An Investment Prospectus

Strengthening Education and Democracy through Service-Learning

OCTOBER 2005

Service-learning is not new

Service-learning has deep roots in many American reforms, traditions, and disciplines. The cooperative extension movement in higher education, the settlement house work of Jane Addams, the pedagogies of John Dewey, the freedom schools of the African-American community: all these types of experiential education have connected young people to their communities as does service-learning. Service-learning is a teaching method that engages young people in community problem-solving as part of their education, both in school and out-of-school settings.

Service-learning is one of the most powerful experiential education practices because it not only fosters effective learning but also prepares the next generation for democratic life. John Glenn calls service-learning "the single best way to educate young people for active citizenship in a democracy."

Experiential education is well established within educational theory and practice but still slighted in American public education. The filmmaker and education philanthropist George Lucas recently noted, "Too often, schools operate as if they were separate from their communities, and the standard curriculum lacks relevance to real life." Service-learning is uniquely poised to address these deficiencies and thus strengthen education and democracy.

Service-learning is the single best way to educate young people for active citizenship in a democracy.

John Glenn

But its time has come

Once an innovative practice confined to a small number of loosely connected educators, service-learning is becoming an integral part of the instructional repertoire of many teachers and the educational expectations of many parents. Today, one-third of all American schools report using service-learning, according to a U.S. Department of Education survey. Also, more Americans recognize the value of service-learning: a Roper Starch national opinion poll found that 90 percent of Americans say they support service-learning because it offers the kind of multifaceted education they want for their children, equipping them for their roles as learners, citizens, and members of the work force.

A growing body of research describes the positive impact service-learning can have on young people. Well-implemented service-learning can help them achieve academically; strengthen their job- and career-related skills and aspirations; and increase their self-efficacy, respect for diversity, self-confidence, collaborative skills, avoidance of risk behaviors, and resilience. A significant part of the research examines the potential of service-learning to help young people develop civic skills, attitudes, and behaviors.

Increased use of service-learning, better evidence about its impact, greater recognition of its value, and years of collaborative work have established service-learning as an emerging field. For two decades, the service-learning community has been developing its own practice standards, scholarly journals, professional education venues, research agendas, leadership networks, and a national conference. This growth of the service-learning field reflects strategic investments of time and money that leveraged the groundbreaking work of the first service-learning enthusiasts. Yet, despite progress, the vast majority of young people are not yet engaged in service-learning. This is the challenge.

Targeted Investments Yield Results

The first investors in service-learning understood this challenge, and their investments have paid off. Today's service-learning leaders can point to substantial progress, as the following results indicate.

1. Professional practice standards

The hallmark of any field is an agreed-upon set of professional standards that practitioners use. When the National and Community Service Act established the first federal definition of service-learning in 1990, service-learning leaders produced two sets of national standards, which have often been adapted locally. The 1993 *Standards of Quality for School and Community-Based Service-Learning* (Alliance for Service-Learning and Education Reform) and the subsequent *Essential Elements* (National Service-Learning Cooperative of the National Youth Leadership Council) led to local versions, such as the *Maryland Student Service Alliance Elements.* Professional education in service-learning is rooted in these standards, which are currently being revised.

2. More rigorous research demonstrating the value of service-learning

Researchers have improved the quality and quantity of service-learning scholarship over the last decade, including a national evaluation of the Learn and Serve America program by researchers from Brandeis University's Heller School for Social Policy and Management; a three-year national research study on the impact of service-learning on high school students' civic engagement conducted by RMC Research Corporation; and studies led by researchers at the University of California at Berkeley, Education Commission of the States, Search Institute, Compass Institute, and other preeminent institutions. The results of these and other studies—which are beginning to document the positive impacts of service-learning on students, teachers, schools, and communities—have been published and widely disseminated through scholarly journals, newspaper articles, and special reports by organizations such as The John Glenn Institute for Public Service and Public Policy and the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse.

3. New venues for publishing service-learning research

To accompany the increase in scholarship, service-learning leaders have developed journals and other fieldwide publications—such as the *Michigan Journal on Service-Learning* and *Growing to Greatness: The State of Service-Learning Report*—to provide outlets for new research and analyses and to bridge the gap between research and practice. In addition, established education journals, such as *Phi Delta Kappan, Educational Horizons, ERIC Research RoundUp,* and the *School Administrator,* now include sections on service-learning. An annual International Service-Learning Research Conference serves as the nation's premier venue for researchers to learn from one another's work. This conference generated a new book series, *Advances in Service-Learning Research,* a collection of key studies and research agendas published annually. Service-learning research is summarized in books that received national acclaim, including Eyler and Giles's *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* and *Serve and Learn* by Pritchard, et al. The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse provides a vital dissemination venue for self-published material that is valued by the service-learning community but not produced by a formal publishing organization.

4. Policy advocacy structures and supports

Advocates at the national, state, tribal, and local levels have organized to secure better policy supports for service-learning. A new national alliance, *Service-Learning United*, led by such organizations as Campus Compact, National Service-Learning Partnership, and Youth Service America, pursues common advocacy strategies, messages, and legislative appeals to obtain federal policy and funding favorable to service-learning. Youth Service America uses its annual Youth Service Day to mobilize support for service-learning, and in 2004, 21 governors, 80 state legislators, 83 mayors, and 105 city and county officials participated. At the state level, 11 states formally support service-learning, and several chief state school officers have commissioned taskforces charged with improving supports for service-learning in their states. To support all these efforts, organizations such as the National Service-Learning Partnership, Education Commission of the States, State Education Agency Service-Learning Network (SEANet), Youth Service America, American Youth Policy Forum, and RMC Research Corporation have developed a variety of tools to assist organizational and individual advocates. These materials, in print and on websites, include legislative policy briefs, policy updates, an advocacy guide, action alerts, databases, the *Talk It Up* series (by advocates for advocates), and talking points to help advocates "make the case" for service-learning with policymakers.

5. Public investments in service-learning

The Corporation for National and Community Service's Learn and Serve America program has become the single largest public or private investor in service-learning, providing more than $645 million to support service-learning in schools and communities over the past 15 years. Service-learning has also captured the attention of federal programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Justice, and the Environmental Protection Agency, and service-learning has been featured in White House conferences on civic education and community service. At the state and local levels, advocates access a variety of public funding streams to expand the use of service-learning.

6. Financial resources to increase practice use and innovation

The Corporation for National and Community Service's Learn and Serve America program provides an annual federal investment of $43 million to expand the use of service-learning. In addition, minigrants from public and private sources provide additional support for practice growth, improvement, and innovation. Examples include the Constitutional Rights Foundation's Robinson Awards, Youth Service America's National Youth Service Day grants, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Youth Innovation Fund grants, and a variety of State Farm Companies Foundation initiatives led by the National Service-Learning Partnership, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and National Youth Leadership Council. At the local level, schools report donations from many other sources.

7. A robust set of service-learning practice tools and materials

An array of teaching resources—including curricula, "best practice" descriptions, toolkits, guides, journals—help practitioners offer high-quality service-learning practice in a wide variety of institutional settings. Using the on-line resource portals provided by the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse and the National Service-Learning Partnership, practitioners can access practical resources produced by mainstream publishers, state departments of education, Learn and Serve America grantees, Education Commission of the States, Earth Force, Constitutional Rights Foundation, RMC Research Corporation, Youth Service California, National Youth Leadership Council, Kids Consortium, Youth Service America, Vermont Community Works, Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, Search Institute, YMCA of the USA, Common Cents, The Giraffe Project, and other organizations.

8. Increased opportunities to master service-learning teaching practice

More higher education institutions support teachers mastering service-learning practice as part of their training. Several websites offer Dr. Jeffrey Anderson's list of 26 colleges and universities where students can secure faculty support for studying service-learning practice. To expand these opportunities, the National Service-Learning in Teacher Education Partnership promotes "best practices" and helped launch a new center for service-learning teacher education housed at Clemson University. Opportunities for in-service education have also expanded. Professional education is offered through the National Service-Learning Conference; National Service-Learning Exchange; summer institutes; state, regional, local conferences; and customized trainings for schools, districts, and other organizations. Service-learning leaders aim to increase professional education opportunities by sharing models (through the *District Lessons* series, for example), by expanding service-learning summer institutes, which numbered 23 in 2004, and by promoting the *Service-Learning Marketplace,* a new online professional services directory, which provides users with information about service-learning organizations' services, including professional development.

9. Networks with communication vehicles for information exchange and collaboration

The service-learning community has a number of established and emerging networks for service-learning supporters, including specialized affinity groups as well as state and local groups. These include the National Service-Learning Partnership; Service-Learning Research Network; State Education Agency K-12 Service-Learning Network (SEANet); an urban school district administrators network at the Education Commission of the States; KIDS Consortium in Maine; League of Professional Schools in Georgia; regional centers of the National Service-Learning Exchange—Center for Service-Learning Opportunities in Education (Southwest Region); Institute for Global Education and Service-Learning (Atlantic Region); National Dropout Prevention Center (Southeast Region); National Youth Leadership Council (North Central Region); and Youth Service California (Pacific Region). All these networks play a vital role in facilitating dialogue and cross-sector collaboration by offering convenings, listservs, electronic news summaries, and websites. These communication vehicles also connect the service-learning community to other relevant organizations and information resources.

10. Intensified multidisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration

Service-learning's growth, prevalence, and stature have made it attractive to organizations concerned with education, youth, and community development. Many education groups and associations have incorporated service-learning into their programs and activities. New business partners—such as 3M, General Motors, and State Farm®—actively support service-learning. A significant proportion of higher education institutions that belong to Campus Compact report partnering with K-12 schools to support their students' service-learning. Increasingly, organizations focused on character education, civic education, community schools, social and emotional learning, and youth development embrace service-learning.

11. Prominent media attention

During the past decade, media coverage of service-learning—as effective education, as a valuable support for improving education and democracy, and as a field—has grown. Since 2004, many print and broadcast news stories about service-learning have appeared via local, state, and national media outlets. The service-learning community now boasts a cadre of prominent community and national leaders who champion service-learning, including former senators John Glenn and Bob Dole, Marian Wright Edelman, Martin Luther King III, and Clay Aiken. Several of these champions have written popular op-eds on service-learning.

Reaching all Students Requires New Investments

Momentum and results are important indicators of progress, but they will not be enough to sustain the spread of high-quality service-learning practice. Service-learning is at a tipping point—and whether it tips in a direction that advances and anchors the field depends largely on whether it has adequate and sustained backing. A diverse set of public and private institutions that are committed to service-learning goals—engaged students who master core academic and civic curriculum, teaching excellence, effective schools, healthy communities, and a strong democracy—must invest time and money. This is the only way to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to learn and grow through service-learning. Support for the service-learning field's long-term growth and development is critical to making service-learning part of every student's education.

Financial resources are important, but they cannot ensure success. *Collective leadership* among the institutions, organizations, and groups advancing service-learning is essential to moving forward.

Recognizing this—and acutely aware of the "turf wars" and duplication that have hindered other fields and movements—a group of service-learning leaders, representing a diverse set of organizations, programs, and methodologies, met in December 2004 to discuss strengthening the field in order to scale service-learning. These leaders asked themselves, "How can we work together to strategically leverage our past, present, and future work so as to maximize service-learning's impact?"

They agreed that the answer is not simply "more money." *Strategic investments* are needed for many critical gaps in the field's infrastructure. These leaders collaborated with their peers in other service-learning organizations during spring and summer 2005. They selected the following five priorities for investment.

- **Practice and Professional Education:** affordable professional education and other supports for practice excellence

- **Policy Advocacy:** favorable policies at all levels of government, secured through a well-organized, comprehensive advocacy strategy and executed by coalitions that include organizations and individuals within and outside the service-learning community

- **Research:** a persuasive body of research showing service-learning's positive and significant impact on various desired outcomes, including students' academic and civic learning

- **Constituency-Building:** a coordinated strategy to secure support from key stakeholders in the public, private, and philanthropic sectors

- **Communications and Visibility:** an inter-organizational strategy for communicating effectively with those who must embrace and support service-learning

Now, the service-learning community is ready to move forward and urges those who are committed to strengthening education and democracy in our nation to join this collective effort. For service-learning to thrive in schools and communities across the country, we must work together to pursue the comprehensive agenda outlined in the following pages. This ambitious agenda aims to secure the leadership, public policies, practice excellence, research, institutional supports, and stakeholder enthusiasm required to provide all young people with opportunities to engage in service-learning.

New investments of time and money are the only way to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to learn and grow through service-learning.

The Need: Access to Information about What Works

Service-learning practice must help educators with their two most important challenges: student engagement and achievement.
VOICES FROM THE FIELD, *WINGSPREAD CONFERENCE ON SERVICE-LEARNING PRACTICE EXCELLENCE AGENDA* (SEPTEMBER 2005)

Research shows that service-learning must be well implemented to offer the kind of education Americans want for school-age children. Yet providing educators with sufficient information about service-learning practice excellence—what works and why—remains a challenge. Current descriptions of the standards and competencies required for effective practice are incomplete, and institutional support for practice implementation is often weak.

To address these needs, service-learning leaders, with support from the Johnson Foundation, organized a September 2005 Wingspread Conference on Service-Learning Practice Excellence. A diverse group of educators laid the groundwork for more intensive collaboration on three priorities that reflect field leaders' concerns:

- Define the standards and competencies for service-learning practice excellence and promote their use

- Support more and better professional service-learning education

- Advance efforts to integrate service-learning into related education reforms

What Investors Can Do

1. Support a comprehensive initiative to redefine the standards and competencies for service-learning practice excellence and promote their use. All established fields have standards of practice. For service-learning to become a core teaching method in American education, practice standards must be improved. Auspiciously, this work has begun. At the Wingspread conference, one track of participants reviewed a new set of standards in draft form, defined the related competencies practitioners must master to meet such standards, and examined how to disseminate information about standards and competencies effectively, including using a new certification process.

2. Support new projects to strengthen and expand professional service-learning education. At the Wingspread conference, a second track of participants considered what the standards for professional service-learning education must be as well as how those standards can be used to expand the resources and opportunities for such education. This work resulted in an initial set of recommendations of ways to enhance and improve practice education.

3. Support an intensive effort to integrate service-learning into related education reforms. A third track of Wingspread conference participants considered how to integrate use of service-learning in other education reforms such as literacy education, high school reform, after-school education, graduation and promotion requirements, and civic education. This work led to a plan of action for improving service-learning practice promotion, implementation, and depth.

The following national, state, and local organizations are critical to this work and want to work together in a leadership role to advance this agenda (listed in alphabetical order):

- Center for Service-Learning Opportunities in Education
- Compass Institute
- Earth Force
- Institute for Global Education and Service-Learning
- The John Glenn Institute at Ohio State University
- Learn and Serve America
- National Center for Learning and Citizenship at the Education Commission of the States
- National Dropout Prevention Center
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
- National Service-Learning Exchange
- National Service-Learning Partnership
- National Youth Leadership Council
- RMC Research Corporation
- Sagawa-Jospin Associates
- SEANet
- Youth Service California

Strategic Investment Opportunities
Moving Forward: Addressing Practice and Professional Education

▶ **Completing and promoting new practice standards and competencies as well as a certification process that encompasses them.** This work includes field-testing the content and presentation of standards and competencies; preparing, packaging, and distributing the final products; and working with partners to develop an appropriate and credible certification process involving the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, if feasible.
Cost: $350,000 to support planning, review processes, professional editing, publication and distribution, and access to appropriate high-level expertise

▶ **Creating, publishing, and disseminating a new "textbook" positioned as a field "standard"** (provisional title: *The Science and Art of Service-Learning Practice*). The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development has expressed interest in publishing a book for superintendents, teachers, and parents about *why* and *how* to teach service-learning. Such a book would provide information about service-learning's impact on the new standards for student engagement and intellectual rigor; service-learning practice competencies and standards; the nuts and bolts of teaching service-learning; structures and strategies for assisting teachers in implementing and sustaining service-learning in the curriculum; curriculum resources; and using action research and other forms of evaluation to assess teaching effectiveness and verify results.
Cost: $400,000 to support an advisory board, a convening of organizations specialized in service-learning practice, a project coordinator, virtual work groups, and a highly skilled professional writer

▶ **Supporting organizations that are working to increase and improve pre- and in-service education in service-learning practice.** Existing models of professional service-learning education must be strengthened to adhere more closely to current standards for effective professional education. Also, new models must be developed, and good models must be replicated. To develop practical next-steps, service-learning training and technical assistance providers must convene and confer with higher education faculty who prepare students for service-learning teaching.
Cost: $100,000 to support one face-to-face convening, planning, and organizing

▶ **Conducting an in-depth assessment of existing public funding streams that can support in-service education about service-learning practice.** Practitioners need financial and administrative support to participate in summer institutes and in-service education. To persuade administrators to allocate professional development funds to service-learning, advocates must determine whether administrators need better information or more convincing arguments.
Cost: $75,000 to support research, writing, and distribution

▶ **Developing an accessible database of exemplary service-learning curriculum models/modules for all grades and subject areas.** A database can provide information on best-practice examples; offer incentives for educators to refine and document their service-learning teaching; and provide examples of tested curriculum models/modules.
Cost: $100,000 to support initial planning and $50,000 for the database

▶ **Investing in collaboration with relevant national education reform initiatives.** Practitioners must explore ways to integrate service-learning into these efforts and forge productive partnerships.
Cost: $100,000 to support planning and organizing

The Need: Effective Policy Advocacy

We need combined advocacy efforts that mobilize us all.
VOICES FROM THE FIELD IN *STRONGER TOGETHER* (MARCH 2005)

Effective service-learning practice and credible evidence of service-learning's positive impact on student learning are not sufficient to make service-learning a core instructional practice in American schools. Favorable district, state, and federal policies are essential because they provide incentives for schools to include service-learning as a way to meet academic and civic-education standards. In this way, service-learning can become part of the systemic reform of American education. Without appropriate public policies, service-learning will never reach all students by going to scale.

To secure such policies, the service learning community's growing advocacy capacity, at all levels of government, must be sustained and strengthened through strong interagency collaboration. A good policy environment for service-learning depends on the field's advocacy effectiveness.

Advocacy is a cost-effective investment in that policy improvements will provide educators with better resources for expanding use of good service-learning practice. Dedicated funding for service-learning will be less necessary when other funding streams can be allocated to service-learning as a matter of course.

What Investors Can Do

1. Support the broad-based coalition advocating at the federal level. Service-Learning United is a growing alliance of national and state organizations that promote service-learning in all the institutions that educate young people. The alliance is committed to securing federal resources and recognition for service-learning in schools, tribes, colleges and universities, and faith- and community-based organizations. Expanding the alliance and strengthening its work is imperative.

2. Support state-based advocacy. Education policy is primarily set at the state and local level. Most state accountability systems do not provide adequate incentives for schools and districts to integrate and sustain high-quality service-learning. Several states are ready to establish new policy supports for service-learning, but they need additional help in crafting policy agendas, communication plans, and advocacy campaigns. This type of state-level advocacy can lead to new and innovative state policies for service-learning and serve as a critical support for federal advocacy efforts.

3. Support district- and local-level advocacy. Service-learning leadership organizations must work directly with districts that are ready to build an infrastructure to support schools in incorporating service-learning into their instructional strategies. This effort must address the following kinds of constraints: the scarcity of models of how to bring service-learning to scale in a district; lack of local champions for service-learning among policymakers and administrators; limited institutional resources to support and sustain service-learning; inadequate professional development; inconsistent assessment strategies; and weak or merely rhetorical language in district mission statements concerning the preparation of students for civic engagement.

The following national, state, and local organizations are critical to this work and want to work together in a leadership role to advance this agenda (listed in alphabetical order):

- American Youth Policy Forum
- Campus Compact
- Camp Fire USA
- Center for Service-Learning Opportunities in Education
- Civic Mission of Schools Campaign
- Connect Michigan Alliance
- Earth Force
- Institute for Global Education and Service-Learning
- The John Glenn Institute at Ohio State University
- National Center for Learning and Citizenship at the Education Commission of the States
- National Dropout Prevention Center
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
- National Service-Learning Partnership
- National Youth Leadership Council
- RMC Research Corporation
- SEANet
- Voices for National Service
- Youth Service America
- Youth Service California

Strategic Investment Opportunities
Moving Forward: Addressing Policy Advocacy

▶ **Stabilizing Service-Learning United as a broad-based advocacy coalition.** The coalition will mobilize national support for federal policies and funding streams benefiting all sectors of the service-learning community.
Cost: $150,000 annually to support a core leadership team, representing organizations with designated policy and government affairs staff and expertise, to mobilize advocates and pursue Congressional outreach and visits

▶ **Sponsoring service-learning supporters—particularly young people—educating federal and state policymakers about the importance of service-learning through organized site visits, field trips and policy forums.** These activities would also provide teachers, youth, parents, and their community partners with the skills, information, and opportunities to showcase service-learning projects and results to elected officials and their staff.
Cost: $350,000 for planning, travel, lodging, and training sessions associated with hosting one or two field trips, three-to-five local site visits, and two-to-four Hill Days in Washington DC and in selected states

▶ **Supporting state-based advocacy coalitions.** Mobilized service-learning supporters can be trained and prepared to train others to promote favorable policies, including funding for service-learning at state and local levels. The goal is to increase the number of states with explicit service/service-learning policies from 11 to 25.
Cost: $300,000 for staffing, product development and dissemination, and formal ways for policymakers and education leaders to deliberate about the most effective strategies to integrate and sustain good service-learning practice

▶ **Sustaining a network of 100 district leaders to promote citizenship education that includes service-learning.** Efforts are underway to establish a cadre of district superintendents and school board members to create a national voice for district leaders on service-learning and related issues. Network members will work with local policymakers to advocate for service-learning and citizenship education, as well as work within their districts to build systemwide service-learning models. Through this network and corresponding dissemination strategies, additional district policymakers and leaders will be provided with options to adopt and adapt in their districts.
Cost: $250,000 for staffing, product development, dissemination, and convening

▶ **Subsidizing a national district leader award named for the funder(s).** Building on the success of Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Leader School program, several organizations will develop criteria for choosing a school district leader who deserves recognition at the annual National Service-Learning Conference. This award will highlight the importance of developing districtwide service-learning models. The winning district will send a delegation to the conference to receive the award, including the superintendent, a school board member, a service-learning coordinator, a principal, a teacher, a community partner, and students.
Cost: $35,000 for staffing, product development, publicity, travel, and lodging

▶ **Supporting education, training, and technical assistance about district-level models for integrating service-learning into core instructional practices.** These models will include strategies for promoting the systemic implementation of service-learning within schools and school districts as well as policy options.
Cost: $200,000 *for staffing, product development, dissemination, and travel*

The Need: Rigorous, Accessible, Useful Research

Helping practitioners make intentional connections between research and their actual practice is one of the most important next steps for moving forward.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD IN *STRONGER TOGETHER* (MARCH 2005)

The past five years have seen a welcome increase in both the quality and quantity of research about service-learning practice. But the field still suffers from a paucity of research that is rigorous, accessible, and immediately useful to practitioners.

What is needed is both impact and correlation research that is based on quasi-experimental or experimental designs, includes high-quality case studies, and helps practitioners make their case for service-learning and understand what features of service-learning are linked to outcomes. Research needs to focus on pressing questions that will advance the field, and research results need to be disseminated more widely so that the studies influence practice. And finally, some of the funding available for conducting evaluation studies needs to be redirected into research so that the findings are more robust and can be generalized.

Many active researchers in universities and research organizations have the skills needed to conduct the research and disseminate the results in clear and compelling ways, but well-designed large-scale studies are expensive. While it is possible to conduct this research in such a way as to aggregate the results of small studies, many researchers are not drawn to the field because of limited funds to conduct high-quality research or limited venues for publication. Recognizing these challenges, service-learning research leaders recommend three areas for investment focused on content, dissemination, and support as follows.

What Investors Can Do

1. Content: Supporting research that addresses the most important research questions with the most robust designs. Research that answers specific, highly targeted research questions that will advance the field is needed. Further, studies are needed to identify which components of service-learning implementation are most consistently and significantly related to outcomes and what conditions of implementation are associated with greatest short- and long-term impact. There is a strong need for comparative studies to determine the impact of service-learning relative to other interventions so that wise instructional choices can be made. Researchers should replicate well-designed studies to make the research more reliable and generalizable. Service-learning research should be aligned with existing research standards for quality, including the criteria used by the What Works Clearinghouse for quantitative research; criteria developed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation for evaluative studies; and the criteria discussed by the National Research Council for qualitative research.

2. Dissemination: Putting research results into the hands of essential users and decision-makers. Since research results are critical to researchers, practitioners, policymakers, the media, and parents, support for new ways to share and translate research findings is needed.

3. Support: Generating more funds and leveraging existing funds. Current funds to study service-learning are, in the vast majority of cases, directed towards program evaluations rather than pure research. In the best-case scenario, more funds should be generated to conduct applied research. If evaluation funds are the only resources available, researchers must be convinced to use common evaluation methodologies and instruments. This way, the evaluations can be culled more readily into research findings, even though the investigations are about specific programs. Researchers may agree to use common instruments if there is an incentive to do so. Creating valid and reliable instruments or construct subscales will be helpful. In addition, providing funding that asks researchers to coordinate with others and adopt existing validated instruments is necessary.

The following national, state, and local organizations are critical to this work and want to work together in a leadership role to advance this agenda (listed in alphabetical order):

- ABT Associates
- American Youth Policy Forum
- Brandeis University
- Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)
- International K-H Service-Learning Research Conference
- The John Glenn Institute at Ohio State University
- League of Professional Schools
- National Center for Learning and Citizenship at the Education Commission of the States
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
- National Service-Learning Partnership
- National Youth Leadership Council
- National Governor's Association
- RMC Research Corporation
- The University of California-Berkeley
- Westat
- individual scholars and universities

Strategic Investment Opportunities
Moving Forward: Addressing Research

▶ **Increasing funds for service-learning research.** Research should address key questions about the impacts of service-learning on various stakeholder groups, impacts relative to other possible interventions, and the relationship between service-learning design characteristics and outcomes. Rigorous research could provide the scientific evidence needed to sustain and improve the practice of service-learning in schools if results are positive. Research should have a specific target, such as the study of academic, civic, or social-emotional outcomes.
Costs: From $100,000 to several million dollars for commissioned studies

▶ **Endowing a dedicated center for service-learning research.** This center could develop a common research agenda and use the guidance provided by an advisory group to provide grants to researchers from multiple sites to work together. Researchers would start by conducting several related national studies and together apply for additional funding. This effort should be tied to the current plans for the newly-formed professional association attached to the existing annual International Service-Learning Research Conference held each fall, cosponsored by a leading university and RMC Research Corporation. Another option is to fund multiple studies with a collaboration requirement. Alternatively, a large grant could be supplied to one organization that would provide competitive subgrants to others using a model much like that currently implemented by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) to fund studies in the field of civic engagement or the Aspen Institute's Nonprofit Sector Research Fund.
Costs: From $100,000 to several million dollars to endow a center, depending upon scope of the research agenda to be implemented

▶ **Publicizing research for key users and decision-makers.** The vehicles for dissemination to, and modes of communication with, relevant user groups differ. To inform the community of researchers, studies should be published in peer-reviewed journals or books designed to reach an academic audience of scholars who will build on one another's work. This would require sponsorship of an electronic or print journal that could be published several times a year. Reaching nonresearch groups would require regular scans of the research and translating the research into clear, easily digested information briefs to be distributed through a variety of communication channels.
Costs: $50,000 to $300,000 per year depending upon the frequency of publication and whether distribution channels are electronic or print; includes time for editors and funds for peer review, printing, and distribution

▶ **Supporting the Service-Learning Research Professional Association.** This association will improve communication and collaboration. The nascent organization will eventually be supported through dues and conference registration, but a financial jumpstart would accelerate field-building work in research.
Costs: $50,000 for coordination, material development, virtual organizing and planning, as well as in-person convening

▶ **Sponsoring a series of annual research prizes/awards.** A funded prize for the best service-learning-related dissertation or article would give scholars recognition that is useful for their own institutions and would provide service-learning research with greater visibility.
Costs: $50,000 for the prize money and selection process

The Need: Stronger Collaborations with Key Stakeholders

As we move forward, we should conduct more intentional outreach to fewer organizations. We need to be more strategic and find common work to pursue with key partners so they can operationalize their commitment to service-learning.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD IN *STRONGER TOGETHER* (MARCH 2005)

To successfully move service-learning into the mainstream of American public education, service-learning advocates must persuade a range of influential stakeholders to embrace service-learning as part of their organizational agendas. To succeed with this work, service-learning leaders must collaborate on developing and executing a coherent plan to reach key stakeholders in the public, private, and philanthropic sectors, including education associations, school reformers, public agencies, parent groups, businesses, community-development specialists, foundations, and youth development organizations.

Constituency-building efforts must aim to bring the voice of service-learning advocates into key stakeholders' meetings, conferences, events, communications, publications, and initiatives. This work must maximize mutual benefit. Ultimately, service-learning advocates want these stakeholders to promote service-learning and strengthen its practice as part of their everyday work.

To secure meaningful results, service-learning leaders must join forces to pool scarce staff time. Such an effort will require coordinated leadership, information-sharing tools and tracking processes, and an overarching strategy with realistic and useful performance targets.

What Investors Can Do

1. Support coordination among national and regional organizations with a primary or significant focus on expanding service-learning. Collective leadership for common work is indispensable to service-learning becoming a core part of every young person's education. To secure the changes required for integrating service-learning into formal education systems, in both school and out-of-school settings, service-learning leaders must work with focus and cohesion. An emerging Service-Learning Leaders Circle will both inform and be informed by its members' networks in order to provide such leadership. The Service-Learning Leaders Circle will enhance existing efforts while developing new ways to set priorities, organize strategically, maximize resources, align efforts, address burning questions, and attend to shared needs.

2. Support a coordinated constituency-building initiative. Service-learning leaders need time to review their constituency-building efforts to-date; share information about key contacts, promising opportunities, and potential joint work; create the work management tools and processes to support interagency coordination; create an action plan with performance reviews; and determine the Service-Learning Leaders Circle's role. Only then can leaders implement the constituency-building initiative.

3. Sponsor opportunities for service-learning leaders to establish relationships with potential corporate and philanthropic partners. Corporate and philanthropic organizations have more to offer the service-learning community than "just funding." For instance, they can introduce service-learning leaders to potential allies in other fields and sectors. Similarly, service-learning organizations can be vital partners for corporate and philanthropic organizations as they pursue their business interests and missions. Increased interaction between service-learning leaders and representatives of interested companies and foundations will help generate strategic innovations that push all involved beyond traditional roles.

Leader Organizations

Strategic Investment Opportunities
Moving Forward: Addressing Constituency-Building

▶ **Investing in the creation of an intrafield plan and system to secure tangible contributions from, and to, influential stakeholder organizations.** Through the Service-Learning Leaders Circle, service-learning organizations will develop and execute a comprehensive and coordinated plan to increase the number of public, private, and non-profit stakeholder organizations that promote service-learning. In addition, service-learning organizations will work together to prepare their own networks or members with the information and tools to approach state and local affiliates of targeted stakeholders as well as other relevant stakeholder organizations. Some of these promotional tools have already been created and others are in varying stages of development.
Cost: $100,000 to support staffing, virtual organizing and planning, product development, and convening

▶ **Hosting meetings that allow service-learning organizations to address common purposes and problems with stakeholder organizations.** Funders are well positioned to introduce service-learning leaders to representatives from relevant fields and to support new types of collaborations. Grantmakers can also sponsor informational sessions to help organizational leaders learn more about service-learning and how it might be leveraged to pursue common goals and objectives.
Cost: $50,000 to support staffing, product development, travel and meals for four meetings each year

▶ **Creating a Service-Learning Ambassador Corps Fund** to support the participation of service-learning experts, at the national, regional, and local levels, participating in panels, workshops, and other events sponsored by external stakeholder organizations.
Cost: $50,000 to support time, travel, and training to ensure continuity among ambassadors

▶ **Hosting meetings at philanthropic conferences to introduce colleagues to service-learning.** Philanthropic partners could invite a service-learning leader to speak at a meeting of colleagues-—not to seek funding but to provide information about service-learning and related topics, to answer critical questions, and to contribute to discussions.
Cost: $50,000 to support staffing, product development, travel and meals for four meetings each year

▶ **Hosting meetings at business conferences and meetings to introduce companies to service-learning.** This investment can support dialogue about much more than fund-raising. Service-learning leaders want to support corporate volunteers engaging directly in service-learning efforts, to encourage companies to use service-learning as a vehicle for business priorities, to discuss with corporate staff how service-learning might support cause marketing campaigns, and to address business gatherings in order to provide information and encourage mutually beneficial activities.
Cost: $50,000 to support staffing, product development, travel, and meals for four meetings each year

The Need: Persuasive Publicity

We need to work together strategically across organizations to craft a common message and then get the attention of national media outlets and critical stakeholders so that service-learning actually benefits from the attention. It's hard work. We just need to do it.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD, *STRONGER TOGETHER* (MARCH 2005)

The opinion poll cited on page one found that, although many people are unfamiliar with the term "service-learning," they support service-learning when they learn more about it and its positive effects on students. As recognition of service-learning grows, advocates must build on this momentum by generating favorable publicity for service-learning in communities across the nation.

Service-learning organizations must work together on a coordinated communications effort targeting policymakers, educators, journalists, opinion-shapers, parents, business leaders, philanthropists, and young people. This work should aim to:

- Strengthen service-learning organizations' existing communication efforts to reach a variety of audiences with a variety of messages about improving education, in both school and out-of-school settings, through service-learning
- Expand service-learning organizations' and individual advocates' proficiency with communications and media relations
- Develop and disseminate tools that will help service-learning advocates respond quickly to opportunities to "talk smart" about service-learning
- Develop strategic marketing approaches to promote service-learning adoption in school districts
- Develop a centralized communications clearinghouse that can facilitate more streamlined communication efforts among advocates
- Pool organizational resources to address specialized needs
- Collect relevant and credible new research and summarize it in ways that are useful for reporters and opinion-leaders
- Seek favorable publicity from key allies, thereby leveraging their communications resources

What Funders Can Do:

1. Help service-learning organizations improve their individual and collective education and marketing capabilities. The service-learning community needs a shared communications agenda to "get everyone on the same page" in promoting service-learning. Advocates have had considerable experience with trying to improve communication about service-learning. Organizational leaders and communications specialists should pool their knowledge to develop an agenda that targets organizations, and through them individual advocates. This agenda must encompass:

- Training in communications, media management, and social marketing
- Convincing messages about service-learning's attributes, benefits, and feasibility
- Talking points with supporting information
- A wide variety of communications channels (electronic, print, events, networks, meetings, conferences) to reach essential stakeholder sectors and segments

2. Support interorganizational collaboration on addressing specialized communications needs. To use scarce resources wisely and eliminate duplication, service-learning organizations must develop a shared communications infrastructure by pooling resources where needed. Needs include an interagency "rapid response" capacity, coordinated use of websites and e-briefs for information exchange, and strategic collaboration to market service-learning.

3. Tap into the communications resources of organizations in other disciplines, fields, or sectors. When possible, advocates need to make service-learning part of the communications and marketing efforts of organizations that focus on education, service, community development, youth, civic engagement, philanthropy, or business.

Strategic Investment Opportunities

Moving Forward: Addressing Communications and Visibility

▶ **Strengthening communications capabilities within and across service-learning organizations.** An initiative of the Service-Learning Leaders Circle would develop a shared communication agenda, coordinate organizations' use of their communication and education resources, and generate the materials, training, information sharing, and marketing know-how service-learning advocates need.
Cost: $200,000 for planning, technical consultation, coordination, consensus building, and train-the-trainer education, metrics monitoring, and sharing lessons learned

▶ **Assembling a national "rapid media response team" with specialized expertise so that its members can serve—quickly and effectively—as persuasive spokespeople with the news media**. This interorganizational team would also work together to identify issues "on the horizon" and create proactive strategies for "framing the debate." In addition, the team would assist national, regional, state, tribal, and local groups as well as spotlight favorable publicity to provide models for other advocates.
Cost: $100,000 for development, implementation, and information-sharing through a designated website or database

▶ **Increasing use of key stakeholder organizations' communication and education resources to promote service-learning.** Key allies and media outlets will carry appropriately packaged service-learning referrals, information, and stories. This effort would complement the constituency-building work described on pages 12-13 by capitalizing on opportunities to use other organizations' communication and education vehicles for promoting service-learning. Ideally, this work would be part of the communications initiative described as the first investment in this section.
Cost: $100,000 for planning, strategizing, and coordinating

For more information about investment opportunities, contact:

Practice and Professional Education
- **National Service-Learning Partnership**: nbrown@aed.org
- **National Youth Leadership Council:** wweah@nylc.org

Policy Advocacy
- **American Youth Policy Forum:** spearson@aypf.org
- **Earth Force:** ctampio@earthforce.org
- **Education Commission of the States**: tpickeral@ecs.org
- **National Service-Learning Partnership**: nbrown@aed.org
- **SEANet:** syu@aed.org
- **Youth Service America:** sculbertson@ysa.org

Research
- **The John Glenn Institute:** hill.358@osu.edu
- **RMC Research:** billig@rmcdenver.com

Constituency-Building
- **National Service-Learning Partnership**: nbrown@aed.org
- **National Youth Leadership Council:** jimp@nylc.org
- **SEANet:** syu@aed.org

Communications and Visibility
- **American Youth Policy Forum:** spearson@aypf.org
- **National Service-Learning Partnership**: nbrown@aed.org
- **Youth Service America:** sculbertson@ysa.org