SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT ADVISOR GUIDE

Mody Service Learning Microgrants | The Center for Gifted Studies

Thank you for supporting a young person through their service learning project. Adult advisors help students turn their ideas into meaningful action while developing leadership, problem-solving, and communication skills along the way.

Your role is not to lead the project for the student, but it is to help the student develop the skills and confidence to lead it themselves.

WHO CAN BE AN ADVISOR?

An advisor might be a teacher, gifted education coordinator, counselor, coach, community member, organization representative, or another trusted adult.

YOUR ROLE AS AN ADVISOR

As an advisor, you can:

- Ask questions that help students think through their ideas and decisions.
- Provide feedback and encouragement.
- Help students identify resources and make connections.
- Support problem solving when challenges arise.
- Help students recognize when adult assistance is needed for safety, permissions, transportation, communication, or other logistics.
- Encourage students to reflect on their progress and learning.
- Help students stay focused on their project goal and community need.

When connecting with community partners, encourage students to take the lead when appropriate. You can help them prepare, make an introduction, or step in when adult involvement is necessary.

KEEP THE PROJECT STUDENT-LED

One of the most valuable parts of this experience is giving students the opportunity to lead. There will be challenges and adjustments as the project progresses. When a student encounters a challenge, help them consider their options and decide how to move forward.

Ask questions before giving answers.

Advisors should not:

- Choose the project for the student.
- Complete the Project Planner or application for them.
- Solve any problem that arises (support is okay, but solving is not).
- Take over communication or project activities that students can reasonably lead themselves.

Leadership does not always mean being "in charge." Look for opportunities for students to practice initiative, communication, collaboration, decision-making, problem solving, organization, adaptability, and responsibility.

ADVISOR PARTICIPATION

Advisors are expected to:

- Participate in the initial virtual orientation.
- Attend the final virtual project showcase.

Advisors are encouraged to:

- Meet with the student or team regularly throughout the project.
- Participate in the midpoint conversation/check-in with the student.

There is no required meeting schedule. Determine what makes sense based on the project and the level of support the student needs.

The Center will copy advisors on important project communications. Advisors are also welcome to contact The Center directly with questions or concerns at any point.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR CHECK-INS

Regular conversations do not need to be formal. These questions can help guide them:

- What progress have you made since we last talked?
- What is going well?
- What challenges have come up?
- What are you learning?
- Do you need help, resources, or connections?
- What are your next steps?

At the midpoint of the project, students will be asked to reflect on their progress, challenges, learning, changes to their plan, and next steps, including what they have discussed with their advisor.

WHEN PLANS CHANGE

Service-learning projects do not always go exactly as expected. Adapting, problem solving, and responding to new information are important parts of the experience. Help students think through:

- What changed, and why?
- What options do they have?
- Who could help?
- How will the change affect the project's goal, timeline, or budget?

Significant changes to an approved project or budget should be discussed with The Center before moving forward.

ABOUT GRANT FUNDS

Grant funds should support the student's approved service-learning project. Students will not receive grant funds directly. After projects are selected, The Center will provide recipients with instructions for requesting approved materials. The Center will purchase and ship materials to the student.

The proposed budget submitted with the application is a starting point. If purchasing needs change, or if you are unsure whether an expense is allowable, contact The Center before making plans.

WHEN TO CONTACT THE CENTER

Please reach out if:

- A major part of the project needs to change.
- The project cannot proceed as originally planned.
- You have questions about allowable purchases or the budget.
- The student or team needs additional support.
- A safety, permission, or logistical concern arises.
- You have a question or concern at any point in the process.

Thank you for helping students turn their ideas into meaningful service. Your guidance can help them make a difference in their communities while developing the confidence and skills to lead.