

INTRODUCTION

Repair the World developed standards of practice for immersive Jewish service-learning (IJSL) programs¹ to identify best practices in program design and implementation. These standards were developed using precursor documents and with significant input from practitioners and other stakeholders. (For background, please see page 4.)

1. Authentic Service: Participants engage in service that addresses genuine and unmet community needs.

Indicators:

- The program works in collaboration with community partners to establish a shared vision and set common goals to address community needs
- Service has demonstrable positive impact on communities and/or individuals served
- Service outcomes are valued by those being served
- Service is appropriate for participants' skills
- Sufficient service work is available to involve all participants throughout the program.

2. Integrated Jewish Learning, Contextual Learning and Reflection: The program has an educational framework that includes activities that (1) root the service that takes place during the program in Jewish learning and (2) deepen participants' understanding about the social, economic and historical context in which the service occurs.

Indicators:

- The learning (curriculum) is about the same subject matter and issues as the service and deepens participants' understanding of the need for and impact of the service activities
- The educational framework is articulated in writing²
- The program combines reflection and learning in a way that is appropriate to the program model and service context
- The program incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities about the service and learning experiences and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself, one's Jewish identity and one's relationship and responsibilities to the Jewish community and to society.

¹ In the context of the IJSL field, immersive is most often defined as at least seven days (and up to one year or longer) of full-time service. There are shorter programs (e.g., five days of full-time service) that self-define as immersive. There is not yet consensus in the IJSL field about the definition of immersive.

² There is not (yet) consistency across the field about the format in which the educational framework is articulated. The educational framework should include the underlying educational philosophy and assumptions and an overview of the educational content. Formats currently in use in the field include a combination of the following: overview of the program's educational philosophy; curriculum outline; syllabus; participant curriculum edition; facilitator curriculum edition; etc.

3. Program Design: Through its design and execution, the program achieves clearly articulated outcomes for participants and service recipients.

Indicators:

- Service is the central activity of the program and short-term programs include at least 25 hours of service per week
- Programs are focused on a particular community or issue in a way that enables participants to develop a nuanced understanding of the service activity and its context (e.g. there should not be a different service project in a different place every day)
- The program has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified participant outcomes
- Program activities directly relate to the program's intended outcomes

4. Diversity: The program develops understanding of diversity and mutual respect among and between participants and community members.

Indicators:

- Service and learning activities encourage participants to identify and analyze different points of view
- Participants are actively encouraged to understand and value the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of those offering and receiving service
- The program fosters cultural understanding through explicit cross-cultural training or another effective approach.

5. Progress Monitoring: The program assesses the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting goals and uses the results for improvement.

Indicators:

- The program collects evidence of the quality of service-learning from multiple sources throughout the service-learning experience and afterwards
- The program uses the evidence to improve the service-learning experience, both for participants and for those served, in the future.

6. Orientation: Preparation for the immersive program ensures that participants are well-prepared to engage fully in the immersive experience.

Indicators:

- Methods for participant recruitment and selection ensure that program requirements are clear to prospective participants and that their motivations for applying to the program are aligned with the program's design and objectives
- Before the service experience begins, participants are oriented to the mission and objectives of the program and any host agency or organization with which they will be working
- Before the service experience begins, participants are provided with training that enables them to perform the service effectively and respectfully

7. Reorientation

Indicators:

- Participants engage in activities to extend the impact of their experience on themselves, their peers and their home communities after the immersive experience ends. (For short-term programs this will typically take place after the immersion experience while for long-term programs, this may take place toward the program's conclusion.)
- Reorientation activities are aligned with the program's design and intended participant outcomes.

8. Well-Trained Facilitators: Educators/program leaders have formal training that is appropriate for their roles.

Indicators:

- Educators/program leaders are formally trained in relevant program areas such as facilitation of service projects; integrating Jewish learning, contextual learning and reflection; group dynamics and health and safety
- Program uses methods for evaluating and providing feedback for educators/program leaders.

BACKGROUND

The Immersive Jewish Service-Learning Standards of Practice were developed in October, 2010 (as interim standards) and revised in October, 2011. While no longer titled, "interim," the standards will be informed in an ongoing way by the experiences of IJSL programs and of Repair the World and by work led by Repair the World across the programmatic field to evaluate program design and outcomes.

The standards were developed by Repair the World, IJSL practitioners and other experts. They are based on precursor documents, including:

- "K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice" developed by the National Youth Leadership Council
- "Educational Goals and Standards for Jewish Service Trips" developed by Rabbi David Rosenn for UJA-Federation of New York's Break New Ground initiative
- "Standards of Practice for Short-Term Service Programs" developed by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and supplemented by the Universal Jewish Service Vision developed for the May 2007 conference, From the Ground Up, Advancing Jewish Service
- Break Away's "The Eight Components of a Quality Alternative Break."

Standards of Practice for this young and diverse program field have some inherent limitations: First, because of the program field's diversity, full consensus on elements included in these standards is not yet possible. Second, many programs hold themselves to additional standards that they believe are very important but that do not reflect current practice across a broad range of programs. Both of these limiting factors mean that some programs will feel that some standards are too stringent and others are not stringent enough. Despite these limitations, we believe that the standards of practice will help to further develop a more clearly defined and unified program field in which programs are consistently of high quality and have significant positive impacts.

Repair the World anticipates that these standards will serve as a communication and assessment tool in several ways, including:

- As a criterion to inform Repair the World's IJSL grant-making and technical assistance offerings
- As a resource for IJSL programs to share with participants, community-based partners, funders and other stakeholders
- As a reference for Repair the World in its communication with current and emerging IJSL providers, secular service-learning providers, funders and other stakeholders.