Haven from Hunger: A service learning and community development project at Eastern Oregon University

Long-term project goals:

1. Increase community and household food security and alleviate hunger. Estimates suggest that up to 12% of the local population may be experiencing hunger or food insecurity.
2. Build social capital. HfH seeks to work with those already working on the problem, to strengthen community food networks and campus/community collaboration on hunger-related and food-producing activities.
3. Build a student-run organization to coordinate and manage the project.

Project objectives:

▫ Work with community partners, providers of food assistance and food production/provision (e.g., gleaning).
▫ Raise awareness of the local problem and erase the stigma of receiving/seeking food assistance;
▫ Integrate student participation (using curricular/extracurricular means);
▫ Conduct research that illuminates local hunger issues and identifies service learning opportunities.

Project priorities:

▫ Create a process for soliciting broad-based participation among community partners, local farmers and gardeners, faculty, students, administration and people affected by food insecurity;
▫ Build a student run organization with faculty oversight
▫ Collect information on local hunger to help better identify community needs;
▫ Develop projects driven by local input and perceived need of participating parties;
▫ Develop a curricular mechanism for connecting service learning opportunities with developing and ongoing projects, to ensure adequate student participation to support projects;
▫ Use the development of the organization itself as a service learning project.
▫ Strengthen social capital and networks of food and hunger aid in the area

Principles

▫ Student-driven with faculty oversight
  ▪ Running the organization as service learning project
  ▪ Ensuring continuity
  ▪ Sustainability
▫ Bottom-up planning, participation
  ▪ University role is to complement (and thus learn) what other community organizations and individuals do, not duplicate effort
  ▪ Students introduced to the organization through service learning
  ▪ Strives to understand meaning of hunger and food insecurity from those who experience it
▫ Social capital comes first (building relationships with local businesses, schools, food aid providers and community members)
▫ Addressing multiple goals (initiatives not only address local problems but provide opportunities to strengthen classroom learning, raise awareness of hunger and food insecurity, increase donations, etc.)
▫ Use of research to illuminate problems and evaluate the impact of collective efforts