

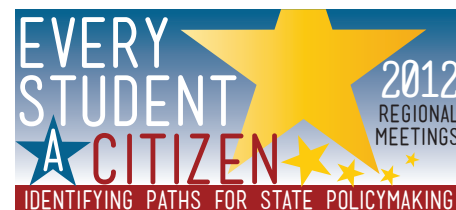
Service-Learning After Learn and Serve America: How Five States Are Moving Forward

Molly Ryan, Education Commission of the States, June 2012



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Education Commission of the States
700 Broadway, Suite 810
Denver, CO 80203
www.ecs.org | ecs@ecs.org

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“Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy integrating meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The field of service-learning has made impressive strides in recent decades, and has evolved from a pedagogy in a few schools around the country to a national movement engaging between four million and five million students each year.¹ In 2011, 42 states mentioned service-learning in state policy compared to 27 states in 2000.² A significant setback occurred in April 2011 however, when Congress passed the fiscal year 2011 budget and eliminated funding for Learn and Serve America (LSA), the sole federal funding stream dedicated to service-learning in PK-12 schools.³ Moreover, LSA funding likely will not be restored in the near future; President Obama’s fiscal year 2013 budget fails to call for even a compromise appropriation for LSA.⁴

The loss of federal support coupled with state budget shortfalls has prompted a transition period for the service-learning field.⁵ Advocates across the country are choosing to move beyond the devastating budget cut and seize the opportunity to refocus efforts to expand high-quality service-learning. This set of case studies aims to highlight policy and practice in several states where service-learning experts are designing and implementing agendas to maintain and advance statewide service-learning initiatives with no federal aid and no new state aid.



SERVICE-LEARNING DEFINITION AND OUTCOMES

Service-learning is an educational model that is supported by a growing body of research. The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse defines *service-learning* as a teaching and learning strategy integrating meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.⁶ High-quality service-learning requires: (1) meaningful service, (2) intentional link to curriculum, (3) reflection, (4) diversity among participants, (5) youth and parental engagement and decision-making, (6) mutually beneficial partnerships, (7) ongoing progress monitoring, and (8) appropriate duration and intensity to meet community needs and outcomes.⁷

In recent years, the intended outcomes of most service-learning have expanded to include not only community engagement but also 21st century skills and academic achievement.⁸ Students engaged in high-quality service-learning learn to collaborate, think critically, and problem solve. Teachers engaged in high-quality service-learning implement the components that research has identified as effective instructional practices.⁹ Research has also documented student and long-term outcomes of high-quality service-learning, as illustrated in the following tables:

Student Outcomes of High-Quality Service-Learning ¹⁰	
Strengthens academic engagement	Helps students to answer the question “Why am I learning this?” and prompts students to exhibit more positive academic behaviors
Increases school attendance	Excites students about learning so they persist in education and gain skills needed to contribute to society
Connects students to their communities	Empowers students to believe they can make a difference in their community
Reduces risky behaviors	Prevents school violence and dropout

Long-Term Outcomes of High-Quality Service-Learning ¹¹	
Civic engagement	Students engaged in service-learning are more likely to vote and be involved in community organizations
Career preparedness	Students engaged in service-learning exhibit more positive attitudes toward work and better-developed job skills
Healthy school climate	Students and teachers engaged in service-learning trust each other more and are more likely to collaborate among peers and across grade levels
Public engagement in education	Community partners engaged in service-learning are more likely to develop positive perceptions of the students they work with

SERVICE-LEARNING IN STATE POLICY

In 2000 and 2011, the National Center for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC) at the Education Commission of the States (ECS) conducted state policy scans on service-learning to determine the degree in which service-learning has been institutionalized in the states. By the end of 2011, almost every state had either passed legislation or adopted state board of education policy that encourages local schools to use service-learning. Specifically, the 2011 scan found that:

- ✦ 18 states award credit toward graduation for service-learning, up from seven in 2000
- ✦ 21 states have adopted policy stating that student engagement is positively affected by participation in service-learning
- ✦ Six states allow schools to offer a stand-alone, credit-bearing service-learning course
- ✦ 18 states tie service-learning/community service to student achievement
- ✦ Nine states include service-learning as a valuable strategy for at-risk students

Many states include service-learning/community service in benchmarks and instructional strategies in state standards and/or frameworks.¹²

The federal government demonstrated its support of service-learning in 1993, when Congress passed the National and Community Service Trust Act.¹³ This bipartisan legislation created the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation). Until its recent defunding, LSA was the grant-making arm of the Corporation for PK-12 service-learning (and higher education), and invested approximately \$40 million in service-learning efforts each year.¹⁴ Although modest, this appropriation provided steady funding to state LSA offices and its absence threatens to breakdown the state-level infrastructure that service-learning experts and advocates have established over the past 15 years.

CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS

The intent of these case studies is to highlight how service-learning leaders in five states are negotiating the loss of federal support and working to sustain the state-level infrastructure necessary to continue and advance statewide service-learning.

NCLC staff conducted interviews with former state LSA program officers and state service-learning experts in Arizona, Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Wisconsin. Five components of service-learning policy and practice are recognized as fundamental to institutionalizing high-quality programs and guided the selection of interview questions. Those five components are: (1) Leadership, (2) Continuous Improvement, (3) Professional Development, (4) Curriculum and Assessment, and (5) Community Partnerships.¹⁵ NCLC staff designed case study interview questions to elicit study participants' descriptions of models and lessons learned for advancing statewide service-learning with no federal aid and little to no state aid.

5 Components Necessary to Institutionalize High-Quality Service-Learning:

1. Leadership
2. Continuous Improvement
3. Professional Development
4. Curriculum and Assessment
5. Community Partnerships.



CONSISTENT THEMES

Despite geographic, demographic, state and local infrastructure, and policy differences across the five states, NCLC staff found consistent themes throughout the interviews on the elimination of LSA and service-learning in general. Such themes are detailed in the graph below.

Loss of LSA funding:	AZ	CO	MN	NC	WI
Eliminates the only state-level service-learning position	✓	✓	✓		✓
Eliminates service-learning professional development offered at the state level	✓	✓	✓		✓
Makes state infrastructure even more essential	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Compels advocates to regroup and reframe service-learning at the state level	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



RECOMMENDATIONS AND CHALLENGES

At a time when the service-learning field is in transition, the findings from these case studies may have implications not only for state service-learning leaders struggling with next steps, but also national service-learning leaders anticipating and working toward the next generation of federal service-learning policy.

Key recommendations include:

1. **Build state capacity** – Form a coalition of service-learning leaders from across the state to create a state presence for service-learning and fill the void that the defunding of LSA created at the state level. Model states: Colorado and North Carolina.
2. **Leverage support of other state reform efforts** – Find other statewide initiatives as vehicles for service-learning, such as 21st Century Community Learning Center programs and Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement programs. Model states: Arizona, Colorado, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.
3. **Leverage effective expertise of community partners** – Collaborate with local nonprofits and other organizations already finding creative ways to support service-learning in districts. Model state: North Carolina.
4. **Advocate for state and federal policy** – Refocus state efforts around clear messaging to ensure policymakers are informed as to what high-quality service-learning is and is not. Work towards federal support for service-learning under the Department of Education.

Among the challenges faced by states, three consistently stand out:

1. **Sustainability and Infrastructure**, perennial issues for the service-learning field, have been exacerbated by the defunding of LSA and the loss of dedicated service-learning positions at the state level. Research shows that *high-quality* service-learning has positive impacts on student outcomes. State departments of education, local school districts, and schools cannot support and provide high-quality service-learning without infrastructure to support it.
2. **Professional development** is one of the components of service-learning policy and practice recognized as fundamental to institutionalizing high-quality programs. LSA funds allowed state departments of education to provide service-learning professional development and collaboration among teachers. States are not able to provide the training and professional development necessary for high-quality implementation of this complex pedagogy.
3. The elimination of LSA has illuminated the fact that the **definition of service-learning is still unclear**. In general, state and federal policymakers continue to be unclear on what high-quality service-learning is and is not. This uncertainty in the field may have contributed to LSA funding being an easy target for elimination. Similarly, despite the fact that most states have enacted either legislation or policy encouraging school districts to use service-learning, stronger state policy is necessary for service-learning to be fully utilized as a strategy to reform education, close the achievement gap, and engage citizens in American democracy.

CURRENT STATE OF LEARN AND SERVE AMERICA

LSA historically has been the sole federal appropriation for service-learning and the primary source for state-level funding of service-learning. This caused concerns for many in the service-learning field over the years. The National Youth Leadership Council’s annual publication *Growing to Greatness: The State of Service-Learning* reported in 2008 that many state education agencies expressed a concern over lack of state funding to sustain programs funded by LSA and statewide service-learning in general.¹⁶ The report further found that in numerous states funds are not available to “monitor [service-learning] programs, coordinate and network activities statewide, or provide professional development and training to practitioners.”¹⁷ State programs (other than health care) are highly unlikely to see any increase in funding if weak economic growth continues to force state policymakers to cut budgets.¹⁸

Congress eliminated LSA funding for 2011, 2012 and for the foreseeable future.¹⁹ These cuts have compromised the service-learning infrastructure and been a significant setback to the field of service-learning. Moreover, after almost two decades of modest but steady federal support to state LSA offices, the defunding of LSA emphasizes the federal budget’s “slow retreat from engaging students and youth as leaders and active contributors through their own education.”²⁰

Service-learning is a bipartisan issue, as evidenced by its legislative history. Two senators from Minnesota, one Democrat and one Republican, collaborated with then-Senator Ted Kennedy to sponsor the first iteration of LSA through the National and Community Service Act.²¹ Subsequent federal service-learning legislation also has received bipartisan support. The table below summarizes the history of federal service-learning policy.

History of Federal Service-Learning Policy	
1990	The National and Community Service Act: Provided the first federal funds for service-learning programs and created the Commission on National and Community Service (the Commission). ²²
1993	The National and Community Service Trust Act: Converted the Commission into the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) and designated the Corporation as the central organization for AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America (formerly known as Serve America). Most states utilized LSA funds to support state-level LSA offices, typically located within the state department of education. ²³
2009	The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act: Reauthorized and expanded national service programs administered by the Corporation. ²⁴

In April 2011, Congress passed a budget that cut the Corporation budget by \$74.6 million. This cut included a \$40 million reduction of LSA funding, which effectively eliminated LSA.²⁵ Although the Obama administration requested \$39.5 million for LSA in fiscal year 2012,²⁶ this request was not funded and the President’s fiscal year 2013 proposal fails to ask Congress for even a compromise amount of LSA appropriation.²⁷ Consequently, when the remaining forward-funded grants are fulfilled this year there will be no programs at the Corporation that aim to engage students under age 17 in national service.²⁸

LSA has supported service-learning through formula and competitive grants to state education agencies (SEAs) and other entities, professional development and technical assistance, collaboration and celebration through state conferences and regional meetings, and national leadership. Federal policy also requires LSA to provide and maintain the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (NSLC). NSLC is the country’s most comprehensive service-learning resource and exists primarily to collect and disseminate information and research on service-learning to educators, students, parents, and community partners.²⁹ NSLC also provides networking opportunities to practitioners and researchers.³⁰ Just a few of the impacts of the elimination of LSA are detailed in the table on the following page.

What the Elimination of LSA Means for Students, Teachers, Schools and Communities:	
Students	Approximately one million students will lose the chance to obtain essential academic and workplace skills.
Schools	Almost 600 individual schools, 450 school districts, 985 community colleges, and 240 colleges and universities will lose more than \$25 million in funding.
Teachers	More than 35,000 K-12 teachers and higher education faculty will lose millions in direct funding to provide real-world, hands-on instruction for their students.
Communities	Nearly 16,000 community-based organizations will lose more than 14 million volunteer service hours contributed by students. Communities will lose access to student volunteers who provide services valued at up to \$310 million. ³¹

The use of service-learning is widespread in part because of federal legislation that supported its implementation and funding in the states. LSA has promoted a climate of accountability for its service-learning programs at the national, state/grantee, and local/subgrantee levels. The elimination of LSA, lack of state funding, and ongoing fiscal challenges in the states put the future of service-learning in doubt. In this paper NCLC will examine how this future might look without federal aid and the measures states are taking to ensure that service-learning continues to produce positive outcomes for students and the community.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

NCLC embarked on these case studies to:

- ✦ Learn how the loss of LSA funds is effecting states around the country
- ✦ Identify challenges and obstacles facing state service-learning leaders
- ✦ Describe the best practices and models state service-learning leaders are using to sustain state-level infrastructure and advance service-learning programs.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of these case studies is to identify how five states are moving forward with service-learning in the year immediately following the elimination of the major funding stream for most states' service-learning programs.

WARRANT STATEMENT

These case studies are warranted because service-learning is at a critical juncture. Whether service-learning remains as a viable and widely used pedagogy is dependent on how policymakers and practitioners proceed at this moment. Through these case studies, NCLC aims to offer examples to policymakers and practitioners as to how they might proceed in ways that are productive and establish a solid foundation for further growth of service-learning in PK-12 schools.

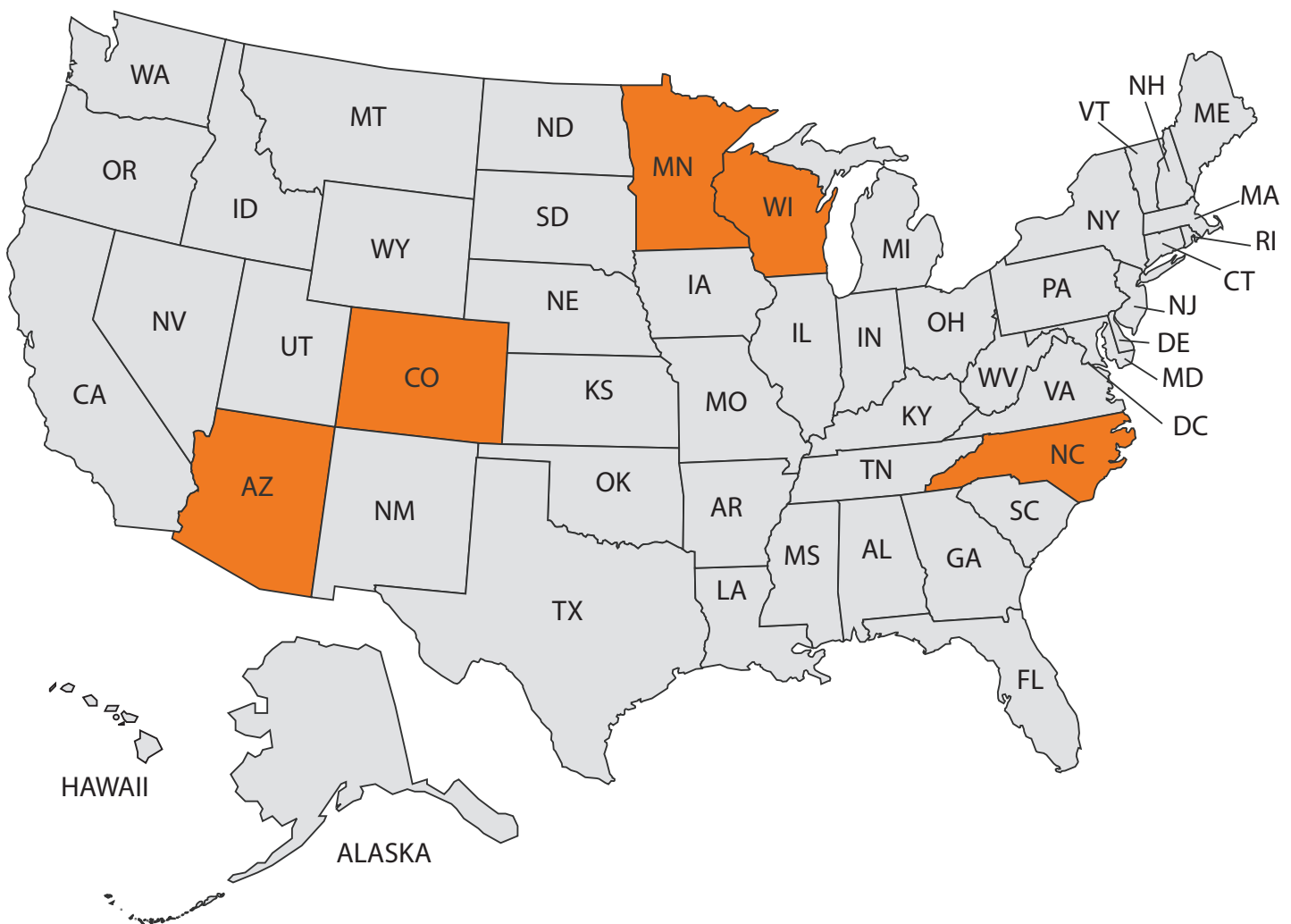


CASE STUDY STATES

NCLC staff selected five states to participate in the “Service-Learning After Learn and Serve America” case studies: Arizona, Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Wisconsin.³² The states are diverse not only geographically, demographically, and politically, but also reflect variety in-state approaches to service-learning. The five states appear to be united by their confidence in high-quality service-learning as a critical pedagogy for student academic, civic, social, emotional and career development, and the motivation to promote service-learning as an essential component of their state’s education system. NCLC staff interviewed the former Learn and Serve America (LSA) program officer in each state, as well as other state service-learning leaders, about how the elimination of LSA affects service-learning in their state and what steps they are taking to sustain and advance their service-learning programs without federal support.

The common themes echoed across the case study states include: (1) collaborating with state service-learning leaders from different sectors is key to building state capacity; (2) creative leveraging of existing resources may keep service-learning alive through other state education reforms; and (3) viewing the loss of federal funding as an opportunity to refocus service-learning programs rather than as an end to them. However, the loss of LSA funds did not affect any two states in exactly the same way, nor were any two states identical in their approaches to sustaining their service-learning programs.

In the following pages, NCLC reports on how the five states are moving forward in service-learning despite the defunding of LSA and how other states might employ similar models.



ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY STATES

ARIZONA

Learn and Serve Arizona

For nearly 12 years, Learn and Serve America (LSA) has been the main source of funding for service-learning in Arizona. Although LSA granted the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) its first formula grants in 1993, this allotment was minimal and it was not until 2000 that the state received its full funding allotment.³³ LSA funds flow through ADE to school districts, which typically employ the strategy of funding one school before expanding a successful program district-wide.

Since 1993, approximately 20,000 Arizona students each year have been engaged in service-learning through Learn and Serve Arizona (out of 1,077,831 students enrolled in 2009).³⁴ One of the many successful Arizona LSA programs is the Arizona Education Professions program (EP). EP began in the late 1990s in one school district as a service-learning project called Future Teachers Academy (FTA). By the early 2000s, FTA grew into EP, a state wide Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, and continues to be a collaborative effort of multiple units within ADE. EP is a credit-bearing class with a strong service-learning component and post secondary dual enrollment opportunities. Through the program, now in approximately 100 Arizona high schools, students may earn up to six credits in education in several local community colleges' teacher education programs.³⁵

Until the defunding of LSA, grant funds also supported one full-time Arizona Learn and Serve staff position at ADE and contributed to the salary of the Arizona Learn and Serve director. Learn and Serve Arizona staff generally offer three one-day service-learning training opportunities throughout the year to give educators the tools necessary to guide students to effectively determine and respond to the needs of their communities through service-learning. The spring training culminates with a celebration of service-learning in the state. In 2004, to further assist teachers engaged in service-learning and to provide accountability for the practice, ADE designed a Service-Learning Curriculum Framework.³⁶ The framework clarifies how teachers can connect service-learning to academic standards at each grade level.

Arizona Learn and Serve staff convened the inaugural Statewide K-12 Academic Service-Learning Conference on May 1, 2012. The conference consisted of 24 professional development sessions on service-learning for teachers and addressed such topics as service-learning and the common core standards, service-learning best practices, and building community partnerships.³⁷ State Superintendent John Huppenthal delivered the keynote address. Arizona Learn and Serve staff anticipate the conference publicity will expose more state policymakers to the positive student outcomes of service-learning so the pedagogy can move beyond LSA grantees to all schools across the state.



ADOE Initiatives Using Service-Learning:

21st Century Community Learning Centers

Academic Achievement

Bullying Prevention

Career and Technical Education

Character Education

Dropout Prevention

Early Childhood Education

Education and Career Action Plan

Honors Programs

Nutrition Programs

School Improvement

**Special Education/
High School Transition**

STEM

Teen Pregnancy Prevention

State Policy

In 2003, State Senator Mark Anderson worked with state service-learning advocates to draft a bill identifying how service-learning could be used as a means to meet the state's academic content standards. The bill passed and directs the state board of education to "[a]dopt guidelines to encourage pupils in grades nine, ten, eleven and twelve to volunteer for twenty hours of community service before graduation from high school."³⁸ The statute also provides that community service may include service-learning.³⁹ This policy led ADE to develop the Service-Learning Curriculum Framework previously mentioned.

What the Elimination of LSA Means for Arizona

According to Arizona Learn and Serve staff, at the end of the current LSA grant period Arizona will have *no formal service-learning initiative at the state level*.

- ✦ The state infrastructure for service-learning is severely compromised because the only position at ADE dedicated to service-learning will be gone.
- ✦ ADE has no plans to continue service-learning professional development and training for teachers.
- ✦ Service-learning likely will not spread beyond the districts and schools currently employing it.

Arizona Learn and Serve staff report that collaboration and momentum in service-learning was swelling when the federal funding was cut. They hoped the first statewide conference would expose more state education leaders to service-learning and generally create a service-learning "buzz" around the state. Also, Learn and Serve staff were planning to change the LSA subgrant structure from school grants to district-wide grants in an effort to expand the program and encourage sustainability within districts. To provide more accountability, this plan included benchmarks the districts would be required to meet for each year of the grant.



State Solutions

Model: Leverage Support of Other State Reform Efforts

In the time they have left with Arizona Learn and Serve, staff intend to:

- ✦ Leverage support of other state reform efforts, such as career and technical education, to find ways to incorporate service-learning
- ✦ Revise the Service-Learning Curriculum Framework so teachers will have access to up-to-date information
- ✦ Move the Arizona Learn and Serve website to the ADE website with the expectation that an ADE employee may be able to periodically update it
- ✦ Work with the available state service-learning data to illustrate the positive student outcomes that the service-learning program has realized, such as improvement of reading levels.

ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY STATES

COLORADO

Learn and Serve Colorado

Since the early 1990s, Learn and Serve America (LSA) has been the primary consistent source of funding for service-learning in Colorado. LSA funds flow to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) where over the years they have been subgranted to schools, regional service-learning offices, and community agencies. The federal funds also have contributed to securing a full-time position at CDE and enabled nearly 26,000 Colorado students to engage in service-learning in the 2004-05 school year (out of 780,708 students enrolled in 2005).⁴⁰

Throughout the 1990s, Learn and Serve Colorado, through CDE, awarded approximately 60 small LSA grants per year to teachers to implement service-learning programs in their classrooms. These grants enabled a middle school teacher from Colorado Springs to connect service-learning to state middle school reform efforts, which helped to foster the expansion of service-learning across the state.

In 2000, Learn and Serve Colorado shifted its focus to building a regional infrastructure for service-learning to make training and technical assistance more accessible to local schools and communities. LSA grants, supplemented with some private money, funded the development of four service-learning regions. Each region had a full-time service-learning coordinator and three full-time AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTAs). The regional offices also partnered with service-learning centers at local colleges or universities. These initiatives produced significant outcomes. For instance, in 2000:

- ✦ Colorado students provided over 200,000 hours of service, connected to 60,000 hours of classroom instruction linking service-learning to state and local content standards
- ✦ Regional service-learning offices offered five trainings throughout the year and established support for service-learning at their respective school and district levels.

From 1993 to 2003, Learn and Serve Colorado merged community- and school-based service-learning through management of LSA Community-Based Grants. Learn and Serve Colorado granted LSA funds to community agencies, such as the Denver Zoo, that worked directly with schools to help teachers and administrators align service-learning with content standards and state assessments. State evaluation results documented the success of these efforts, which showed that students engaged in service-learning programs linked to state standards had higher grade point averages and performed “significantly higher” on the state high-stakes assessment than students who did not participate in the program.⁴¹

Similarly, Learn and Serve Colorado contracted with RMC Research Corporation in 2004 to evaluate the effectiveness of LSA grantee service-learning programs. The evaluation documented that students engaged in high-quality service-learning programs were more likely to: (1) value school, (2) be academically and civically engaged, (3) feel civically influential, (4) have positive civic dispositions, and (5) possess civic skills.⁴²

Learn and Serve Colorado and other Colorado service-learning leaders have partnered with state implementers of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) as well as the leaders of state character education, English-language learners, and School-to-Work programs to explore methods of incorporating service-learning into other state reform initiatives. CDE has also annually convened educators and students engaged in service-learning at a state service-learning conference. Since 1992, the conference has provided Learn and Serve Colorado with the opportunity to recognize leadership in service-learning and students and educators the opportunity to learn from each other.

Mission of the Colorado Service-Learning Council:

To promote, advance, and institutionalize high-quality service-learning through innovative collaboration among K-12, higher educational institutions, government agencies, nonprofit agencies, and the private sector throughout Colorado.

CDOE Regional Service-Learning Infrastructure:

Four regions throughout Colorado

One full-time service-learning coordinator per region

Three full-time AmeriCorps VISTAs per region

Partners with local college or university service-learning center

For the current and last LSA grant cycle, Learn and Serve Colorado has focused on dropout prevention and student reengagement. Learn and Serve Colorado awarded school-based grants to advance high-quality service-learning in schools with high populations of disadvantaged youth to improve retention and graduation. To encourage sustainability at the school and district levels, Learn and Serve Colorado has partnered with existing prevention programs in the grantee's district.

State Policy

Colorado state statute explicitly permits school districts to adopt a service requirement for high school graduation.⁴³ The statute provides that “[e]ach school district shall consider and, if the school district board of education deems it appropriate, adopt a policy to encourage students to engage in community service or service-learning and to recognize students’ contributions to their communities through community service or service-learning The policy should specify the manner in which recognition of service may be reflected on a student’s diploma or transcript as an indication of the student’s commitment to service within the community.”⁴⁴

State policy further:

- ✦ Identifies service-learning as an instructional strategy to increase student achievement
- ✦ Supports service-learning professional development for teachers and administrators
- ✦ Identifies service-learning as a means of preparing students for the workplace
- ✦ Requires CDE to consider, in awarding grants for the dropout prevention activity program, whether the activity program demonstrates a connection with the community and provides a benefit to the community.⁴⁵

What the Elimination of LSA Means for Colorado

According to Colorado Learn and Serve staff, at the end of the current LSA grant period the currently healthy state infrastructure for service-learning will be in jeopardy.

- ✦ CDE will no longer have a position dedicated to service-learning
- ✦ The future of the regional service-learning offices is threatened because they will lack funding
- ✦ The frequent state-level service-learning professional development and training for teachers and administrators will cease
- ✦ Research on the state’s service-learning programs likely will not continue
- ✦ Districts will unlikely have the funds to expand service-learning beyond the schools currently employing it.

State Solutions

Models: Build State Capacity; Leverage Support of Other State Reform Efforts

CDE staff and representatives from state and national private and public organizations have come together to form the Colorado Service-Learning Council (the Council). The Council has been meeting regularly since summer 2011, and intends to pick up where Learn and Serve Colorado left off and become the statewide hub for service-learning.

Specifically, the Council plans to:

- ✦ Sustain and solidify the state infrastructure for service-learning
- ✦ Support and expand current school and district service-learning programs
- ✦ Provide a website with a wealth of resources on high-quality service-learning for students, educators and community organizations.

In the time they have left with Colorado Learn and Serve, staff intend to:

- ✦ Provide a final service-learning professional development opportunity for teachers through a spring 2012 conference
- ✦ Find ways to incorporate service-learning into other state reform efforts, such as the Colorado 21st Century Grant Program, Colorado Graduation Pathways, and the Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement Program
- ✦ Transition into a new position at CDE in the Office of Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement and work to incorporate service-learning in this initiative.

ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY STATES

MINNESOTA

Learn and Serve Minnesota

State policymakers in Minnesota were exploring ways to advance statewide service and service-learning before Congress created Learn and Serve America (LSA). In 1984, the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC), headquartered in Saint Paul, first assembled leaders from education, community organizations, businesses, and government to promote service-learning across the state. Subsequently, Minnesota governors appointed a succession of commissions tasked with developing youth service.⁴⁶

After the state adopted legislation supporting service-learning, detailed in the next section, Minnesota Senators Dave Durenberger and Paul Wellstone introduced Minnesota's successful approach to service-learning at the federal level and, along with then-Senator Ted Kennedy, sponsored the National and Community Service Act.⁴⁷ Since then, more than 15,000 Minnesota students have been engaged in service-learning through LSA funding (out of 837,053 students enrolled in 2009).⁴⁸

Similar to most states, LSA allots K-12 grant funds to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). MDE then awards subgrants to support school-, district-, and community-based service-learning programs. Through LSA funds, MDE has also been able to dedicate one full-time position, known as the Service-Learning Specialist, to coordinate state service-learning initiatives and provide training and professional development to educators. To encourage service-learning training, MDE allows teachers to count service-learning professional development as training hours toward licensure renewal.⁴⁹

In 1993, MDE, through Learn and Serve Minnesota, established a network of service-learning peer consultants—educators responsible for providing training and technical assistance across the state. MDE paired each consultant with one LSA grantee school. To further foster sustainability for service learning, in 2005 MDE adopted a state definition of service-learning: “Service-learning is a form of experimental learning whereby students apply content knowledge, critical thinking and good judgment to address genuine community needs.”⁵⁰ Learn and Serve Minnesota also requires grantee school districts to consider ways to sustain service-learning programs in district schools.

MDE adopted K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice and encourages all school and district service-learning programs across the state to adhere to the standards. In 2006, Learn and Serve Minnesota published a handbook to provide teachers tangible examples of how service can be linked to state academic standards.⁵¹

MDE staff have recognized service-learning as a valuable pedagogy in state reform efforts. Service-learning is one of 10 key strategies identified as part of MDE's Dropout Prevention, Retention and Graduation Initiative. MDE's Out-of-School Time Program employs service-learning as a means to “bridge” school time and after-school time. Out-of-School Time staff explain that during the school day, teachers may only “go so deep” in certain curricular concepts; however, the afterschool program often has the capacity to leverage resources of community partners to delve deeper into a certain subject through service-learning.⁵² Community partners involved in district after-school initiatives are invited to curriculum meetings in an effort to ensure that after school service-learning programs meet the definition of service-learning.

“Service-learning is a form of experimental learning whereby students apply content knowledge, critical thinking and good judgment to address genuine community needs.”



State Policy

Minnesota is the only state where the state legislature has passed legislation authorizing local school districts to levy one dollar per capita for community-based youth development/youth service programs including service-learning.⁵³ Many districts have used this levy to employ a district service-learning coordinator.

State statute also permits school districts to adopt a service requirement for high school graduation. Specifically, statute provides that a school board “may award up to one credit, or the equivalent, toward graduation for a pupil who completes the youth service requirements of the district.”⁵⁴ State policy further:

- ✦ Identifies service-learning as an instructional strategy to increase student achievement
- ✦ Directs the Governor’s Workforce Development Council and the Commissioner of Education to study the alignment among community service, service-learning and work-based learning
- ✦ Names service-learning as a strategy to increase civic engagement
- ✦ Identifies service-learning as a means of preparing students for the workplace
- ✦ Supports service-learning professional development for teachers.⁵⁵

What the Elimination of LSA Means for Minnesota

According to Minnesota Learn and Serve staff, at the end of the current LSA grant period, the robust state infrastructure for service-learning will be in jeopardy. Staff stress that “incredible things” are happening right now in service-learning throughout the state, but the defunding of LSA threatens stagnation and reversion in service-learning programs.⁵⁶

- ✦ MDE will no longer have a position dedicated to service-learning.
- ✦ The consistent state-level service-learning professional development and training for teachers and administrators will come to an end. Staff stress that professional development is extremely important to ensure high-quality service-learning because teacher preparation programs generally do not provide instruction on how to integrate service-learning.
- ✦ Regional service-learning offices will unlikely have the funds to continue to assist schools at the same level.
- ✦ MDE no longer will provide grantee school districts programmatic and fiscal assistance through the state Program Monitoring and Risk System.

State Solutions

Model: Leverage Support of Other State Reform Efforts

Prior to the elimination of LSA, most MDE departments were already collaborating on the department’s high school dropout initiative funded by a five-year federal dropout prevention grant. MDE department specialists, including the Service-Learning Specialist, met monthly to identify issues students are struggling with and look for solutions to these issues.

Out of this collaboration the Service-Learning Specialist formed a voluntary ad hoc committee/informal professional learning community with other MDE staff who work with hands-on, project-based activities. The Service-Learning Specialist anticipates that through the power of networking within MDE, this group will find ways to incorporate service-learning in MDE’s broad-based strategies to better engage students.

ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY STATES

NORTH CAROLINA

Learn and Serve North Carolina



Similar to the other case study states, Learn and Serve America (LSA) has been the principal source of funding for North Carolina service-learning programs since the 1990s. In the early stages of Learn and Serve North Carolina, LSA funds flowed through the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to individual teachers to implement small project grants.⁵⁷ NCDPI gradually changed its subgrant structure to support comprehensive proposals from school districts. In the 1999-2000 school year, the Corporation for National & Community Service designated 24 North Carolina grantees as National Service-Learning Leader Schools.⁵⁸ More than 13,000 North Carolina students were engaged in service-learning in the 2008-09 school year (out of 1,483,397 total students enrolled in 2009).⁵⁹

In the late 2000s, NCDPI explored the possibility of transitioning Learn and Serve North Carolina to a statewide nonprofit organization. NCDPI collaborated with Communities in Schools of North Carolina (CISNC) on this effort and in the 2009-10 school year, CISNC began administration of Learn and Serve North Carolina.⁶⁰ CISNC currently supports service-learning programs in 42 counties (out of 100) and at 430 sites.⁶¹

CISNC uses LSA funds to support service-learning projects in schools and districts that address three goals: (1) participant development, (2) strengthening communities, and (3) fostering civic engagement.⁶² CISNC targets schools and districts where the majority of the student population is at risk of dropping out.⁶³ CISNC maintains that 98% of potential student dropouts have stayed in school in part because of CIS-supported programs; including service-learning.⁶⁴

Guilford County Schools, a district of 71,000 students, is one of CISNC's star grantees. Guilford County has partnered with the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) in addition to CISNC, to offer students academically rigorous service-learning experiences. Through the district's Character Development Initiative, which addresses one of the district's strategic plan goals of providing students "the tools and motivation necessary to positively impact [the] world," students may earn a Service-Learning Diploma and a Service-Learning Exemplary Award.⁶⁵ School administrators will award the Service-Learning Diploma for the first time in 2012 to students who complete 250 hours of service-learning throughout their high school career.⁶⁶ School administrators will also award the Service-Learning Exemplary Award to students who complete 100 hours of service-learning before high school graduation.⁶⁷

Mission of The North Carolina Service-Learning Coalition:

To develop actively engaged and globally aware citizens by promoting, advancing, and supporting high quality service-learning

Communities in Schools North Carolina:

Brings together all sectors of the community – from businesses and other nonprofits to government agencies and faith-based organizations – to make sure students are graduating on time, prepared for college, career and life.

Through the Character Development Initiative Guilford County administrators and educators have committed to service-learning as an instructional strategy.⁶⁸ In the first year of the program, the 2010-11 school year, nearly 100 teachers received two days of professional development in service-learning.⁶⁹ This school year, a second group of teachers will participate in the training.⁷⁰ The district's goal is to have service-learning teacher leaders at all levels, with at least one in each school.⁷¹

State Policy

State statute encourages local boards of education, as a part of the Basic Education Program, to include instruction on “service to others” by incorporating service-learning into the board’s standard curriculum or “involving a classroom of students or some other group of students in one or more hands-on community-service projects.”⁷² The statute goes on to encourage all schools to “provide opportunities for student involvement in community service or service-learning projects.”⁷³ State policy also:

- ✦ Includes service-learning as a valuable strategy for at-risk students (through dropout prevention and suicide prevention programs)
- ✦ Encourages service-learning as a teaching strategy through The Student Citizen Act of 2001
- ✦ Recommends service-learning as a work-based strategy for courses in the Family and Consumer Science program of study.⁷⁴

What the Elimination of LSA Means for North Carolina

Before the elimination of LSA, CISNC staff realized that one person was not enough to coordinate the state’s service-learning effort.⁷⁵ The loss of federal funding has intensified this issue. Many local school districts’ service-learning programs are not as advanced as Guilford County and support from the state is essential. Moreover, the state does not allocate any funds to support service-learning.

- ✦ CISNC will continue to provide service-learning, but with the loss of the federal aid it will become the only source of statewide funding for service-learning.
- ✦ Service-learning professional development and training for teachers will not be as consistent.
- ✦ Without additional funds, high-quality service-learning may not expand beyond the districts and schools currently using it.

State Solutions

Model: Build State Capacity; Leverage Effective Expertise of Community Partners

CISNC staff and representatives from state and national private and public organizations have recently joined forces to form The North Carolina Service-Learning Coalition (the Coalition). Similar to the Colorado Service-Learning Council, the Coalition aims to pick up where Learn and Serve North Carolina left off, and become the state hub for service-learning. The mission of the Coalition is “to develop actively engaged and globally aware citizens by promoting, advancing, and supporting high quality service-learning.”⁷⁶ The Coalition convened the inaugural State-wide Service-Learning Summit in May 2012 in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Specifically, the Coalition plans to:

- ✦ Sustain and strengthen the state infrastructure for service-learning by supporting and expanding current school and district service-learning programs and by making resources on high-quality service-learning accessible for students, teachers, and community organizations
- ✦ Ensure that schools and districts understand what high-quality service-learning is and is not (misconceptions about service-learning continue to persist throughout the state)

ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY STATES

WISCONSIN



Learn and Serve America (LSA) funds have been the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's (WDPI) primary means of supporting school district service-learning programs since 1992. Since 2006, WDPI has focused on building district infrastructure to sustain service-learning and granted up to \$20,000 to districts to support service-learning programs. The impact of the district grants has been substantial; more than 13,000 Wisconsin students were engaged in LSA service-learning programs in the 2010-11 school year (out of 1,224,689 total students enrolled).⁷⁷

LSA funding enabled WDPI to support one dedicated staff position, a service-learning consultant. The service-learning consultant developed and provided resources for teachers to support high-quality service-learning practice based on current research, convened state service-learning conferences, and provided technical assistance, facilitation and professional development opportunities for educators.

To further foster sustainability, WDPI required each school within a grantee district to identify a "teacher leader" in service-learning.⁷⁸ The teacher leaders from each school formed a district leader team that worked with the service-learning consultant on institutionalization of district wide service-learning implementation. For several years, WDPI also partnered with the Wisconsin Campus Compact to convene the annual State Superintendent's PK-16 Institute on Service-Learning and Citizenship.⁷⁹ The aim of this conference was to expand educators' service-learning skills.⁸⁰

WDPI has recognized service-learning as a priority state initiative, and incorporated the practice into many state programs, such as 21st Century Skills, career and technical education, STEM initiatives, family and consumer economics, and character education. In addition, WDPI recently published a service-learning implementation guide titled *High Quality Instruction that Transforms: A Guide to Implementing Quality Academic Service-Learning*.⁸¹

State Policy

Although Wisconsin state policy does not require service-learning to count toward graduation requirements, state statute does permit a school board to "require a pupil to participate in community service activities in order to receive a high school diploma."⁸² State administrative code defines service-learning as a pedagogy where "pupils learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized services that meet the needs of the community."⁸³ Historically, elected state superintendents of public instruction also have supported service-learning and citizenship education.



"Service-learning encourages students to use their academic skills to make a difference in the world."

*~ Former State Superintendent
Elizabeth Burmaster*

What the Elimination of LSA Means for Wisconsin

According to Wisconsin Learn and Serve staff, at the end of the current LSA grant period there will be a void at the state level for service-learning. Staff stress that it “felt like we were right on the cusp” of advancing and sustaining high-quality service-learning when funding was cut.⁸⁴ WDPI staff further explain that schools want to do service-learning, but it is nearly impossible to maintain fidelity to quality with no support at the state level.⁸⁵

- ✦ WDPI will no longer have a position dedicated to service-learning.
- ✦ The thorough and ongoing service-learning professional development and training that has been based on a cascade model to expand to educators throughout the state will cease.
- ✦ Districts will unlikely have the funds to expand service-learning beyond the schools currently employing it.
- ✦ The gains in service-learning made over time likely will fade as teachers supporting it retire.
- ✦ Fidelity to quality may decrease without ongoing support, professional development, and the creation of new resources based on current research.



State Solutions

Models: Leverage Support of Other State Reform Efforts

WDPI staff have presented to WDPI leadership specifically how service-learning can transition into other department efforts. They hope that the unique elements of service-learning as not only an instructional strategy but also a project- and inquiry-based learning experience will make it easily incorporated into other state initiatives, such as career and technical education. Similarly, as a pedagogy that resonates with effective instructional practices, service-learning could be a key component of teacher quality efforts. Staff anticipate that because service-learning is a universal strategy, it could be incorporated into WDPI’s statewide reform efforts: *Response to Intervention, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports*.⁸⁶

CONCLUSION

Service-learning is at a critical juncture. After almost two decades of steady progress, the recent elimination of Learn and Serve America (LSA), the lack of state funding, and the fiscal crisis across the states have placed the future of service-learning in jeopardy. Whether service-learning remains as a viable and widely-utilized practice is dependent on how policymakers and practitioners proceed at this point in time.

Thanks to the state LSA officers and service-learning advocates and experts in Arizona, Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Wisconsin, NCLC was able to compose these case studies to offer examples to policymakers and practitioners as to how they might continue to advance service-learning without federal funding. NCLC sought to determine how the elimination of LSA is affecting states around the country, identify the challenges and obstacles facing state service-learning leaders, and provide best practices and models state leaders are using to sustain the service-learning infrastructure at the state level. NCLC also intended that these case studies build upon previous NCLC service-learning initiatives that promote service-learning as a critical pedagogy for student academic, civic, social, emotional, and career development.

At this time of transition for the field of service-learning, the findings from these case studies may have implications not only for state service-learning leaders grappling with next steps, but also national service-learning leaders working toward the next generation of federal service-learning policy. Despite substantial differences in geography, demography, infrastructure, and policy, case study interviews found that the five participating states share many of the same challenges in dealing with elimination of LSA and service-learning implementation in general. Similarly, the five states also offer consistent recommendations and best practices with regard to sustaining service-learning without new funding.



CHALLENGES

Among the many challenges states are facing because of the defunding of LSA, three consistently stand out:

1. Sustainability and Infrastructure

- ✦ Congress's original decision to grant the power of allocation of LSA funds to State Education Agencies (SEAs) was elemental in sustaining and advancing service-learning within the states. SEAs became the central resource for expanding service-learning programs and provided technical assistance and state leadership. The elimination of LSA funding has fractured the state-level infrastructure of service-learning in each of the five case-study states. In Arizona and Wisconsin, the defunding of LSA has devastated state infrastructure.
- ✦ Research has shown that service-learning must be of high-quality to positively impact student outcomes, and SEAs, local school districts, and schools cannot provide high-quality service-learning without the infrastructure to support it. Sustainability and infrastructure is not only about funding; state policy and collaboration of service-learning practitioners is also vital. However, funds are necessary in the beginning to intermediate stages of infrastructure building, which is the stage of most states today.

2. Professional Development

- ✦ Professional development is one of the essential components of high-quality service-learning. LSA funds allowed SEAs to provide training and professional development in service-learning and collaboration among teachers. Specifically, many SEAs used LSA funds to transport teachers from across the state to a training location and to pay for the required substitute teacher. With the loss of LSA funding, states are not able to provide the training and professional development necessary, and it is up to teachers to seek their own training.

3. Inconsistent Messaging

- ✦ The elimination of LSA has illuminated what many service-learning experts already knew—that the definition of service-learning is still unclear. In general, state and federal policymakers continue to be unclear on what high-quality service-learning is and is not. While the service-learning field has embraced a set of research-based standards for high-quality practice, the standards are not yet universally and consistently applied to implementation efforts. This uncertainty in the field may have contributed to LSA funding being an easy target to cut.
- ✦ Despite the fact that most states have enacted either legislation or policy encouraging school districts to use service-learning, stronger state policy is necessary for service-learning to be fully utilized as a strategy to reform education, close the achievement gap, and engage citizens in American democracy. Service-learning requires changes in how instruction is delivered; thus it is essential that state policy target the requisite changes to instructional practices and school climate efforts in order to fully create schools that embrace service-learning. The infrastructure and professional development concerns caused by the defunding of LSA make service-learning policy even more necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

Among the recommendations and best practices found in case study states, four stand out as consistent and significant.

Key recommendations include:

1. Build State Capacity

Colorado and North Carolina are finding success through a coalition of service-learning leaders from across the state. Such a coalition will create a state presence for service-learning and fill the void that the defunding of LSA created at the state level. The Colorado Council is in the process of designing a website to provide the necessary resources and networking capabilities that the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse and SEA websites have provided. Similarly, the North Carolina Coalition aims to become the hub for service-learning in the state.

2. Leverage Support of Other State-Reform Efforts

Arizona, Colorado, and Minnesota are identifying other statewide initiatives as vehicles for service-learning, such as 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs and Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement programs. Minnesota also is seeing progress through an ad hoc collaboration of SEA staff who work on project-based initiatives.

3. Leverage Effective Expertise of Community Partners

North Carolina is the one state in the case studies whose LSA was administered by a nonprofit, Communities in Schools North Carolina (CISNC), rather than the SEA. While the loss of federal funds still has a significant impact on the support that CISNC will be able to provide, because CISNC is involved, North Carolina is better situated to maintain momentum in light of the elimination of LSA. Thus, collaborating with local nonprofits and other organizations already engaged in finding creative ways to support service-learning in districts may be essential.

4. Advocate for State and Federal Policy

State service-learning advocates in Wisconsin currently are refocusing efforts on clear messaging to ensure that policymakers are informed as to what high-quality service-learning is and is not. The advocates anticipate introduction of service-learning policy at the state level and also will work toward rebuilding federal support for service-learning under the U.S. Department of Education (ED). LSA has had few connections to the ED, because it was housed under the Corporation and thus concentrated more on the service part of service-learning. Advocates in Wisconsin and other states believe the time is right to move service-learning beyond the federal service and volunteerism agenda into the education agenda. Many believe that the reauthorization of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act and implementation of the Common Core State Standards will provide opportunities to “grow” active learning approaches, such as service-learning.

While the end of LSA is unquestionably a blow to service-learning, it is not the end of the road for the field. Students, educators, and advocates who are engaged in service-learning are passionate about the pedagogy because they know its power. Service-learning teaches students how to collaborate, think critically, and problem solve. Each of these 21st century skills is critical to a student’s success.

A growing body of research documents the student outcomes produced by service-learning: strengthening academic engagement, increasing school attendance, connecting to community, and reducing risky behaviors, such as dropping out of school. The long term outcomes produced by service-learning include: civic engagement, career preparedness, healthy school climate, and public engagement in education.

Arizona, Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Wisconsin represent positive models of how to progress at this critical point in time. These states are designing and implementing agendas to maintain and advance statewide service-learning initiatives with no federal aid and no new state aid. They are committed to service-learning because they know it works.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Early Stages of Service-Learning

- ✦ How did service-learning originate in your state?
- ✦ Who/what groups organized the statewide effort?
- ✦ What were the original goals?
- ✦ What roles did the various state institutions play?
- ✦ What motivated the institutions to participate in the early stages?
- ✦ How coordinated were the early efforts?
- ✦ What challenges and obstacles existed in the early stages?

Accountability

- ✦ Were there any evaluations early on or studies of effectiveness?
- ✦ Is a process for evaluating statewide service-learning efforts spelled out?
 - ✦ Describe the criteria for evaluation.
 - ✦ Who assesses?
 - ✦ Who monitors progress?

Sustainability

- ✦ Has service-learning become institutionalized? How? State Board of Education policy?
- ✦ What other school reforms are taking place?
- ✦ How is service-learning integrated into the curriculum?
- ✦ What organizational structures exist to promote and communicate a service-learning agenda statewide (for example, a service-learning council, education-sponsored forum, etc.)?
 - ✦ Which organizations are involved and who represents them?
 - ✦ Are there other organizations not now involved that should be? Explain.
 - ✦ Describe the goals and functions of the PK-12 organizational structure(s).
 - ✦ To what extent is PK-12 considered an integral part of PK-12 and postsecondary education activities?

State Policy Environment

- ✦ In your (or the department's) view, what are the current education policy priorities for state leaders?
- ✦ What is the relationship of these policy priorities to the state's service-learning agenda and goals?
- ✦ What roles have state leaders played in establishing and promoting a statewide PK-12 agenda? (Outline the specific roles and actions of the governor's office, legislature, state department of education, state higher education agency, business, other) Any champions of service-learning?
- ✦ What motivates or compels each of the state leaders mentioned to participate in the PK-12 agenda in the state?
- ✦ Is there a statewide/legislative/departamental commitment to civic responsibility?

State Funding

- ✦ How are PK-12 activities funded in your state?
- ✦ Does the state have a special allocation focused on service-learning?

Current State of Service-Learning

- ✦ What has been accomplished thus far?

Challenges to Implementation

- ✦ Have you identified any unforeseen challenges to achieving better cooperation, alignment, or effectiveness?
- ✦ Other than funding, what are the challenges and obstacles in advancing service-learning?
- ✦ What are your strategies for overcoming obstacles?



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State	State Solution
Michigan	<i>Reaching out to subgrantees</i> through The Michigan Community Service Commission blog, asking “What can we do to help you sustain service-learning without this funding? What are the critical elements of the program that we need to sustain? How can we work together to maintain our momentum in the field?”
Pennsylvania	<i>Building state capacity</i> through the Pennsylvania Service-Learning Alliance, made up of PennSERVE, The Institute for Global Education and Service-Learning, and The Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development.

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