

## COOL and Idealist Civic Engagement Curriculum

# Bridging the Gap: Service, Advocacy, and Activism

**Overview:** This series of workshops helps participants identify the complementary nature of direct service and advocacy. Participants will have the opportunity to explore their perceptions of the range of approaches to justice work. They will also have the opportunity to reach beyond their comfort zones, identify the value of complementary approaches and learn new skills which will help them to incorporate assets of each approach into their primary approach.

**Level:** Intermediate to advanced

**Type:** Stand-alone workshop or for use as part of a retreat

**Focus or Goals of this Guide:**

- Participants will recognize the complementary nature of direct service, advocacy, and activism
- Participants will address perceptions they have of several approaches to justice work
- Participants will assess their own approaches to justice work
- Participants will gain skills that will strengthen their primary approach to social justice

**Materials:**

- Markers
- Flipchart paper
- Paper posted around the room for graffiti wall

**How to prepare:**

- Have participants complete a program inventory prior to the workshop (will they already know what a program inventory is?)

**How to Do/Brief Outline:**

This four-hour series of workshops has the following parts:

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|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Welcome/Introductions          | suggested time 15 minutes |
| 2. Stand and Declare              | suggested time 15 minutes |
| 3. Graffiti Wall                  | suggested time 30 minutes |
| 4. Break                          | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 5. Individual Program Assessments | suggested time 50 minutes |

6. Break	suggested time 15 minutes
7. “How I Work Toward Social Justice” Panel	suggested time 40 minutes
8. Skill-Based Breakout Sessions	suggested time 40 minutes
9. Using Idealist.org	suggested time 10 minutes
10. Closing	suggested time 15 minutes

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## 1 Welcome/Introductions

Suggested time 15 minutes

Introduce self as facilitator

Have participants introduce themselves

- Use something serious, like name of organization the participant is representing
- Use something fun, like favorite superhero of all time

Introduce the session, talk about definitions, and run through the agenda. Ask participants to define, in their own words, the meaning of “service,” “advocacy,” and “activism.” The following are some suggestions to get started:

- Service – *“work done by one person or group that benefits another”*
- Advocacy – *“active support, especially the act of pleading or arguing for something”*
- Activism – *“a policy of taking direct and militant action to achieve a political or social goal”*

After taking student suggestions, transition into “stand and declare” by saying that there are a lot of different perceptions of and approaches to all three of these methods.

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## 2 Graffiti Wall

Suggested time 30 minutes (10 minutes writing and 20 minutes discussing)

Guide participants through the exercise. Participants will roam around the room and answer the following questions about “service,” “advocacy,” and “activism” on large sheets of paper (each sheet should be labeled):

- What are the stereotypes associated with service, advocacy, and activism?
- What are some examples of service, advocacy, and activism?
- What kinds of people participate in service, advocacy, and activism? (Participants can use generalizations or historical figures.)

After giving everyone time to roam around and write perceptions, guide a conversation about what has been written down. Participants can comment on any of the statements, regardless of who wrote them. Everyone should be honest, but courteous. The goal is to put a lot of statements on the table, then to talk about how accurate those statements are and to share perspectives with one another.

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# 3 Stand and Declare

Suggested time 15 minutes

Establish ground rules:

- This workshop requires you to contemplate and articulate your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. Please use “I” statements and speak for yourself, not for any group.
- The facilitator’s job is to provide a space where all can feel comfortable speaking. Feel free to share as much as you’re comfortable with and to listen attentively to others.
- Everyone is encouraged to speak often and share opinions, but we won’t be forcing anyone to speak.
- This activity’s success depends on your honesty and open mind. There are no wrong answers or questions.

The four corners of the room will be labeled with the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4. Students should move to one corner of the room after each statement, depending on their response. For each statement, participants must choose one of four responses:

- A: strongly agree
- B: agree
- C: disagree
- D: strongly disagree

Stand and declare statements:

- I believe that one-day service projects will have a significant impact on communities
- I think there is a big difference between being involved in service projects and being involved in activist initiatives
- In my experience, I can get more done through policy work than through direct service
- I believe that the most effective way to enact change and create a more just world is through advocacy efforts
- People are either “service people” or “activist people,” but rarely both
- Though service work is important, it is usually a “band-aid” solution
- Service is easier than advocacy
- Activists risk being out of touch with the constituencies with whom they are advocating
- People who choose an activist approach are usually impatient and want an immediate fix to a problem
- When I think of activism, I think of rallies, riots, and protests

Individual report-backs – Ask participants to respond to the following questions. This is a voluntary activity; no one is forced to share, and everyone will have a chance to share.

- What did you think about having to take a stand about your approach to justice work?
  - Did anyone feel uncomfortable with having to choose an answer? Why?
  - How many of you align yourselves primarily with one way of working toward justice?
  - How many of you use a variety of approaches when working toward justice?
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# 4 Break

Suggested time 10 minutes

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## 5 Individual Program Assessments

Suggested time 50 minutes

Guide students through an assessment of their individual programs, keeping all five critical elements in mind. In small groups, have students report out on their answers to their homework. Students should give a brief summary of their program, answer the homework questions in the group, and respond to questions and comments from other group members. In groups of five, each student should have up to ten minutes to speak and respond. (Homework can be found at the end of this module.)

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## 6 Break

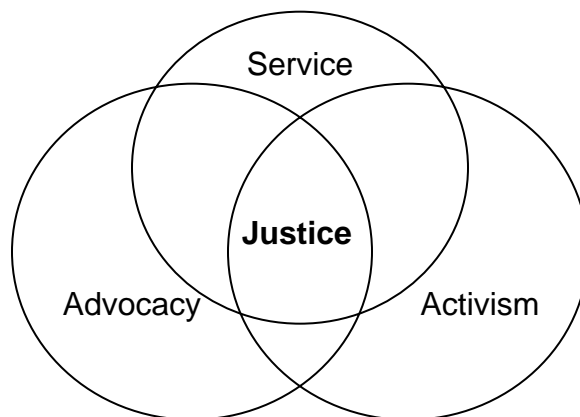
Suggested time 15 minutes

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## 7 “How I Work Toward Social Justice” Panel

Suggested time 40 minutes

Students working toward justice all have something in common – the world is not good enough yet. There is work to be done. This panel is an opportunity for students to share how they “get at” justice from a variety of perspectives. Service, advocacy, and activism should take on the look of a Venn diagram, overlapping with others’ efforts and building on the strengths of other programs:



It is not a time to fight over methods, but rather a time to challenge each other to do work better.

The host school/office will assemble a group of students who are working toward justice in a variety of ways and across different issue areas. Ideally, this panel will represent solid programs that primarily work within a service, advocacy, and activism model. A student or staff facilitator will invite each student to speak for approximately 5-7 minutes about their approach to social justice and why s/he has chosen that approach.

Following the presentations by panelists, students will have the opportunity to ask questions and respond. Following questions (if there is time), students will break into small groups, led by the student panelists, to talk about these different approaches, including the advantages and difficulties of each.

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## 8 Skill-Based Breakout Sessions

Suggested time 40 minutes

Depending on how students evaluate their programs, they will divide into skills-based breakout sessions. Students will decide whether their program needs to incorporate more reflection, community voice, or meaningful action into their activities. Generally, service groups do reflection well, advocacy groups rely heavily on community voice, and activist groups find ways to engage in meaningful action. But rather than drawing these distinctions, students should divide into groups according to the skill which their program is lacking, realizing the fluidity of these distinctions. These sessions will provide students with skills to help them broaden their knowledge base and deepen the kinds of work in which their programs engage.

Three facilitators (an Idealist staff member and two campus staff members) will coordinate these sessions, relying on the experience of the group and a conversation guide. (These guides can be found at the end of this module.)

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## 9 Using Idealist.org

Suggested time 10 minutes

Spend some time walking students through Idealist.org and IOC.org, pointing out some of the student-oriented features. Highlights should include: “Building Bridges” IOC initiative (<http://www.idealists.org/ioc/organize/initiatives.html>), organization search feature, issue search feature, etc. Other resources that promote working across the service-advocacy-activism gap include CampusActivism.org, FeministCampus.org, and others.

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## 10 Closing

Suggested time 15 minutes

In closing, ask students to evaluate their experience and to give any parting comments on things they would like to re-think or re-visit in their programs, ways they can collaborate with other campus, national, and/or international organizations, and ideas about how to incorporate a variety of approaches to justice work in their program. “We are not yet.”