Illinois State University

ISU ReD: Research and eData

4-30-2018

Community Partner Survey Report: Conducted by the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, April 30, 2018

Center for Civic Engagement
Illinois State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/prcce

Community Partner Survey Report

Conducted by the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning

April 30, 2018

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CESL) conducted a 37 question online survey in fall 2017. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain the relationships and experiences community organizations, primarily in Bloomington-Normal, have with Illinois State University. This information is essential because CESL is responsible for growing and formalizing the institution's service learning practices. This information is also key as CESL establishes how it will interact with community organizations. Fifty-five organizations responded to the survey.

The results of the survey indicate community organizations do truly want to partner with ISU. Most organizations in Bloomington-Normal already have some kind of relationship with ISU. That relationship may be with a registered student organization, individual faculty member, or a specific department. Community organizations understand that there are many opportunities for students to learn within their organizations while the organization can benefit from the knowledge and skills of the students. Community organizations feel positively about ISU and their experiences overall, but there is work that can be done to take these partnerships from good to great. Much of the immediate action items are for CESL to accomplish, but it is important for the entire campus to understand the communities' perspective on the institution.

Topics included in the full report include:

➢ Organizations' relationships with ISU in the past three years
➢ Comparison of experiences against the Community Campus Partnerships for Health principles
➢ Community needs and problems
➢ Resources CESL can develop for organizations
➢ Action items

Introduction

The Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CESL) conducted a survey of community organizations in fall 2017. The purpose of conducting the survey was to gather information from community organizations to inform CESL work as it develops the resources to support Illinois State's service learning practices and establishes how CESL will interact with community organizations.

The survey, administered via Qualtrics, was distributed by electronic link in the October 30 *Path-O-Gram* (bi-weekly social service enewsletter) and via email to staff of nonprofit organizations in McLean County, primarily Bloomington-Normal. Initially, 71 people received an email on November 2 to try to manage the desired one response per organization. Due to a low response rate, 176 people were emailed on November 13. The survey deadline was November 17, 2017, but the survey was left open until December 2017. Three organizations had multiple respondents. These responses were consolidated to ensure community organizations were only represented once in the data set.
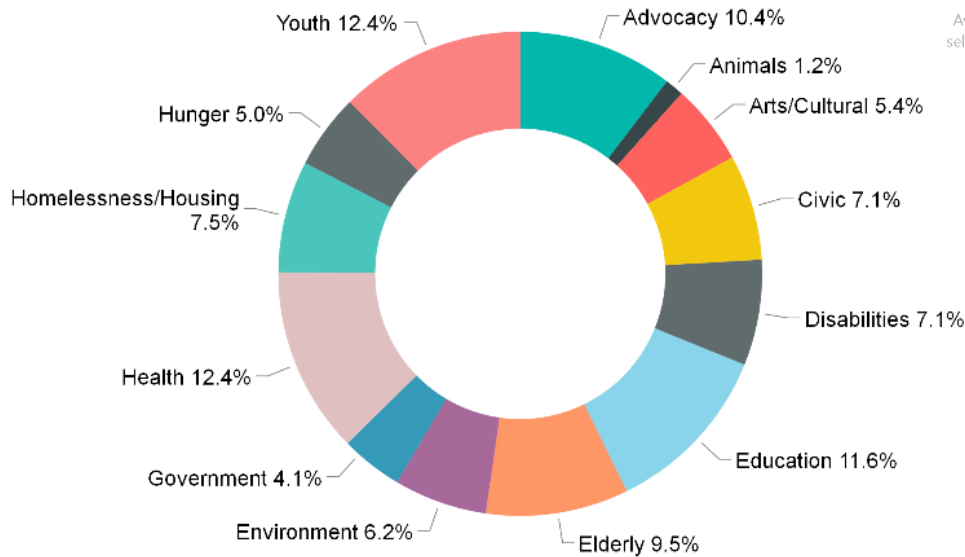
Respondents

Fifty-five unique organizations responded to the survey.

Advocate BroMenn Medical Center
Alzheimer's Association Illinois Chapter
Autism Mclean
Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts
Bloomington Public Library
Bloomington-Normal YMCA
Boys & Girls Club of Bloomington-Normal
Center for Hope Outreach Programs
Center for Youth and Family Solutions
Central Illinois Pride Health Center
Child Protection Network
Children's Discovery Museum
Children's Home + Aid
Collaborative Solutions Institute
Community Health Care Clinic
Easterseals Central Illinois
Faith in Action of Bloomington-Normal
Family Community Resource Center
Habitat for Humanity of McLean County
Habitat for Humanity ReStore
Heartland Head Start
Home Sweet Home Ministries, Inc.
KTB Financial Services Inc.
Marcfirst
McLean County Museum of History
McLean County Nursing Home
McLean County Regional Planning Commission
Meadows Mennonite Retirement Community

Mid Central Community Action, Inc.
Midwest Food Bank
Miller Park Zoo
Mosaic Collective, LLC
Muscular Dystrophy Association
Neighbors Association of Normal
Normal Public Library
Northwest Neighborhood Community Center
PATH, Inc.
Peace Meal
Prairie State Legal Services
Project Oz
Regional Alternative School
Regional Office of Education 17
STAR Adult Literacy Program
The Baby Fold
The Salvation Army
Town of Normal
Town of Normal Parks & Recreation
University of Illinois Extension Unity Community Center
University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria/Positive Health Solutions
University of Illinois Extension-McLean County
West Bloomington Revitalization Project
YouthBuild Mclean County
YWCA McLean County
YWCA Stepping Stones

Organizations were asked to classify the social issues they address. This is helpful information for the campus to understand the needs of the community. The largest areas of work are in youth and health, followed closely by education and advocacy.

Areas Addressed by Community Organizations (n = 55)

Youth 12.4%
Advocacy 10.4%
Animals 1.2%
Arts/Cultural 5.4%
Hunger 5.0%
Civic 7.1%
Homelessness/Housing 7.5%
Disabilities 7.1%
Health 12.4%
Education 11.6%
Government 4.1%
Environment 6.2%
Elderly 9.5%

4.4
Average number of areas selected by an organization

Organizations could select more than one area.

Working with Illinois State University

Organizations were asked to indicate if they had worked with ISU in the last three years.

Has your organization worked with Illinois State University in any capacity in the last 3 years?

49
Community Organizations selected "Yes"

In what capacity?
Select all that apply

17.7%   6.9%   18.9%   9.1%   13.1%   11.4%   21.1%

- Groups of Student Volunteers
- Fundraising/Philanthropy
- Presentation to Staff
- Internship/Practicum
- Student Research Project
- Service-Learning Project
- Faculty Research Project
- Present to Class
- Individual Student Volunteers

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%
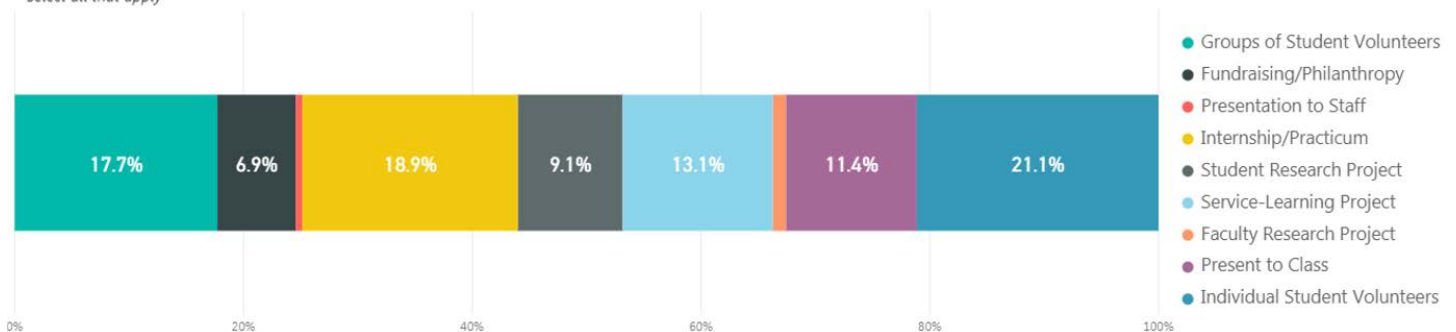
Eighty-nine percent of respondents had worked with ISU in the last three years. In 2011, ISU's American Democracy Project conducted roundtable discussions with community organizations. Twenty-six organizations participated and

100 percent had worked with ISU in the last three years. This is a helpful comparison to see how the institution's relationships may have changed. The more expansive recruitment efforts and larger group of respondents to this question in the 2017 survey compared to the 2011 discussions may explain why there was a lower percentage of organizations reportedly working with ISU.

Organizations that had worked with ISU were asked if they had regular/ongoing partnerships with anyone at ISU. The twenty-seven organizations that indicated they have an ongoing partnership with ISU were then asked to list the faculty/staff name or student organization; the nature of the partnership; and the length of the partnership. The following are the names of individuals, departments, or student organizations mentioned. Length of partnerships ranged from new/only 1 semester to up to 24 years. The mean response to length of relationship was 7.4 years and the median response was 5 years.

Individual Faculty/Staff	Departments	RSO's
Beggs, Brent (Kinesiology & Recreation)	Agriculture	Alpha Sigma Phi
Elkins, Dan (Kinesiology & Recreation)	America Reads/America Counts (2)	Alternative Breaks
Lamonica, Tom (School of Communication)	Campus Recreation	Encounter
Toro Morn, Maura (Latin America Studies)	Career Center	Habitat for Humanity
Barnes, Jen (Family & Consumer Science)	Communication (2)	National Association of Colored Women
Carpenter, Nathan (School of Communication)	Construction Management	Public Relations Student Society of America
Chalian, Sona (School of Social Work) (2)	Criminal Justice Sciences	Sigma Alpha Iota Music Sorority
Crubaugh, Tony (History)	Culturally Responsive Campus	Student Nursing Association
Edwards, Laura (Language Literature & Culture)	Community Conference	Students Supporting Individuals with Disabilities
Halsey, Robin (English)	Department of Education	Various RSO's (4)
Hartlep, Nicholas (English)	Department of Social Work (10)	
Hildebrandt, Sue (Language Literature & Culture)	Early Childhood Education	
Hughes, Richard (History)	English Language Institute	
Lanier, Jackie (Health Sciences) (2)	Fraternity and Sorority Life	
Lessoff, Alan (History)	Health Education	
Mainieri, Tracy (Kinesiology & Recreation)	Horticulture (2)	
Mark, Karen (Psychology) (2)	Human Development and Family Science	
McKinney, Jerey (School of Social Work)	Human Resources	
Moore, Cynthia (Biological Sciences)	Kinesiology and Recreation (2)	
Mulvaney, Mike (Kinesiology & Recreation)	Mennonite College of Nursing (3)	
Noraian, Monica (History)	Milner Library	
Nwake, Nweze (Family & Consumer Science)	Planetarium	
Zosky, Diane (School of Social Work)	Psychology	
	Sociology	
	Special Education	
	Various classes (2)	

The following were the only organizations that have not worked with ISU recently: Collaborative Solutions Institute, KTB Financial Services Inc., Meadows Mennonite Retirement Community, and Miller Park Zoo.

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health

Campus Community Partnership for Health (CCPH) is a national organization focused on partnerships between academic institutions and communities specifically for health equity and social justice. Although their work is

focused on health, the principles are generalizable to any partnership and has long been the standard for establishing and maintaining sustainable campus-community partnerships. We asked the 27 community organizations that indicated they had an ongoing relationship with ISU to think about their organization's longest partnership with ISU and then asked them to rate their level of agreement as to whether the campus-community partnership standards established by the CCPH were evident in that partnership.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Unable to Comment
The partnership takes time to celebrate success.	28%	32%	24%	12%	4%
The partnership values multiple kinds of knowledge and life experiences.	60%	32%	4%	4%	
The partnership makes clear and open communication an ongoing priority by striving to understand each other's needs and self-interests, and developing a common language	56%	28%	8%	8%	
The partnership has mutual accountability for success.	48%	44%		8%	
The partnership has agreed upon goals, values, measurable outcomes, and processes for accountability.	28%	52%	12%	4%	4%
The partnership has a specific purpose and has evolved over time.	52%	40%	4%	4%	
The partnership can be characterized by mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment.	52%	40%	4%	4%	
The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also works to address needs and increase capacity of all partners.	52%	40%	4%	4%	
The partnership allows for feedback among all stakeholders with a goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.	40%	52%		4%	4%
Responsibility is balanced among partners and resources are equitably shared.	44%	36%	8%	8%	4%
Partnership principles and processes have been established with the input and agreement of all partners, especially for decision-making and conflict resolution	40%	36%	16%	4%	4%
Partners share the benefits of the partnerships accomplishments.	44%	44%	4%	8%	

There were no responses for *strongly disagree* for any statement. One organization consistently rated their experience with ISU with *disagree*. CESL staff will follow up with the organization to better understand their experience(s).
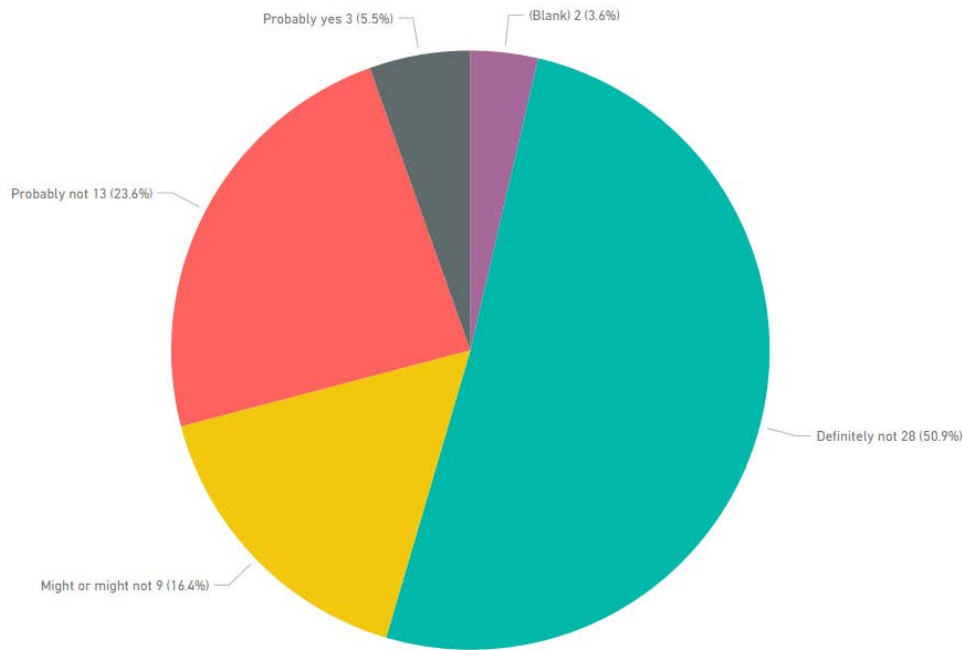
Overall, these responses speak positively for ISU and its partnerships/interactions with community organizations. Based on the results listed above, the most significant area for improvement is in celebrating success. After a project has concluded, it is important to celebrate the outcomes and the partnership with activities like sending a thank you card, attending a final class presentation, debriefing experience with faculty and partner, holding a celebratory meal, or writing a formal report of results. The other area where improvement could be made is related to agreed upon goals, values, outcomes, and accountability. Advanced planning would allow time to establish shared goals, values, outcomes, and accountability measures. Open-ended responses later in the survey (see What ISU Should Know About Community Organizations) reinforce the need for advanced planning when developing partnerships.

What the community needs from Illinois State

Key in understanding how ISU can better partner with the community is knowing if any organization is currently overwhelmed with requests for partnerships from ISU.

Probably yes 3 (5.5%)

(Blank) 2 (3.6%)

Probably not 13 (23.6%)

Definitely not 28 (50.9%)

Might or might not 9 (16.4%)

No organizations indicated "definitely yes" or that they were definitely overwhelmed with requests from ISU. The organizations that indicated "probably yes" are: Advocate BroMenn Medical Center, Marcfirst, and The Baby Fold. This is important for the campus to understand if they are interested in establishing a partnership with these organizations, as it might not be possible. In addition, an open-ended response later in the survey indicated Home Sweet Home Ministries is nearing capacity to host student volunteers.

Community Needs
Community organizations were asked to rank the kind of engagement they need from ISU.

Community Need	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00
Assistance solving business problems		2	3	2	3	3	6	7	2
Assistance with marketing/media/communications	8	7	6	5	3	5	2	4	
Long term special projects	1	2	5	7	9	7	3	1	
Ongoing volunteers	18	2	6	3		5	3	3	
Other (interns, technology help, faculty expertise)	4	1	2	1					3
Philanthropic/Fundraising efforts	6	11	5	8	1	3	3		
Research	2	2	2	2	6	2	4	8	
Short term special projects	2	5	9	10	7	4	2		
Volunteers for special events	5	14	6	2	7	1	4	3	

Community Need
● Assistance solving business problems
● Assistance with marketing/media/communications
● Long term special projects
● Ongoing volunteers
● Other (interns, technology help, faculty expertise)
● Philanthropic/Fundraising efforts
● Research
● Short term special projects
● Volunteers for special events
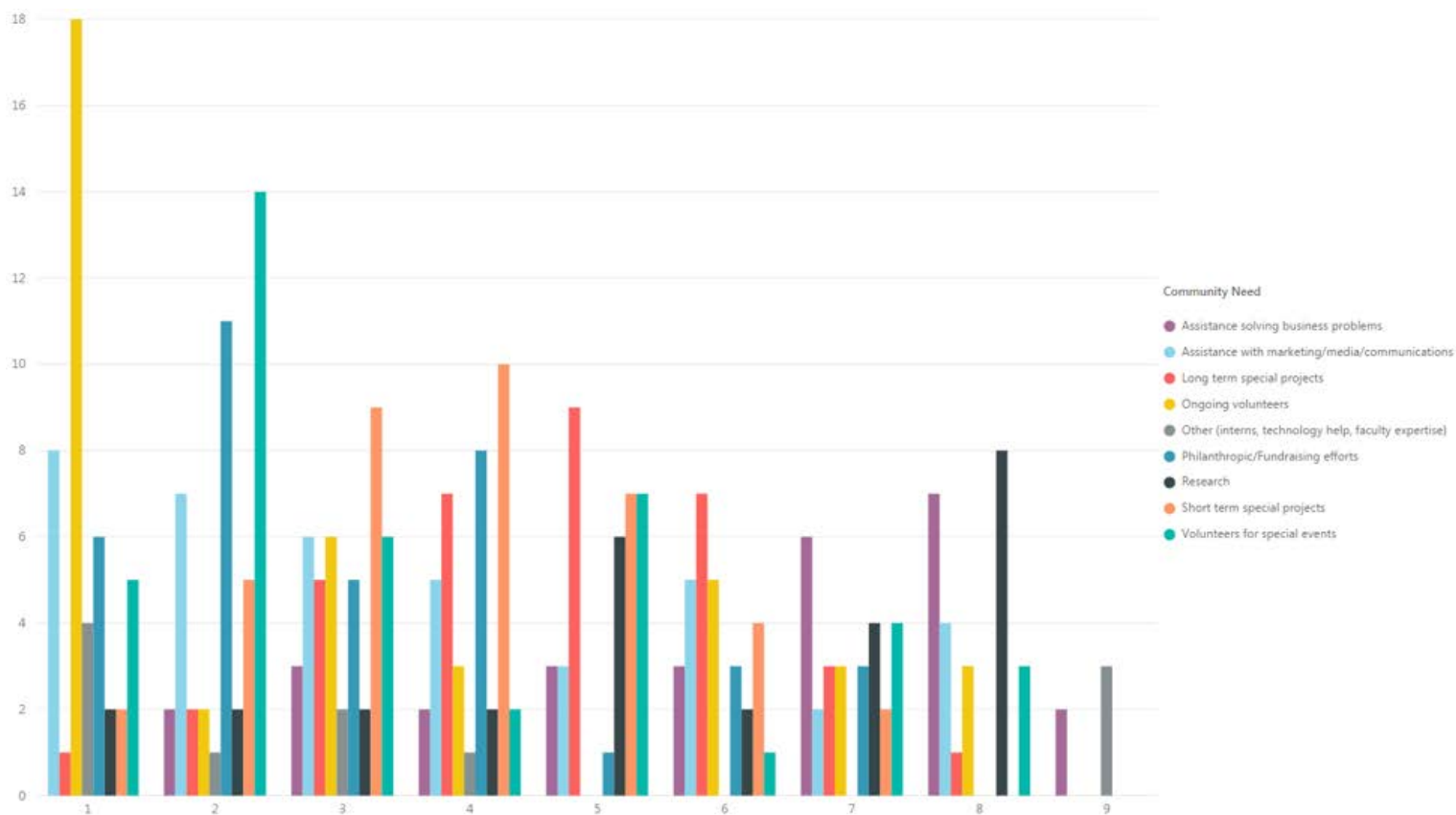
The highest ranked need was ongoing volunteers followed by volunteers for special events and assistance with marketing/media/communication. CESL should emphasize the importance of relationship building in community engagement work to foster experiences through both courses and student organizations for ongoing volunteers. One way ISU can help address this need immediately is to encourage and support RSO's to volunteer for both special events and on an ongoing basis as CESL is made aware of those needs. CESL had already and will continue to reach out to departments that work with marketing/media/communications to facilitate partnerships.

The individual organization's responses to this question is also particularly valuable to CESL staff as they help faculty identify specific community partners.

Community As Co-Educators
If a course is incorporating community engagement, it is best practice to have the community partner present to the students prior to the service. This can provide an overview of the organization, context for the work the students are going to do, and/or basic orientation and training items. Even if a course does not have a service component, the instructor may be interested in having community organizations present to the class as content experts and to incorporate civic learning. The survey results indicated eleven percent of respondents recently presented to a class. This may be in conjunction with a community project or as a stand-alone experience in the class. This process of inviting community organizations to share their unique perspective and expertise embraces the community as co-educator concept. This is the idea that community organizations can and should play a role in the student educational experience. This idea can be extended to the role organization staff play on site with students, as well.

We asked community organizations their preference for location when speaking to a class or student organization. Forty-five percent preferred to come to campus. Eighteen percent preferred the group come to their office. Thirty-six percent were indifferent or did not respond. How instructors or student organizations proceed should be tailored to the specific situation and the preferences of the community organization.

Community Concerns and Problems

The survey also asked community organizations to identify any community concerns and problems they see that are different from the specific needs of their organization. Community concerns and problems speak to the broader needs of the community. This information should challenge ISU to think about what role it can play in shaping, improving, or eliminating community problems. This creates a tremendous learning opportunity for students and an opportunity for ISU to play a transformational role in community problem solving. This information also allows CESL staff to support faculty as they explore how and what they incorporate into a class.

The most pressing needs and concerns for community organizations are marketing, fundraising, recruiting and retaining volunteers, and funding streams. The most pressing needs and concerns for Bloomington-Normal are affordable housing, health, workforce development, and social and ethnic stratification between the east side and west side of the community. The most pressing needs and concerns for McLean County are largely similar to that of Bloomington-Normal, but magnified by rural areas lack of access to resources.

See Appendix A for a comprehensive listing of responses.
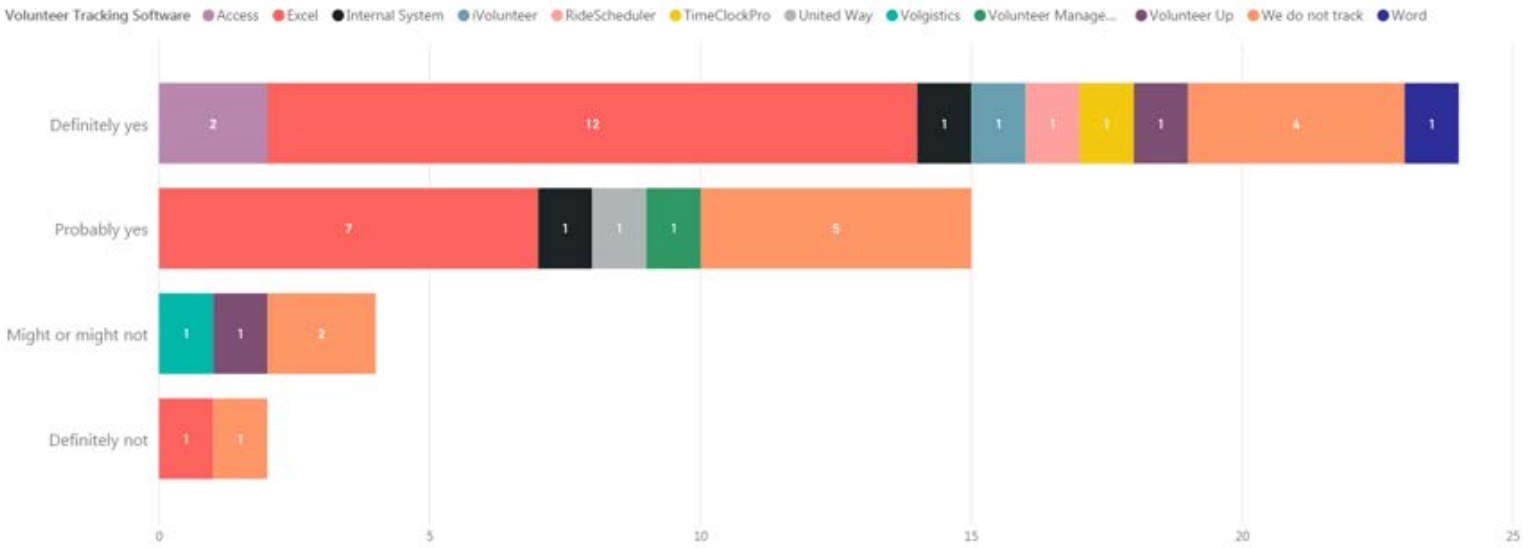
Volunteer Management

As CESL continues to explore potential data tracking mechanisms for civic engagement activities and the Division of Student Affairs at ISU continues to explore student engagement platforms, it is appropriate to understand how community organizations are tracking volunteers and what they might need from ISU. Survey results showed the majority of organizations are using Excel to track volunteer information.

The organizations tracking volunteers were asked to identify what information they collected about their volunteers (e.g. name, phone, group affiliation, length of completed volunteer activities, etc.). This information is helpful for CESL staff to know as potential technology platforms are considered.

Different from volunteer tracking, the idea of an online mechanism for matching community and campus partnerships emerged in the 2011 American Democracy Project study. A project to develop an opportunity matching platform was initially explored, but ended due to lack of dedicated staff at ISU. Interest for an online platform to post volunteer needs and/or projects or other needs remains high among survey respondents in 2017.   Forty-six organizations indicated a likelihood of using an ISU hosted platform for matching if one were offered

Breakdown of organization's current volunteer tracking software by that organization's expressed likelihood to use an online platform/tool hosted by ISU for volunteer opportunities

n = 46

Volunteer Tracking Software ● Access ● Excel ● Internal System ● iVolunteer ● RideScheduler ● TimeClockPro ● United Way ● Volgistics ● Volunteer Manage... ● Volunteer Up ● We do not track ● Word


Would you use an online platform/tool hosted by ISU that would allow your organization to post volunteer opportunities or needs that students or faculty could select?

Definitely not 4.3%
Might or might not 10.9%
Definitely yes 52.2%
Probably yes 32.6%

11
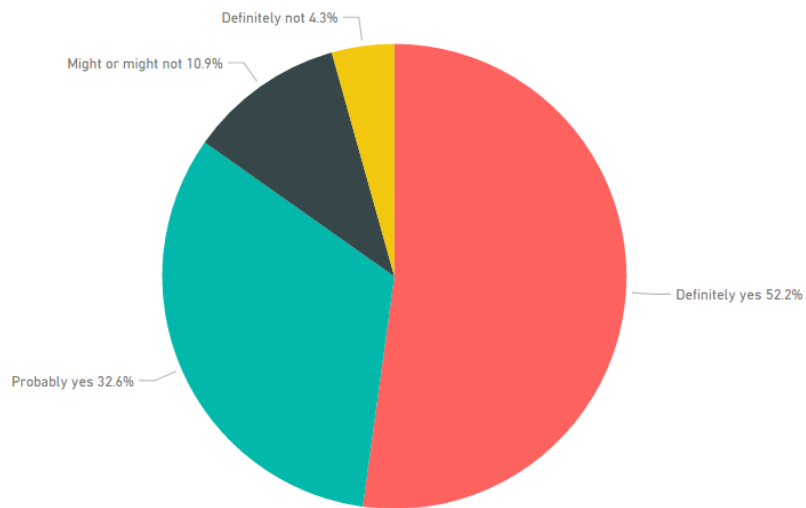
Background Checks

Organizations were also asked about the use of background checks. This is relevant as we consider the recently implemented [Protection of Minors Policy](#) at ISU, which requires background checks of students, faculty, and staff that will have contact with minors through an ISU sponsored activity. Forty-seven percent of organizations require a background check with most of their volunteers with an additional thirty-six percent requiring a background check situationally. While it is unlikely that ISU would accept the background check of another organization to meet this Protection of Minors Policy requirement, perhaps ISU can save organizations money by communicating our process and standards so they may not have to run a background check on ISU students that are working with a class or sponsored RSO.

It depends 36.96%   Yes 47.83%

Does your organization require a background check for most volunteers?

No 15.22%
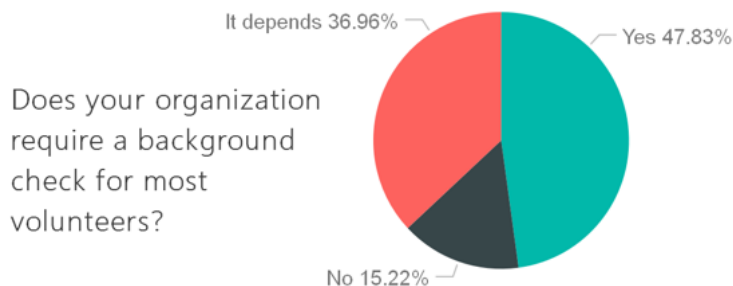
CESL Support for Community Organizations

Several questions were asked that directly inform CESL staff how to work with community organizations.

Toolkit

Thirty-seven organizations said "probably yes" or "definitely yes" when asked if a toolkit for community partners would be beneficial to aid in working with ISU.

Would a toolkit for community partners to aid in working with Illinois State University be beneficial to your organization?

n = 47

Probably yes 43.48%   Definitely yes 34.78%

Probably not 4.35%   Might or might not 17.39%
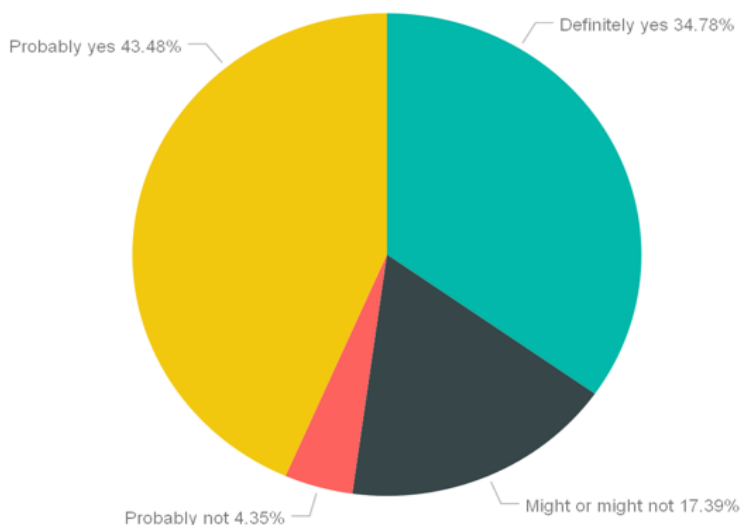
The thirty-seven organizations expressing interest in a toolkit were then asked to generate a list of potential topics to include that would be beneficial in their work with ISU. CESL currently has a graduate practicum student compiling

existing community partner toolkits from other universities to reference as CESL works to develop its own toolkit. Those resources, along with the topics below, will become the starting point for a project to develop our own toolkit in fiscal year 2019.

Topics for toolkit
The following are topics community organizations suggested including in a toolkit. The number in parentheses provides the amount of times that topic suggestion was found in the data.
- Working with students/student organizations (waivers, volunteers, orientation/training, contacting) (10)
- Items specific to an organization (writing business cases for new positions, technology in the classroom for formative assessment, substitute teaching, strategic planning, program sustainability, mental health, grant writing, data management and analysis) (8)
- Ways ISU can help us and we can help ISU (students skills, learning about needs) (5)
- How to contact and work with faculty (4)
- How we communicate our needs and set expectations (educating students) (3)
- How to engage with various areas of campus (2)
- How to develop for-credit service opportunities/internships (2)
- Calendar of engagement opportunities and events (2)

Later in the survey, respondents were asked an open-ended question to express any needed resources not already addressed. Many responses indicated the need for new content on the CESL website including: a way for organizations to share volunteer needs, internships, and potential service learning projects; listing of faculty, students, or student organizations looking for service learning opportunities; theories and frameworks; completed projects and featured examples of exceptional past partnerships. CESL is in the process of building a community partner section in the website that will launch fall 2018. Once the website is established, the creation of an electronic space for "matching" of faculty, students, and RSO's to community needs will be considered.

Other suggestions included utilizing Facebook to regularly push out information and periodic blogs authored by community organizations, faculty, or staff about partnerships, success stories, information on designing internships or service learning projects, or research areas. Finally, it was suggested that faculty have access to a list of community organizations that are willing to serve as a guest presenters for ISU classes.

Professional Development

The survey also asked respondents to rate their interest in attending training coordinated by CESL. The results show organizations are interested in attending a training/presentation twice a year that would last two hours at the Alumni Center. The chart below shows the reaction to suggested potential topics. CESL staff will use these results to select future training topics and speakers.

What training topics are you interested in as it relates to working with Illinois State University?


Electronic Newsletter

Organizations were also asked about their interest in receiving an electronic newsletter from CESL. Based on this response, CESL will definitely be pursuing an electronic newsletter in fiscal year 2019. Topics will be drawn heavily from suggested topics for the toolkit and trainings. The frequency of the newsletter distribution is not finalized, but will be either monthly or quarterly based on the responses distribution.

Would an electronic newsletter be helpful? If so, how often would you like to receive a newsletter?
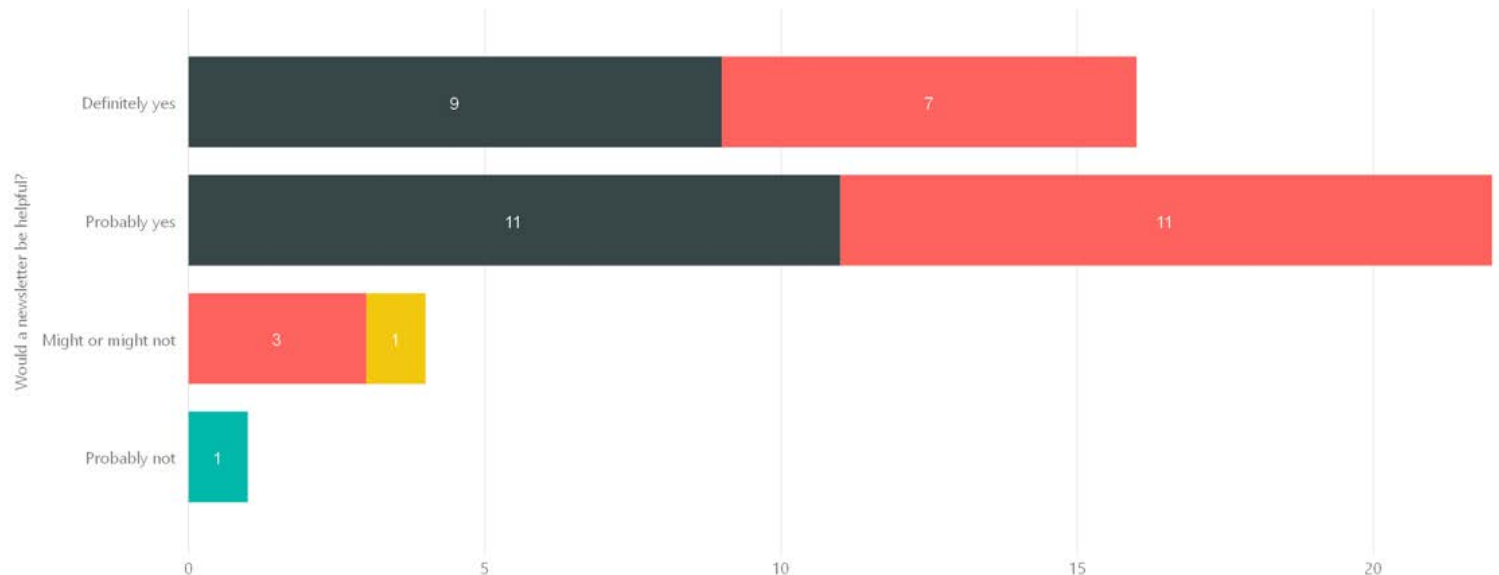
What ISU Should Know About Community Organizations

Community organizations responding to the survey were asked what topics they felt ISU faculty need to know about community organizations. The question sought community perspective on topics/information from community organizations CESL could offer training on for faculty. The question elicited a variety of responses (albeit valuable information) that suggested that the question's intent was not clear to respondents. The overall response to the question focused on ISU truly understanding the organization's mission, what they do, and who they serve.

In its first professional development opportunity for community organizations, CESL hosted Dr. Barbara Jacoby – the foremost service learning scholar-practitioner – in October 2017. Dr. Jacoby explained campuses might often treat the community like a learning laboratory. The response from community organizations that they want ISU to know more about their organization suggests that some community organizations might feel like a learning laboratory instead of a partner like the one Dr. Jacoby described. Community organizations want the university to understands all aspects of their work and operation and not be seen as a transactional place to send students. All members of the ISU community must consider the organizations perspective as a partner.

In addition to that overall theme, there were several comments about an organizations interest and ability to partner with a wide variety of classes. They do not want ISU to assume that because the organization has a specific focus it is only limited to that work. For instance, if an organization's purpose is health-related it does not mean that only health-oriented courses can partner. There could be learning experiences (e.g. marketing, accounting, assessment, systems management, etc.) for students in a variety of majors. Organizations are interested in genuine relationships with faculty/staff/students where the organization can understand the course and faculty needs and faculty can understand their mission and work. Two responses from community organizations included below outline that idea.

We would love to help you with your goals, and find ways that your students and faculty would fit well with our mission.

Please do not contact us at the last minute with a class project. If you are interested in engaging with us for service learning, contact us and meet with us prior to syllabus development. Learn about awesome opportunities and work with us to develop incredible mutually beneficial projects. This takes a little more time to develop, but worth it. Meet to develop and plan this year, project implementation next year.

Conclusion

The Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning is grateful for all of the organizations that took the time to complete the survey. This information is essential for guiding CESL staff and actions and ultimately informing service learning practices at Illinois State University.

Moving into fiscal year 2019, CESL will be working on the following items:

- ➤ Forming a community partner consulting board
- ➤ Creating a community partner toolkit and expanding resources on the CESL website
- ➤ Creating a faculty toolkit and sharing with interested faculty
- ➤ Developing and distributing a community partner electronic newsletter
- ➤ Creating opportunities and spaces for faculty and community partners to meet
- ➤ Offering professional development twice a year together for faculty and community partners
- ➤ Encouraging campus to celebrate partnership successes
- ➤ Encouraging campus to develop genuine relationships with community partners
- ➤ Discussing an online platform for organizations to post needs and projects
- ➤ Exploring the overlap in the Protection of Minors Policy with community organization background checks

Appendix A

What are the most pressing problems/concerns for your organization?

- Marketing and outreach (publicity, client awareness, community awareness of organization or social issue) (15)
- Funding (sustainable income stream, budget, declining/flat income stream) (13)
- Volunteers (need for, students fulfilling obligations, turnover) (12)
- Fundraising (9)
- Balancing client needs with capacity (8)
- Employees (attracting, maintaining, small staff) (7)
- Helping clients reach community resources (events, jobs, referrals) (6)
- Educated/trained/skilled volunteers or interns (5)
- Facility/technology growth/upgrades (4)
- Collaboration and partnership (3)
- Operational effectiveness (2)

What do you think are the most pressing problems/concerns for Bloomington-Normal?

- Affordable housing (11)
- Health (mental, obesity, affordable healthcare) (9)
- Workforce and job development (retention, brain drain, job security, major employer changes) (9)
- East/West divide (access to resources, social/ethnic stratification, west side redevelopment, racial divide) (8)
- Food insecurity (nutrition, hunger) (6)
- Funding (for community resources, state budget impacts, alternative streams of revenue) (7)
- Homelessness (5)
- Transportation (5)
- Infrastructure (5)
- Access to services (4)
- Economic impact/development/redevelopment (4)
- Income inequality (4)
- Nonprofit partnership (collaboration, consolidation, communication, shared problem solving) (3)
- Racial equity (2)
- Drugs (2)

What do you think are the most pressing problems/concerns for McLean County?

- Same as Bloomington-Normal (9)
- Affordable housing (7)
- Rural (access to resources in BN, magnified challenges) (7)
- Transportation (6)
- Budget/funding (5)
- Mental health (4)
- Economy/economic development (4)
- Jobs (unemployment, workforce development) (3)
- Taxes (2)
- Drugs (2)

Appendix B

Websites referenced:

American Democracy Project www.americandemocracy.illinoisstate.edu

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health www.ccphealth.org

Illinois State University's Protection of Minors Policy www.ehs.illinoisstate.edu/minors/