & Guidelines

Academic honesty and integrity: All work submitted in this course must be your own. All sources used in your work must be properly acknowledged and documented. Violations of academic honesty will be taken seriously and may result in a failing grade in the course.

Course conduct: In the interest of promoting a positive learning environment, students are expected to observe the following guidelines for personal conduct:

- Share only items and comments that are pertinent to the discussion topic.
- Be respectful of diverse opinions and experiences; disagree respectfully.
- Use discretion when sharing experiences and names of individuals directly from your VISTA assignment.

Participation: Students who enroll in VISTA online courses are expected to participate actively, and may be dropped for failure to log into the course within the first 7 days of the first day of class. If a student is added after the 7th day of the course, he/she must login within 48 hours or be dropped from the course.

Please notify your facilitator if you expect to be out of town for an extended period of time (7 days or more).

Assignment due dates: Weekly activities are due on Sunday at 11:00 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time) See the Course Activity Checklist under Courses Resources on the home page for a list of assignments and corresponding due dates.

Policy for late work: Students are responsible for locating and completing all the activities in the course. Active participation is also expected on a weekly basis. See the *Course Activity Checklist* for activity due dates. Activities will be due every Sunday night. You must give prior notice and receive permission from the facilitator in order to turn in work past the due date, up to 10 days. Every day

an activity is late, without prior notice and permission, will result in the loss of 1 point (for example, if your activity is 3 days late, you will lose 3 points). After 10 days, you will automatically receive a score of 0.

Minimum Technical Requirements

- Access to an Internet connection (dial-up/56k minimum, cable modem preferred)
- Java, JavaScript enabled browser (IE9 or better, Chrome, or other equivalent)
- Although not required, a PDF reader and word processing may be necessary for reading/completing specific course components. If you don't have access to Microsoft Office; we recommend the open-source equivalent, [Apache Open Office](#).