**Backgrounder for Community Partners on Development Studies 591: Critical Perspectives on Development Practice and Research (DEST 591)**

**Course:** DEST 591 Critical Perspectives on Development Practice & Research
**Instructor:** Dr. Caesar Apentiik
**Proposal Submission Period:** <span style="color:red">October 1 to December 6, 2024</span>

**The Course:** This is a required senior-level seminar/practicum course for students majoring in Development Studies at the University of Calgary. The course is designed to help students develop the skills and the critical perspective needed to conceptualize, design, implement and effectively manage community development projects and programs. As both a learning and a work experience, the course offers students who are finishing their degree the opportunity to integrate theory and practice. The course is designed to allow students to work in teams (4-5 students in a team) to carry out a small community development-related project during the semester with selected host organizations. The organizations submit a proposal detailing the activities that would be undertaken by the students, as well as the desired outcome. If the proposal is accepted, a team of students will be assigned to the project. The students' work will involve the conceptualization, planning, and implementation of the project, and the preparation of a final report. The students are engaged in a formal course that runs in parallel with the work on the project. The course content focuses on skill development in the areas of project planning, management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as protocols (e.g. ethics) required to conduct research and to carry out a collaborative project. The student teams present their findings to the class and community partners at the conclusion of the project.

**The Client:** This opportunity is best suited to organizations which need to design project strategic plans, evaluations or monitoring strategies, as well best practices required to carry out specific development projects or programs. Through DEST 591, senior undergraduate students can help organizations with these tasks. Ideal student projects include literature reviews, web searches, project design, environmental scans to identify best practices, strategizing and donor retention studies. They may also include the analysis of existing data on usage, impact, or assessment of an organization's programs. Students have also engaged in web design to enhance the visibility of an organization. ***Students cannot be involved in collecting or using data that are potentially sensitive or confidential.***

**The Students:** Students in DEST 591 are senior undergraduate students majoring in Development Studies at the University of Calgary. This is a capstone course for their 4-year program, which is normally taken during their last semester. Typically, students in this course are interested in working in the field of international and local community development. They possess basic skills in research methods, literature review, environmental scan, theories and approaches to development. They are also skilled at writing proposals and reports. The in-class portion of DEST 591 provides students with knowledge around the research protocols & ethics in development work, project design and implementation, project monitoring and evaluation. The course instructor assists students in the various phases of the work that they conduct around the project that they have been assigned, and helps them with overcoming challenges.

In recent years, projects in which our students have collaborated include: **The Calgary Zoo** on designing a plan to measure volunteer experience and satisfaction; **YMCA Preschool Program** to identify indicators that could be used to assess the impact of the Preschool Program on participating families; **Hillhurst-Sunnyside Community Association** to develop a strategic plan to address food security issues in the community; **The Mustard Seed** to design a donor retention strategic plan.

**The Project Proposal:**

Successful projects will:

1- include a description of the organization needs
2- include a detailed, focused project plan, achievable within the time frame of the course (12 weeks)
3- list a key organizational contact available throughout the entire project, who is prepared to work with students, and who is knowledgeable about the project undertaken
4- have a backup contact to the key organizational contact
5- demonstrate organizational understanding and support of the project
6- provide students with access to the resources to complete their project (including staff)

**Timeline:**
- Application Deadline: **Friday, December 6, 2024**
- Orientation for Community Partners: Webinar date TBA.
- Semester Start & End Date: **Jan 6, 2025 to Apr 11, 2025**
- Community Partners are required to attend the first class **Tuesday January 14th, 2025 (2:00 – 4:45) in room ES 702**, to present on their project and answer questions from students.

**Interested:** To submit a project proposal for DEST 591, please complete the attached form and contact Julie Boyd (boydj@ucalgary.ca) with "Service-Learning Project" in the subject line.

**Questions?** Please contact Julie by email at boydj@ucalgary.ca