Community-Engaged Teaching and Research – CETR
“Service-learning program”
A Program Evaluation Plan

December 2023

Northeastern University | Boston, MA
PPUA 6509: Techniques of Program Evaluation
Samhitha Vaidhyasubramaniam, Khaing May Oo, Hudson Hastings, Gerardo Gentil
Fall 2023 | Professor Elaine Marshall

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Background and Context

The Community-Engaged Teaching and Research (CETR) housed under the Office of the Chancellor at Northeastern University offers support to student experiential learning through their programs. CETR facilitates two main purposes through its program: Service-learning courses and Engaged Research. The former offers opportunities to students and faculties to work with community partners to build upon and reinforce topics learned in classroom settings, and the latter provides the platform for faculties, students, and community partners to collaboratively pursue projects with broader social implications. The main goal of CETR is to support students in experiential learning and community-based organisations by collaborating with them for research and service-learning purposes. The main stakeholders for whom this organization provides support are the faculty members (those who include community learning in their course and those who take part in collaborative research), students (both service-learning participants and leaders), and community organizations.

The signature program that CETR offers is the service-learning course program that serves as an experiential learning platform for the students and as a teaching tool for the faculty who integrates academics and community-engaged projects to use classroom learning for the purposeful achievement of community goals. Ms. Jalene Tamerat- the associate director of the Community Engaged Teaching and Research organisation wants to understand the strengths and the weakness of the different components of the service-learning program and through this assess the return on investment in the service-learning courses. Evaluators intend to answer whether the service-learning program provides improved satisfaction to the students, faculties & community organisation and whether CETR's investments in this program yielded positive results. The evaluation findings would highlight the evaluand's strengths and areas of improvement which would help CETR in reallocating its resources to make the program efficient. By highlighting the effectiveness of the program, this evaluation would help to increase funding opportunities and future collaborations with more community organisations.

2. Program Description and Logic model

2.1 Program Description

Ms. Jalene Tamerat- the associate director of the Community Engaged Teaching and Research organisation wants to understand the strengths and the weakness of the different components of the service-learning program and through this assess the return on investment in the service-learning courses. The signature program that CETR offers is the service-learning course program that serves as an experiential learning platform for the students and as a teaching tool for the faculty who integrates academics and community-engaged projects to use classroom learning for the purposeful achievement of community goals. Under this program, the students partner and collaborates with community-based organisations, non-profits, government agencies, and schools to learn the course material with a practical approach. A few months before the start of a semester, the service-learning program sends out a call for community-engaged projects to the faculties and collects necessary information regarding the courses and the type of support they need. Taking this into consideration CETR sets up productive collaboration between the faculties and the community organisations out of which in the end the students benefit from the experiential learning they receive. This program also offers the support of service-learning teaching assistants who act as logistic coordinators between the assigned course and the community organisations. On the whole, this service-learning course offers benefits to students, faculties, and community organisations, thus contributing towards social development.

2.2 Contextual factors and social problem

There are several important contextual factors that the evaluation planning team, including CETR, needs to pay attention to. To begin with, the historical context of the university's relationship with and public image within these surrounding communities is important to take into consideration. Furthermore, understanding the findings of the previous surveys is important when designing and planning the evaluation. Another important area to consider is the flexibility and adaptability of CETR in balancing the needs of student service-learning courses, faculty, and the communities' needs and interests. Are there any challenges in aligning the right course with the appropriate community partner? Given the changing dynamics and needs of the community over time, how does CETR ensure there are no conflicts of interest and needs between stakeholders? How does CETR weigh the needs and objectives of each stakeholder? Answering these questions would help plan as well as integrate past experiences, insights, and lessons learned into the evaluation process is also important.

CETR is a small unit with diverse stakeholders and complex program components. To investigate the success of a service-learning program, the evaluation process to take into account the diverse perspectives of these stakeholders, the relationships among them, the historical context, and the evolving needs of communities. The success of the service-learning program also depends on the faculty's approaches to teaching service-learning courses and their interaction with community organizations. Effective engagement with community organizations can help foster strong and mutually beneficial relationships as well as meaningful learning experiences for students.

CETR's Service-learning program aims to address social issues such as promoting equity and increasing access to resources in surrounding communities to improve the quality of life and foster the thriving of communities. The Community Collaboration Award-winning project, "Documenting Fieldwork Narratives" which promotes recognition of Black artists is a successful collaboration between students, faculty, and community members in service-learning courses that create social justice and community impact.

2.3 Stakeholders Information

Stakeholders comprise people or entities that have a vested interest in the evaluation results and can directly benefit from the evaluation. Generally, stakeholders comprise those who are: 1. Interested in the program who will use the evaluation results like the community groups, students, and faculties in this program; 2. Those who are involved in running the program like the program staff, volunteers, funders, etc.; 3. Those who are served by the program like the community, students, etc. In this program. With this brief, the stakeholders of the Community Engaged Teaching and Research program have been identified and described under the following headings as below:

- **Those involved in program operation:**

a. The program staff: The program staff of CETR includes 4 full-time staff- Director, Associate Director, Assistant Director & Program manager; and 2 part-time staff personnel and Communication assistants. They are the important stakeholders of this evaluation, as at the end of the day as staff of the organization for which the evaluation is performed, they would have greater involvement and interest in it. They benefit from this evaluation as they would be able to identify whether the investments put into the program yield them the best results and allocate resources & time towards high-leverage practices. They will be part of the evaluation in all the phases and provide necessary internal information about the program like previous surveys, documentation, etc. for evaluation purposes.

b. Funding organization: The service-learning courses program of CETR is mainly funded by Northeastern University only. These funders would be considered a stakeholder of the program since they invest their resources into the program and would be interested in the evaluation to figure out whether the fund they put into the program is providing positive results and to decide whether they are benefiting from it.

- **Those served or affected by the program**

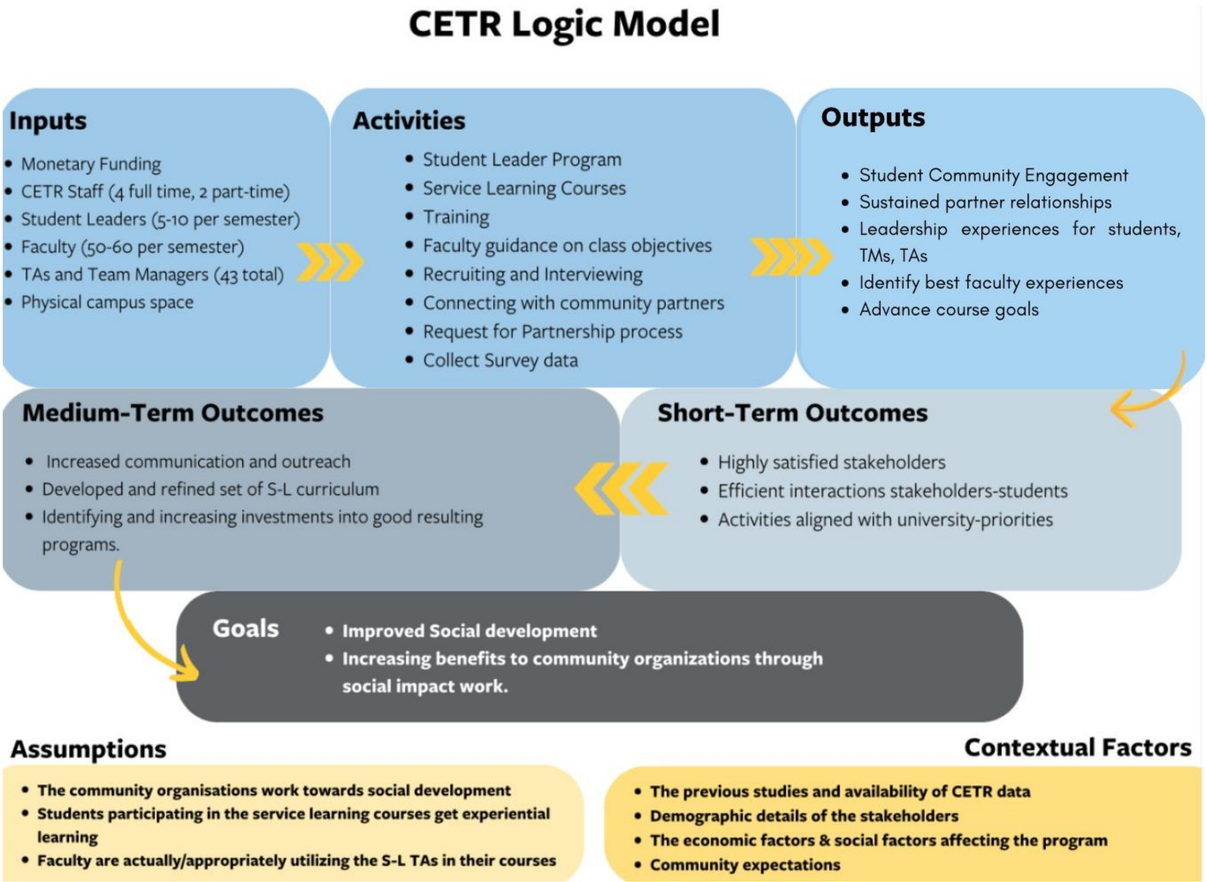
a. Students: The service-learning course program mainly serves the student set through the service-learning courses they offer to the students where they get experiential learning and through the service-learning student leaders where they serve as service-learning teaching assistants and team managers. The evaluation results would be beneficial for them to identify whether the service-learning courses are efficient and provide the needed experiential learning and also help the student leaders to figure out whether they are compensated properly for their work. As a major player in the S-L courses involving them in the evaluation would help in data collection and analysis.

b. Faculty members: The service-learning program supports the faculty by integrating community-engagement aspects in their respective courses. Therefore, the faculties have a vested interest in the evaluation as it would help them to identify the effects of integrating community engagement as a part of their curriculum and would assist them in their decision-making.

c. Community organizations: The service-learning courses seek to support community-identified goals by making connections with existing resources at the university. It collaborates with community organizations having social change-making missions with students who are interested in that field of interest. An evaluation of the program would benefit these community partners as it would help them figure out how effective the program is in addressing their goals and volunteer needs.

- **Primary users of the evaluation**: The Community Engaged Teaching and Research organization would be the primary users of the evaluation as it would help them identify the best practices in the service learning courses where they get a higher return for their investment. This would further assist them in figuring out the impact the student learning courses have on students, faculties, and community partners.

2.4 Logic Model:



Narrative describing the logic model

A. Inputs and activities:

As explained in the logic model, CETR has different resources to accomplish the university's mission of experiential learning and to facilitate the interaction between students, faculty, and community members. Some of the inputs include the funding allocated to hire and train teaching assistants (TAs) to support service-learning courses and the time & energy invested in developing programs that benefit the community. This is particularly focused on the service-learning courses, and it is accomplished by the collaborative work of four full-time staff and two interns who partner with other stakeholders.

All these inputs are put into place to make activities move forward. The student leadership program is one of the key activities and requires the greatest investment of time and funding, as CETR believes this area adds significant value to the student experience on campus and beyond. In addition to that, recruiting and interviewing potential team managers and student TAs is another important activity to make sure the right people are selected and to guarantee that appropriate matches are made between TAs and faculty members teaching S-L courses.

CETR spends a significant amount of time training team managers and TAs at least once a week, so information is up to date and the best practices are used to engage with community members. There is also triage support by the TAs, managers, faculty managers, and partners. Lastly, CETR also works in developing and refining curriculum, so that service-learning courses are aligned with the university approach to experiential learning and the right communication with community partners is implemented. In that way, faculty members pursue service-learning objectives as opposed to their own research agendas, while students benefit from having meaningful experiences with community initiatives while contributing to the City of Boston and surrounding areas.

B. Outputs

CETR produces five main outputs as below:

Students engaged actively with communities and community partner organizations through the service-learning program and experiential education. This will contribute to the efficiency of future interactions with existing and new community partners with CETR staff, leaders, and students.

Service-learning teaching assistants and team managers develop leadership skills and practice critical and ethical service learning within professional contexts while engaging with faculty, communities, and community partners. These leaders build up a skill set catered towards service learning and are better equipped to participate in and lead future S-L projects through CETR, becoming reliable resources for campus and community partners.

In addition, these leaders foster community engagement by facilitating the establishment of meaningful and sustainable relationships between students, faculty, and community partners. Within an academic environment, they also support faculty members and enhance faculty's delivery of service-learning course experiences. Clear lines of communication to collaborate on S-L projects are built and maintained through direct connection with community partners and contribute to the satisfaction of stakeholders from both the partners and CETR.

The service-learning program assesses faculty's needs to accomplish their set course goals, identifies effective practices existing in S-L courses, and advances the goals of experiential learning as directed by Northeastern University centered on social impact and community engagement. It also facilitates and assists collaboration between faculty members and community partners, helping them achieve shared course objectives, and promoting best practices in service learning.

C. Outcomes

Short Term Outcomes (6-12 months)

The intended outcomes of CETR in the short term include higher satisfaction for all stakeholders involved, whether in the S-L courses, collaboration with community partners, or faculty value in their courses. Additionally, efficient interactions between stakeholders and students are an immediate outcome of CETR, ensuring all parties involved benefit from the collaboration and service-learning activities. This is accomplished through creating leadership experiences for Team Managers and SLTAs, active and consistent engagement with community partners from students, and previous sustained relationships with community partners. The CETR activities will be further aligned with university priorities so that social impact and service-learning are the primary focus. This is done through the previous output of identification of best practices, what is working to accomplish S-L goals, and what may hinder that, which can be later implemented into existing S-L courses in consultation with faculty.

Medium Term (1-3 years)

In the 1–3-year period, CETR intends to produce outcomes that result in increased communication and outreach between students, community partners, and faculty through established communication lines. Building off of previous sustained relationships and collaboration on S-L projects, existing stakeholders can aid in developing a network connecting S-L projects and organizations to students who want to contribute to. This network can be continually expanded for future projects, engaging more diverse community partners in Boston. CETR also hopes to identify best practices within S-L courses which will contribute to a refined and developed course curriculum for faculty to use in creating their own S-L course objectives. Ideally, a framework on how to successfully conduct an S-L course can be given to all prospective S-L faculty that can be customized to fit their own course goals. Further, identification of which components of CETR activities can be given greater investment in terms of human capital (staff, TAs, Team Managers) can help inform resource allocation decisions for future semesters of S-L work. Through assessment of faculty and community partner needs, CETR can increase and identify investments into previous successful programs to inform the same decisions in the future. Essentially, gauging what is making CETR successful in accomplishing its goals will best guide strategic resource allocation in the future, improving existing CETR activities.

Goals/Long Term Outcomes

The long-term goals in the 3+ year period are increased social development for the students involved in CETR so they can effectively work with Bostonian community partners and organizations in social impact long after participation in CETR. While it was considered to evaluate the careers of past participants in CETR to see if they ended up in service-learning jobs, indicating their work in CETR successfully encouraged social impact work, the benefits of being a part of CETR are also experienced by those still engaging in community work, volunteering, or collaboration with others even if they are not in a service-learning job. Therefore, CETR's impact is not isolated to those participants who chose S-L jobs since the benefits can be applied to a plethora of professions to be successful. The main overarching goals of CETR is to increase benefits to the Bostonian community organizations through social impact work that is meaningful and effective. Ensuring that the established relationships are sustainable for future collaboration is vital to CETR's work going forward. Recognizing that CETR can help mitigate the negative impact Northeastern University's real estate proliferation has on the historic Bostonian neighborhoods can encourage future engagement with community partners.

D. Assumptions and Contextual factors

The service-learning programs function under basic assumptions where it is assumed that students participate in service-learning to get experiential learning, faculty are properly and appropriately utilizing the SL-Tas in their courses and finally, it is assumed that community organizations work towards social development. Sharing the same goal of social impact, whether gaining experience in this area or contributing to the Bostonian communities, will encourage all stakeholders to actively participate in the S-L process. Like any other program external factors like previous studies of CETR data, demographic details of the stakeholders, economic factors, social factors, and community expectations have an effect on the program and on the evaluation as well. CETR has to be mindful of its place in Boston and how its relation to Northeastern may deter some community partners from working with them, limiting civic engagement to some extent.

3. Evaluation purpose and priority questions to be addressed

According to the evaluand, the primary purpose of the evaluation is to: 1) assess the effectiveness of the service-learning program in its effort to impart quality experiential learning to students, improve faculty satisfaction and improve community social impact. 2) To better allocate resources to different components of the service-learning program like student leader program, collaboration with community partners, etc; according to the returns they yield. In order, to meet these purposes, the evaluand would like the evaluators to answer the following question:

Does the S-L program provide the student with practical learning and a better understanding of S-L concepts and approaches?

Do S-L courses boost students' civic engagement skills and improve experiential learning?

Do TAs and TMs successfully facilitate relationships between the faculty and community organizations and do they effectively help faculty in designing S-L courses?

Do S-L programs positively support the community partners in achieving their goals and do they align with students' own goals?

Do the resources invested in the service-learning course program yield positive results?

4. Evaluation Design

4.1 Study on previous design- A literature review

Previous studies have analyzed the plethora of methodological approaches and data collection methods to properly evaluate a service-learning program like CETR. Typically, questionnaires are the tool most often employed in these types of evaluation and their customizability and specificity to stakeholder groups make it appropriate for the variety of programming within S-L programs (Trujillo et. al, 2022). Reliance on qualitative and quantitative data is most appropriate since a mixed methods approach allows for concrete impact statistics while also engaging stakeholder voices in their experience in S-L. Evaluators need to adjust evaluation designs so they are appropriate for the specific subject matter of the S-L course. Given CETR's higher education context within historically marginalized neighborhoods in Boston and surrounding areas, it would be wise to engage these neighborhoods in the evaluation process, specifically their perspective or experience working with CETR. While a majority of terms in S-L program evaluation data collection is qualitative, it would still be wise to obtain data either from existing CETR surveys or to create surveys to determine the proportion of stakeholders that believe different components of CETR are accomplishing their intended goals of social impact (Trujillo et. al, 2022).

After meeting with Jalene Tamerat, Associate Director at CETR, we gathered information regarding previous survey designs used by the organization for their own evaluation purposes. The surveys typically include components of both multiple-choice and open-answer questions, with the former often using a Likert scale and the latter allowing greater elaboration on personal experiences. These surveys are given to TAs, COs, and faculty members to collect data used by Team Managers to identify strengths of specific programming and growing areas that can be improved. We will employ several surveys that emulate previous CETR data collection designs to ensure that we are conducting a process that the organization is familiar with, while including other methods and measurement tools such as interviews, focus groups, and alternative feedback surveys. We will customize these data collection methods so they are appropriate for their respective evaluation criteria and questions.

4.2 Present Design

We propose a mixed-method approach design for the evaluation that will help in answering all the evaluation questions. A mixed-method approach involves both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. For CETR larger data collected for the service-learning program would be qualitative in nature through interviews and focus groups supported by quantitative data collected from surveys to contribute to its validity.

4.3 Sampling method

The evaluation team would ask all the stakeholders: the students, faculties and community organisations to complete the pre- and post-surveys because the service-learning program is on a smaller side with fewer participants. For the focus groups and interviews, the evaluator will make use of random sampling in selecting the participants since only a few sessions of focus groups with each stakeholder respectively and interviews with few participants would be undertaken.

4.4 Methods grid

The evaluation will take place to find out whether the following criteria have been satisfied, and the evaluation design concerning these criteria has been tabulated and explained below. The criteria are as follows:

1. Improved access to course learning goals: The main purpose of CETR is to provide good experiential education to students through their service-learning program. Therefore, these criteria will help CETR in figuring out whether the S-L program is successful in improving learning experiences for the students.
2. Improved faculty satisfaction concerning TAs and TMs: To facilitate the service-learning program smoothly and efficiently, CETR invests its resources in appointing

TA's and TM'S to provide support to the faculty and bridge the communication gap between them and the Community organizations. Whether this investment yielded benefits would be measured against the criteria of improved faculty satisfaction.

3. Improved Community Social Impact: This criteria will help in measuring how effective the S-L program was in engaging the right set of students and community organizations to work towards improved community social impact.

Table 1: Evaluation Design Table

Evaluation Questions	**Evidence**	**Method(s) and Measurement Tool(s)**	**Sample**	**Time Frame**
Does the S-L program provide students with practical learning and a better understanding of S-L concepts and approaches?	Student understanding of service learning and social impact after participating in S-L course	Pre-test and Post-test surveys	Students who are going to be in S-L courses with CETR the next semester	Give survey every semester at the beginning and closing of that semester's S-L courses
Do S-L courses boost students' civic engagement skills and improve experiential learning?	Student success and skill gaining in community-based settings	Pre-test and post-test surveys Interviews	Students who have taken S-L courses with CETR in the semester	Give survey every semester at the beginning and closing of that semester's S-L courses
Do TAs and TMs successfully facilitate relationships between the faculty and community organization and do they effectively help faculty in designing S-L courses?	Satisfaction of stakeholders that have collaborated with TAs and TMs	Focus Group Performance assessment (TRACE) by faculty, supervisors, students, COs	COs, faculty, Supervisors, Students - all those that worked with TAs	Conducted at the end of every semester
Do S-L programs positively support the community partners in achieving their goals and do they align with students' own goals?	Accomplishment of goals from participating in S-L courses	Pre-test survey Post-test survey	COs, Students in that given semester, students/COs not involved will not be given a test	Given at the beginning of S-L course for that semester and given at the closing of that semester
Do the resources invested in the service-learning course program yield positive results?	Number of trained students, impact of skills in the student community - expenses on each component of the program	Post-survey	Students, faculty and COs	End of every fiscal year

A narrative explaining the methods grid:

Question 1: Does the S-L program provide the student with practical learning and a better understanding of S-L concepts and approaches? - Corresponding to criteria 1

One of the S-L program's goals is to provide students with practical learning effectively and construct a better understanding of the S-L concepts and approaches. This question aims to assess two areas; students' level of knowledge and comprehension of service learning and social impact. The first area assesses how the S-L courses enhance their knowledge and understanding of service-learning principles, practices, and theories, and how these learnings increase their awareness of social impact. The second area aims to evaluate their ability to contribute to positive change in the community. At the beginning and end of each service-learning course, a pre-test and post-test survey will be conducted on those who have completed the course to gather deeper insights about the development of their understanding of the course concepts and abilities to use them in practice. For example, students will be asked to rate their overall understanding of each concept and give brief explanations and examples of how they would apply in practice. The data received will help determine if the S-L program is achieving its intended goals of enhancing students' understanding of service learning and social impact.

Question 2: Do S-L courses boost students' civic engagement skills and improve experiential learning? - Corresponding to criteria 1

The S-L program is also designed to improve students' civic engagement skills through an experiential and effective learning environment where all parties involved can benefit and positively impact the community. It is interesting for CTER to know how the courses help students to successfully develop the required skills and knowledge to engage actively in positive social change. This question aims to evaluate students' experience working in community-based settings, their perception of the skills they have acquired, and their use while working and interacting with local organizations and other stakeholders. Through pre-test and post-test surveys and interviews with students, evidence of how the courses have helped students develop their civic engagement skills such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, teamwork, and advocacy will be gathered. The evidence produced by surveys or interviews will provide feedback to CETER, faculty, and partner local organizations to address the changing needs of the students, local organizations, and the community as well as improve students' experience in civic and social services.

Question 3: Do TAs and TMs successfully facilitate relationships between the faculty and community organizations and do they effectively help faculty in designing S-L courses?- Corresponding to criteria 2

TAs and TMs play a significant role in delivering S-L program activities. Their roles include providing resources and support as well as facilitating communication and building relationships between faculty and community organizations. This question aims to assess how successfully TAs and TMs perform in their roles and responsibilities on this matter. The surveys on satisfaction or focus group discussions will be conducted with those who are involved in working with TAs and TMs such as faculty members, supervisors, students, and members of community organizations. This could also be a review of a regular performance assessment form similar to TRACE. This question will provide evidence of how the TAs and TMs, as significant components, impact the overall success of the S-L program, the relationship building, and the collaboration with community organizations.

Question 4: Do S-L programs positively support the community partners in achieving their goals and do they align with students' own goals? - Corresponding to criteria 3

One of the main success measuring factors of S-L programs is the high satisfaction of the community partners and the student team linked together by the S-L program to work on community development goals. At the end of the day S-L program should make efficient partnerships where the community partners benefit through the work the students do and also the students should get to work in their field of interest. This would come under Criteria 3 and the evaluation question would be whether the S-L program positively supports the community partners and the students to achieve their goals. To see if the indicator that is: accomplishments of goals from participating in the S-L program has been achieved. the survey method of data collection can be used. A pre and post-survey can be used to figure out how the S-L program has contributed to the students and Community partners in achieving their goals. The pre-survey is used to evaluate the positions of the community partners and the students before experiencing the S-L program which would measure how effectively the community partners were able to move towards community development and how the student's way of study was before joining the S-L program. With the same set of questions, a post-survey after the completion of the S-L program would help the evaluator measure the impact of the S-L program by taking into consideration the difference in response. Since it involves a pre and post-test survey, the survey will be conducted at the beginning and at the end of the service-learning courses.

Question 5: Do the resources invested in the service-learning course program yield positive results?

The S-L program has invested a significant amount of resources both human and economic to achieve the goals of providing experiential learning to students, strengthening relationships with community partners, and enhancing capacity among organizations in the Boston area with social impact standards set by the university. Thus, CETR is interested in investigating the return of such investments to determine if they are appropriate and efficiently allocated to achieve its mission. This question assesses the resources allocated to each S-L program component and activities such as training and support for TAs and TMs, course and curriculum design with faculty members, and connecting and building relationships with community organizations. The surveys will be conducted to gather feedback from faculty members and community organizations on their experience with the S-L program and the resources provided to determine the level of satisfaction. The data collected from various stakeholders and parties involved in the program can be used to identify the effectiveness of these current resources on the overall program, the areas where additional resources may be needed, or make adjustments in resource allocation.

One of CETR's missions is to ensure a successful service-learning experience for students, who will potentially use skills learned inside the classroom to identify and contribute to solving social problems. Therefore, the number of trained students with positive experiences after taking service-learning courses within the university will serve as an indicator to measure the interest among the student population to work on these issues, and thus, if the amount of resources and the class offering for this component is appropriate.

5. Data Collection Methods and Data Analysis Plan

The evaluation of the service-learning program will utilize a mixed-method design through quantitative and qualitative data collection with more emphasis on qualitative analysis. This mix will assist in determining what aspects of the program are successful and what needs improvement. Evaluators would be collecting data from all the major stakeholders: the students, faculty members, and the community organizations to gain a well-rounded perspective.

The majority of the data collected for the evaluation are collected through pre- and post-surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The evaluation team would ask the students, faculties and community organisations who are under the service-learning program to fill in a pre and post-survey which would be generated at the beginning and the end of each semester to see the impact of the service-learning program on the stakeholders. This survey will include a mix of both Likert scale and open-ended questions thus making it both quantitative and qualitative. The responses to the Likert scale will be measured on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and the results from this will be coded and analyzed to interpret the data. In addition to surveys, qualitative data are collected through interviews and focus groups with participants. Focus groups and interviews would allow the participants to share more detailed insights into the effectiveness of the program. The results of open-ended questions from the surveys and the transcripts of the interviews & focus group conversation will undergo a qualitative analysis where codes will be determined for data suggesting emerging topics and these codes will be organized to derive upon the common themes. In addition to this, a narrative analysis can also be done to quote any significant responses from interviews and focus groups. Since CETR faces the limitation of a small set of data, statistical analysis application would be difficult and hence the final analysis from the results obtained can be done based on numerical responses, averages, commonalities, and trend analysis.

6. <u>Dissemination and use of findings</u>

Dissemination

Different audiences might benefit from the evaluation results, including students, faculty, staff, and community partners. Thus, a dissemination plan should aim to respond to stakeholders' needs with a combination of different methods and formats. The purpose of disseminating results is to 1) build credibility among stakeholders: so the audience is aware of CETR's mission, the value of the student leaders' program, and the importance of evaluating strategies; 2) get stakeholder feedback: participants have a unique perspective towards evaluation results and may use the results for their own purposes while giving feedback as partners and not just study subjects (Baker & Motton, 2005); 3) give publicity: showing evaluation results to the audience help in raising awareness and promote sustainability of the programs; 4) advance in the field: disseminating results might be beneficial to inform other program evaluations while advancing in this area particularly in higher education. For the service-learning program, the key stakeholders that would receive the evaluation results are the key stakeholders being the students, faculty, community organisation and the funder (Northeastern University). The stakeholders benefit from this information as it would increase their awareness and knowledge regarding the effectiveness of the service-learning program.

The dissemination of the findings will result in the form of written reports, infographics, presentations and talk. The written report containing the executive summary of the evaluation plan would be provided to the community partners and the University administration as they would be requiring a detailed report on the progress of the service-learning program as collaborators and funders respectively. Infographics, talks and presentations would be used to convey the important findings to the students and faculties to make them aware of the progress of the service-learning program in offering experiential learning. A detailed explanation of the dissemination plan is presented in the form of a dissemination matrix in the table below.

Dissemination Matrix

Target audience	Dissemination goals	Format	Channels	Messenger	Timetable
Community partners	Inform community partners about efforts to improve the service-learning experience and build long-term trust relationships	Executive summary (written)	Email submission and printed copy	Director for outreach and engagement (Once the search and hiring process is finalized)	Winter of 2024
Students	Share innovation efforts with the student population and gather feedback from service-learning courses and in-classroom experiences	Infographic and talk	Email submission and townhall discussion	Associate Director	Fall of 2024
Faculty	Publicise results among faculty members to gather feedback, strategize teaching and inform potential curriculum adjustments	Infographic and presentations.	Email submission	Associate Director	Fall of 2024
University administration	Update university administration on the evaluation process to inform strategic planning and align efforts	Executive summary (written)	Email submission	Executive Director	Winter of 2024

Use of Findings

The evaluation findings would be utilized the most by the primary user of the evaluation- The community-engaged Teaching and Research organisation. The findings would help them in identifying the best practices and the areas that need improvement which would help in CETR in allocating their resources effectively between different components of the service-learning program to ensure the success of the program. As discussed in the dissemination plan the findings would be disseminated among the stakeholders (Teachers, faculty, community organisation and the university administration) highlighting the impact the program has on the stakeholders and the effectiveness of the service-learning program. These findings would help CETR attract more students & faculties to be a part of the service-learning program, collaborate with more community organisations and raise more funds from the university administration.

7. Limitations

Capacity Building

During our meetings with Jalene, she informed us that a member of CETR’s staff left to work elsewhere, decreasing the total CETR staff from 4 to 3. Considering the already limited workload that these staffers can manage, a vacancy of a staff member will limit their ability to implement the full evaluation plan. Further, it may limit implementation even after the vacancy is filled due to the limited understanding or experience at CETR of the new hire. While CETR may not be able to conduct the entirety of the evaluation plan due to staff constraints, it can rather focus on Questions 1-3 and their respective data collection methods and analysis to still capture the primary goal of the evaluation. This requires less resources and time so it may be more manageable. CETR also operates on a fixed funding amount from Northeastern University in the short run, so capacity building of CETR can’t be accomplished through increased funding but rather, through strategic allocation of existing human capital.

Statistical Analysis

In past data analyses, CETR has been limited due to the small sample size they draw data from. The number of respondents and participants in feedback surveys and interviews is too small to conduct a comprehensive statistical analysis. Thus, our data analysis seeks to use coding to analyse survey responses that include Likert scale and open-ended questions which is more manageable given the smaller sample size than a complete statistical analysis. Additionally, the aforementioned job vacancy limits the time other staff have to complete a data analysis.

Evaluation Design Limitations

The evaluation design utilizes surveys consistently which presents some issues with voluntary responses. Ensuring that past participants are responding to give their feedback on their experience in CETR may be difficult, especially with respect to past students who have graduated that semester. Perhaps making the surveys themselves a requirement for all CETR stakeholders to participate can increase the survey response rates. Additionally, the timing of these surveys may be contentious with academic schedules, with Jalene citing the end-of-semester surveys often coinciding with final exams, so it may be more difficult to get responses during these times from students and faculty. Perhaps a time that is slightly before the exams begin would result in greater survey responses since these stakeholders will not be as busy as finals week. The responses are also difficult to gauge how true or honest they are, meaning some respondents may not elaborate as much if the survey is viewed as a task or additional homework, limiting the survey’s usefulness. Responses from focus groups may also be influenced by dominating voices in these sessions, so it is important for the evaluator or staffer conducting the focus group to ensure that there is equal collaboration and insight from all participants.

REFERENCES

Baker, E. A., & Motton, F. L. (2005). Creating understanding and action through group dialogue. In B. A. Israel, E. Eng, A. J. Schulz & E. A. Parker (Eds.), Methods in community-based participatory research for health (pp. 307–325). Jossey-Bass.

Camilli Trujillo, C., Cuervo Calvo, L., García Gil, D., & Bonastre Valles, C. (2021). Mixed methods research in service-learning: an integrative systematic review. *Quality & Quantity*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01218-3

CETR – Community-Engaged Teaching and Research. (n.d.). Retrieved November 13, 2023, from https://cetr.northeastern.edu/

Mertens, Donna M., and Wilson, Amy T. (2018) Program Evaluation Theory and Practice: A Comprehensive Guide, 2nd Edition. Guilford Press. ISBN 978-1-4625- 3275-9.

Trujillo, C. C., Calvo, L. C., Gil, D. G., & Valles, C. B. (2021, September 2). Mixed Methods Research in service-learning: An integrative systematic review - quality & quantity. SpringerLink.