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Training of the Regional Service-Learning Award national evaluators

Guidebook for national partners for the capacity building of the national evaluation team

SERVICE–LEARNING
AWARD
Central & Eastern Europe

2025

Output of the Eramus+ Project 2023-1-SK02-KA220-YOU-000159836 Service-learning in fostering youth civic engagement, diversity, and social inclusion in the CEE region

Introduction

The training is designed to prepare national-level evaluators for their role in the Regional Service-Learning Award (hereinafter RSLA). Its purpose is to ensure that all evaluators understand the award's methodology, criteria, processes, and expectations, and are equipped to conduct consistent, fair, and high-quality assessments of submitted Service-Learning projects. The training combines theoretical input, practical exercises, and reflection, enabling participants to gain hands-on experience with real Service-Learning practices and evaluation tools.

The Regional Service-Learning Award (RSLA) for Central and Eastern Europe honors schools and youth organizations that integrate academic learning with meaningful community service to promote active citizenship. Established in 2020 by the Central and Eastern Europe Service-Learning Network (hereinafter The Network), the award recognizes innovative projects that combine curricular goals with social engagement, benefiting both students and communities. It highlights best practices from preschool to university education and non-formal youth work, encouraging replication and continuous improvement. Winners receive financial prizes, public recognition, and opportunities for visibility through ceremonies, case studies, and workshops. Beyond the awards, RSLA provides feedback, resources, and training to strengthen service-learning across the region.

Training initiates the Network in coordination with a national partner - a member of the Network. The Network provides trainer(s) for the national evaluators team as well as needed material like presentation, handouts, Service-Learning case study material. Training can be organized for the evaluators from one or more member countries, and it can be in English or national language. The training can be delivered either online or in-person.

Target group

This training is intended for individuals who will serve as evaluators of Service-Learning project submissions at the national level on behalf of national partners of the Network and within the RSLA framework. The training is suitable for teachers, youth workers, project coordinators, community practitioners, researchers, and professionals working with young people, schools, or community-based initiatives.

Recommended Evaluator Profile
Evaluators should ideally meet the following criteria:
Professional Experience

- Experience working with schools, young people, and/or community-based initiatives
- Familiarity with Service-Learning methodology or similar experiential learning approaches

- Previous experience evaluating projects, practices, or educational programs (an advantage, but not mandatory)

Competencies

- Ability to assess information objectively and make reasoned judgements
- Strong analytical skills and attention to detail
- Capacity to provide constructive written feedback
- Commitment to fairness, transparency, and confidentiality

Availability and Commitment

- Ability to dedicate the required time to evaluating assigned projects (typically several hours depending on the number of submissions)
- Willingness to meet deadlines and follow the RSLA procedural guidelines
- Openness to collaboration and participation in calibration discussions

The aims of the training for evaluators

- To simulate the full evaluation process through two complementary perspectives: the applicant's and the evaluator's.
- To clearly understand each step of the evaluation process at the national and regional levels, including all required documents, filters, and decision points.
- To practice applying the evaluation criteria using real Service-Learning project examples and to test individual scoring and judgement.
- To build a shared understanding of the role, responsibilities, and ethical standards expected from evaluators.
- To compare individual evaluations, discuss differences, and strengthen the consistency and reliability of scoring across all evaluators.
- To gather and share lessons learned from the test evaluation phase and previous experience to improve the quality of evaluation.
- To ensure a transparent, fair, and homogeneous evaluation of all project submissions for the Regional Service-Learning Award.

Structure of the Training

The training consists of two sessions spaced approximately two weeks apart:

Session 1 – Foundations and Process Overview
This session provides:
- An introduction to the CEE Service-Learning Network and the RSLA history and context
- An overview of the RSLA organisational structure, procedures, and timeline including information about ceremonies (national and regional), certificates, and campaign elements
- Requirements and expectations for national evaluators and regional jury
- A walkthrough of all key documents: application forms, terms & conditions, evaluation sheets, jury summary letters, pass/no-pass letters
- Overview of the national and international evaluation processes
- Description of the evaluation criteria, criteria application in the evaluation process, quantitative and qualitative data within the evaluation process, feedback information for applicants

At the end of Session 1, participants receive two real Service-Learning project examples to evaluate individually using the official evaluation form.

Inter-session Assignment (Approx. 2 weeks)
Participants:
- Apply the RSLA criteria to two sample projects
- Decide whether the projects qualify as Service-Learning
- Provide scoring, a short narrative justification, and recommendations for improvement
- Prepare questions or uncertainties related to criteria and the evaluation process

Session 2 – Calibration and Consensus
This session focuses on:
- Sharing evaluation results and discussing differences in scoring
- Deepening understanding of criteria and decision-making filters
- Clarifying common misunderstandings or challenges
- Collecting lessons learned and frequently asked questions
- Aligning evaluators' perspectives to ensure consistent, reliable, and transparent evaluation

Detailed Training Flow

Session 1

(2,5 hours + break)

The aim:

- Get to know the Terms & Conditions regarding the formal aspect and evaluation process
- Fill in the submission form
- Practice differentiation between Service-Learning and other school practice/projects
- Reflect on the lessons learned from applicant experience.

1. Welcome & Introduction (10 min)
Description:
The facilitator will introduce themselves and, if needed, briefly present their organization. Participants then introduce themselves. An interactive activity may be used: participants work in pairs, share a few details about themselves for three minutes each, and then, in a circle, introduce their partner to the rest of the group. Then participants briefly work in pairs and reflect on the question: *"Why is project evaluation essential for developing quality Service-Learning?"*. A few insights are shared with the full group to set the tone.
Objective:
To create a safe learning environment, activate prior knowledge, and set shared expectations for the training.

2. CEE SL Network (10 min)
Description:
A short interactive quiz (e.g., Mentimeter or Kahoot) introduces key facts about the CEE Service-Learning Network. The trainer clarifies and expands on the answers.
Objective:
To help participants understand the broader regional context and their role within it.

3. RSLA History & Context (15 min)
Description:
The trainer presents the key milestones of RSLA's development in a clear chronological timeline and explains the historical context and evolution of the initiative.
Objective:
To provide participants with a shared understanding of RSLA's development, mission, and relevance.

4. RSLA Timeline (10 min)
Description:
Groups brainstorm possible risks related to the timeline (summer holidays, delayed

documentation, etc.). The trainer then presents the official timeline and explains key deadlines.

Objective:

To ensure evaluators understand the timeline and can anticipate bottlenecks that may impact the evaluation process.

5. Application Forms & Terms and Conditions (15 min)

Description:

Working in pairs, participants examine the official application form and Terms & Conditions and try to identify two points that may be challenging for applicants. This is followed by group discussion.

Objective:

To increase evaluators' familiarity with the submitted materials and to develop sensitivity to applicants' perspectives.

6. Writing an application (30 min)

Description:

The facilitator presents a concept of a fictional project. Each participant selects one section of the application form and writes a project description for that section in their own words. Participants may choose the level of quality they want to simulate. Afterwards, the group discusses what they would expect to read in that section and how the provided information could be evaluated and assessed.

Objective:

To deepen understanding of the evaluation criteria and to support consistent and aligned application of these criteria across all evaluators.

Break (15 min)

7. Evaluation Form (15 min)

Description:

Each participant selects one evaluation criterion and rewrites it in their own words. The group discusses interpretations to ensure consistency.

Objective:

To deepen understanding of evaluation criteria and ensure consistent use across evaluators.

8. Jury Summary Project Letter (15 min)

Description:

The trainer presents two anonymized examples of summary letters—one strong and one weak. Participants work in group, compare them and identify what makes a summary letter effective.

Objektíve:

To help evaluators learn how to create clear, concise, and persuasive summary letters for the international jury.

9. Pass / No Pass Letter (10 min)

Description:

Participants receive a template of a “no pass” letter and analyze what key messages should be conveyed to applicants. They discuss the tone, content, and clarity of the communication.

Objective:

To understand the purpose of the Pass/No Pass letter and what information and guidance it should communicate to applicants.

10. Assignment for the Two-Week Testing Phase (15 min)

Description:

The trainer explains the evaluation exercise: each participant receives two sample projects, the evaluation form, and eligibility criteria/terms and conditions. Their task is to judge whether the projects qualify as SL, assign scores, and prepare recommendations or explanations.

Objective:

To practice applying evaluation criteria to real examples and prepare for the reflective discussion in Meeting 2.

11. Wrap-up & Closing (5 min)

Description:

Participants share one word or short phrase summarizing their main takeaway.

Objective:

To reinforce learning and provide closure.

Between Meeting Assignments

(recommended 2 weeks)

Participants receive competition terms and conditions, the evaluation sheet, and two sample project applications. Their task is to determine whether the projects meet Service-Learning criteria and evaluate their quality. They also write feedback, recommendations, or justification if the project is not SL. If it is SL project, they prepare summary letter for teh international jury.

The Service-Learning projects for the individual assignment are provided by the Network.

The aim:

- Practice differentiation between Service-Learning and other school practice/projects
- Understand the project evaluation process
- Familiarize yourself with the forms used for evaluation
- Practice evaluating
- Reflect on the experience from the evaluator's perspective

The participants share the outputs of their assessments and summary letters before the next meeting to allow facilitator to adjust session according to quality of the outputs.

Session 2

(2 hours)

The aim:

- Practice wording in providing feedback to applicants on all three filters
- Understand the role of evaluator
- Reflect on the lessons learned from the evaluator's experience on the feedback process.

1. Welcome & Recap (15 min)

Description:

The facilitator briefly recaps key content from Session 1 and outlines the objectives and structure of Meeting 2.

Objective:

To reconnect participants, reinforce previous learning, and set clear expectations for the second session.

2. Discussion of Evaluations (40 min)

Description:

Participants share and discuss their evaluations of the two sample projects completed during the inter-session assignment. Differences in scoring and interpretation are highlighted and explored in the group discussion.

Objective:

To align participants' understanding of the evaluation process and ensure consistency in how the criteria are applied.

3. Evaluation Criteria Deep Dive (30 min)

Description:

The facilitator clarifies each evaluation criterion, addresses common misunderstandings, and demonstrates the correct application. Participants ask questions and discuss borderline cases.

Objective:

To ensure a shared and precise interpretation of evaluation criteria and improve the accuracy and fairness of assessments.

4. Feedback & Letters (20 min)

Description::

Participants review the feedback and summary letters they prepared during the testing phase. The facilitator guides a discussion on tone, clarity, and effective ways to communicate constructive recommendations to applicants. Participants reflect on how to balance honesty with encouragement.

Objective:
To understand the purpose of feedback and summary letters, and to enhance evaluators' skills in providing clear, respectful, and constructive communication to applicants.

5. Q&A and Closing (15 min)
Description:
Participants have the opportunity to ask final questions regarding the evaluation process, documents, or any practical concerns before starting real evaluations. The facilitator summarizes key points and next steps.
Objective:
To ensure participants feel confident and fully prepared to carry out their evaluator responsibilities.