

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Service Learning begins with understanding real needs in a community. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs helps participants recognize how basic to higher-level needs affect well-being and why different communities may require different types of support. By learning to identify and prioritize needs, participants will be better equipped to make a meaningful impact.



SERVICE LEARNING - IDENTIFY A NEED - 2.1

CONVERSATION STARTER: If you were stranded on a desert island, what's the one thing you would bring?

SURVIVAL SCENARIO CHALLENGE

KEY OBJECTIVES

- How to Identify a Need
- Understand Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Printed/digital version of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.
- Printed copies of Scenario A and Scenario B for two groups, or more if you plan to divide participants into smaller teams.

- Divide youth into small groups of 4–6 participants.
- Explain the challenge:
- Your team is stranded in a survival situation. Resources are limited, and you must work together to create a plan that ensures everyone's survival.
- You will have 5 minutes to brainstorm a survival strategy based on the resources available in your assigned scenario.

Scenario A: Stranded on an island with only the clothes on your back, a pocket knife, and driftwood that washed ashore.

Scenario B: Shipwrecked in a lifeboat with a chicken, two oars, and three days of rations.

FACILITATION TIPS

Encourage participants to think beyond just survival—ask how emotional and social needs might come into play in a long-term survival situation. This will help them connect Maslow's higher-level needs to real-life challenges.

Brainstorm survival strategy (5 minutes):

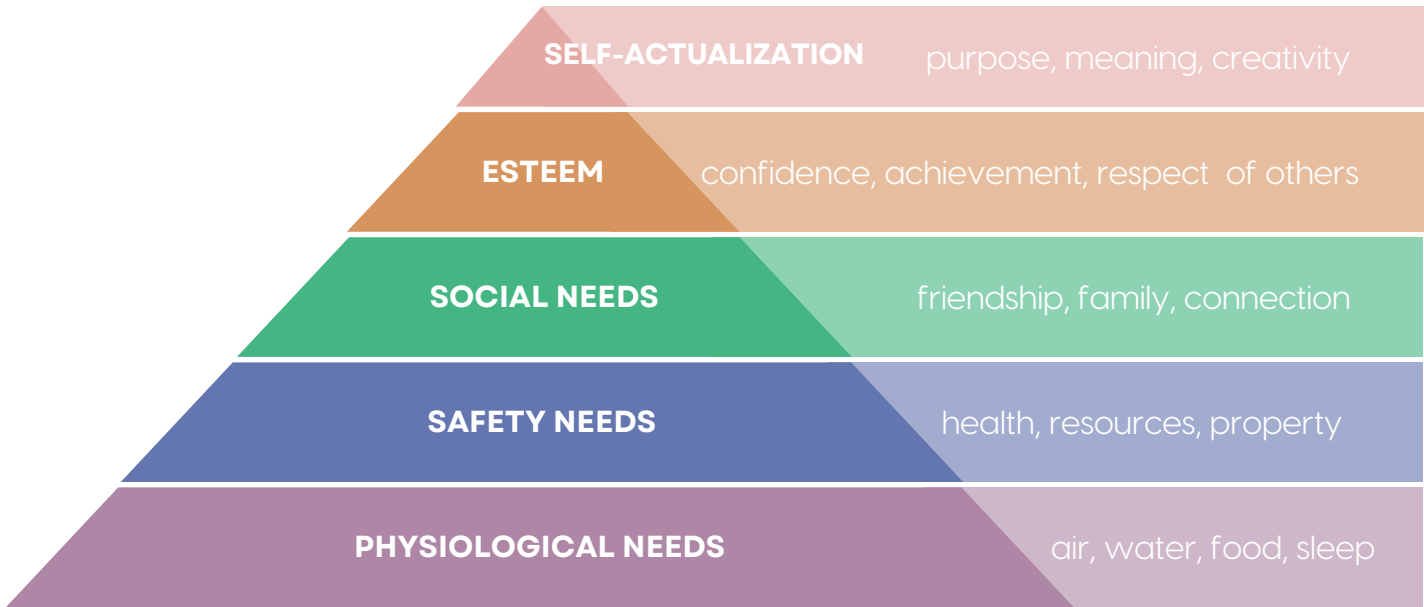
- What are your most immediate needs? (food, water, shelter, safety)
- How can you use available resources to meet those needs?
- What roles will each person take in your group?
- How will you stay safe long-term?

Encourage teams to think creatively and consider different perspectives as they develop their survival plan.

REFLECTION

Show (or pass out copies of) Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs chart.

- What was your plan to help everyone survive the scenario?
- How did you prioritize your needs?
- Were you able to think of ways to meet those needs with your available resources?
- Dive Deeper: If basic needs like food and shelter are met, but a person has no sense of belonging or purpose, can they truly thrive? Why or why not?



APPLICATIONS

- What steps can you take to assess and prioritize real needs in your community, just like you did in the survival challenge?
- How do needs change depending on circumstances (e.g., emergency vs. everyday life)?
- How can leaders effectively assess and prioritize needs in their community?

KEY TAKEAWAY: Just like in the survival challenge, identifying and prioritizing needs is essential—whether in an emergency or when serving a community. When we understand what people truly need before taking action, we create more meaningful and lasting change.

CHECK UNDERSTANDING

Did participants connect Maslow's Hierarchy to problem-solving in real life? Did they reflect on how different situations affect people's needs? How different communities prioritize needs based on their circumstances?



SCENARIO A

You are stranded on an island with only the clothes on your back, a pocket knife, and driftwood that floated ashore.

What is your plan to survive?

SCENARIO B

You are shipwrecked in a lifeboat with a chicken, two oars, and three days of rations.

What is your plan to survive?

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

A classic psychological framework from Abraham Maslow.

BriceSize Learning

