

STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY-CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT IN VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

DESIGNING THE PARTNERSHIP PROJECT:

- Reach out to community-based organizations (CBOs) to learn more about their priorities, needs, and availability for a community-campus partnership project at this time
- Consider varied ways that students can provide support to organizations in a virtual environment (following research ethics guidelines), such as:
 - Conducting 'background research' on a theme related to the focus of the CBO (e.g. environmental scans, literature reviews)
 - Participating in digital design or mapping projects;
 - Conducting interviews or focus groups by phone, through email or over a virtual platform (e.g. Skype, Zoom);
 - Supporting CBO clients virtually (e.g. reaching out to isolated seniors, assisting with language training with newcomers);
 - Conducting online surveys and data analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of a CBO program or services;
 - Creating virtual programming and information-sharing materials for the CBO (e.g. virtual workshops, webinars, online guides and reports, podcasts);
 - Enhancing the organization's website or social media presence; or
 - Creating a video about the organization's response to the pandemic.



DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR REMOTE ENGAGEMENT:

- Build in time for all participants to ensure familiarity with COVID protocols in their area and options for virtual document-sharing/communication platforms
- Establish preferred 1) shared online storage for documents and data files (e.g. Google Drive) and 2) virtual communication platform(s) (e.g. Zoom, Skype)
- Agree on safety/privacy protocols for what will be recorded, documented, saved, and stored in virtual environments
- Set up a checklist of student responsibilities and dates for deliverables within a shared online document, to minimize uncertainty and streamline the project process
- Consider potential options for transitioning to socially distanced in-person engagement over time (where feasible with local public health guidelines)



FOSTERING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AMONG COMMUNITY AND ACADEMIC PARTNERS:

- Set a schedule for regular virtual check-in meetings and email updates (while recognizing that community partners may not always be available to respond to emails right away or attend meetings during this period)
- Set up a central location to ask and answer questions (e.g. a shared online document)
- Acknowledge and brainstorm strategies to overcome limitations of virtual communication (e.g. greater phone contact with participants in areas with limited internet access)
- Encourage patience, flexibility, and empathy among project partners during this unprecedented time



FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES:

- Archibald, M.M., Ambagtsheer, R.C., Casey, M.G., & Lawless, M. (2019). [Using Zoom videoconferencing for qualitative data collection: Perceptions and experiences of researchers and participants](#). International Journal of Qualitative Methods.
- Bharath, D. (2020). [Using eService-Learning to practice technical writing skills for emerging nonprofit professionals](#). Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership, 10(1), 62-81.
- Community Service Learning, University of Alberta. (2020). [Project-Based Community Service-Learning: How to design your online courses for CSL projects this Fall](#). [webinar]
- Campus Compact. (2020, April 9). [Coronavirus and the engaged campus](#).
- Goldberg, M. (2020, March 13). [4 tips for adapting an experiential learning course from real world to online - during \(and after\) the coronavirus](#).
- Guthrie, K.L., & McCracken, H. (2010). [Making a difference online: Facilitating service-learning through distance education](#). Internet and Higher Education, 13, 153-157.
- Krasny, M.E. (2020, May 14). [Social distancing is no reason to stop service learning - just do it online](#). The Conversation.
- Lowes, V., Goldman, A., & McMahon, C. (2020, June 8). [How to adapt experiential learning activities in the time of COVID-19](#).
- Lupton, B. (editor). [Doing fieldwork in a pandemic \(crowd-sourced document\)](#).
- Nelson, W.A. (2016, June 2). [Online experiential learning: Engaging students through real and virtual activities](#).
- North Carolina Translational and Clinical Sciences Institute. (2020). [Tips and tools for remote qualitative data collection](#).
- Peddle, S. (2020, April 27). [Lessons from community service learning during a pandemic](#). Dalhousie University blogs.
- Waldner, L.S., McGorry, S.Y., & Widener, M.C. (2012). [E-Service-Learning: The evolution of service-learning to engage a growing online student population](#). Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 16(2), 123-150.

