Finding a Community Partner

These guidelines are meant for students wishing to develop a partnership with a community-based organization for an immersive quarter-long service experience (e.g., summer fellowships, Community Service Work-Study, etc.).

Self-Assessment
Before you begin, clarify your interests and objectives. What do you hope to learn and focus on? What type of service work do you want to do, and where? What knowledge and skills can you offer to an organization? What types of people do you want to interact with?

Finding an Organization
Once you have established your interests and objectives, start your research early in order to find a suitable community partner for your summer fellowship:

1. Haas Connections: Begin your organization research with any past information or connections that have been utilized, either by other students or Haas Center staff. For all Haas Center fellowships, we have lists of previous organizations that students have worked with, and we may even have contact information. You can view a map of students who engaged in immersive summer experiences in 2015 here: www.tinyurl.com/stanfordsummerservice. Feel free to network with these former fellows and see if they can connect you with their host organizations. In addition, we have put together a “Cardinal Quarter Connections” webpage listing community partners seeking to work with Stanford students. Please take a look at the list and reach out to any of these organizations.

2. Network: If you need to expand your search, begin networking. Tell people you know that you are looking to partner with a public service organization. Contact previous employers and volunteer supervisors and attend any Stanford events where you can meet professionals. Potential leads may also come from faculty members that know about the subject. Many Stanford alumni are also willing to host students, and you can look them up via www.stanfordalumni.org. As you begin contacting relevant organizations, be sure to ask them for other leads or recommendations they may have.

3. BEAM & Web Resources: Visit BEAM, Stanford Career Education to find out more about their programs and events and take a look at the Handshake platform, which will allow you to interface with organizations in a recruiting/job search manner. Other general web resources include:
   - Idealist.org
   - Serve.gov
   - California Volunteers
   - VolunteerMatch
   - Hands on Bay Area
   - Indeed.com

Reaching Out
1. Elevator Pitch: Before you begin making phone calls, identify what you have to offer in terms of knowledge, experience, skills, and interests. Develop a brief “elevator pitch” about yourself and what you would ideally like to do. Do your homework about the organizations you are contacting, studying their website and printed materials.
2. **Start Early, Be Persistent & Responsive:** When making contact, give yourself a lot of time, especially when communicating with community-based organizations, which are often overworked and understaffed. If you do not hear back, be friendly, patient, but persistent. Try using multiple forms of communication—sometimes phone calls are returned more often than emails.

Begin with any existing known contact within the organization, even if the person is not in the position to supervise or collaborate with you. If you cannot determine an established connection at an organization, you can begin by asking for someone who coordinates volunteers or interns.

You will also want to consider the number of organizations you are contacting. Not everyone you contact will be interested in your proposal, so be prepared to call more than one organization. However, you also want to be careful not to contact too many organizations. This is time consuming, and can be awkward when apologies need to be made.

Be responsive to any leads. It is important to remember that while your schedule is complex and you have many commitments, so does your community partner. The organizations are doing you a favor, so present yourself well. Remember, you are also serving as an ambassador of Stanford! In general, you should respond to an organization contact’s email within 24 to 48 hours.

**Deciding on a Community Partner**

If you need to make a choice between several possible placements, you should determine the likelihood of your relationship being successful. Does the organization clearly understand the expectations? Are they excited about the work that will be done? Is your supervisor/partner interested in supervising or collaborating with you? Is the work realistic, substantial, and aligned with your interests? Is the partner responsive? Choose the organization that seems the best fit.

Do follow up with organizations that you are not working with to inform them of your choice. It is common courtesy (and you may want to work with them in the future).

**Maintaining the Relationship**

Once a partner is selected, make sure you agree upon expectations: the roles that both partners will play, what will be accomplished, and the logistics. It may be a good idea to put in writing the expectations agreed upon by both partners of the relationship (i.e., number of hours, supervision or collaboration required, nature of possible projects, etc.). This is important as it helps alleviate any misunderstandings that may happen. If at all possible, discuss these expectations in person or via Skype.

While in the process of working with your community partner, maintain the relationship by having regular check-ins. Be professional in manner. Compromise. Give and take is crucial to any successful relationship.

**Questions**

Please feel free to contact **Valerie Chow** or **Hilary Douglas**, Program Directors of Undergraduate Fellowships, if you have any questions about finding a community partner for a summer fellowship.