



# **Tool Kit**

*for*

***Recruiting and Supporting***

***Job- Seeking Volunteers***

**May 2011**

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## Introduction

Recognizing the growing importance of job seekers as volunteers, the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) started an initiative in 2010 to develop tools and resources to assist organizations in recruiting and supporting job seekers as volunteers. The aim was to optimize the value that job seekers gain from volunteering and to make it easy for organizations to involve job seekers as volunteers. Information was gathered from:

- A survey of leaders of volunteers in Central Minnesota
- Focus groups held in Central Minnesota and the Twin Cities Metro Area
- Advice and guidance from Central Minnesota Advisory Taskforce
- A literature review

The information in this toolkit was gathered from these sources between July 2010 and May 2011. The focus of the work was in Central Minnesota. We thank the Initiative Foundation for grant funding to make this project possible and the Central Minnesota Advisory Taskforce that oversaw the project. Bringing together thinking from workforce preparation organizations and leaders of volunteers was critical to creating resources to strengthen and support how volunteerism can build employability. See the listing of contributors on page 19.

In order to continually improve and update this toolkit we would like your feedback. Please e-mail comments to [office@mavanetwork.org](mailto:office@mavanetwork.org).

## Permission for Use of Tool Kit Materials

You are welcome to freely use and share the tool kit materials. We request that when distributing materials in written or electronic form to include this statement: "Materials developed by the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration, [www.mavanetwork.org](http://www.mavanetwork.org). (c) MAVA 2011"

## The Growth of Job Seeking Volunteers

According to late 2010 MAVA survey data<sup>1</sup>, the state's volunteer programs are experiencing significant growth in the number of inquiries from job seeking volunteers. This in turn has created an opportunity for volunteer program managers to adapt their responses to this trend and utilize volunteers in innovative and unprecedented capacities.

- 54% of organizations reported increased reliance on volunteers compared to two years ago
- 66% of those organizations reporting increased inquiries about volunteering indicated the increase was primarily driven by unemployed people
- 30% reported volunteers helped preserve organizational services
- 50% reported that volunteer hours have increased compared to a year ago
- 35% used volunteers to lead or manage projects
- 42% asked volunteers to use their professional skill sets

Another MAVA survey in April 2011 in Central Minnesota found that 87% of organizations reported involving job seekers as volunteers<sup>2</sup>. Job seekers are clearly an important part of the current

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<sup>1</sup> The Status of Minnesota's Volunteer Programs in a Shifting Environment, <http://www.mavanetwork.org/shiftingenv>

<sup>2</sup> Survey of Volunteer Programs in Central Minnesota, <http://mavanetwork.org/Resources/Documents/Workforce%20survey%20summary%205-5.pdf>

volunteer pool and are instrumental in helping organizations weather increased demand for services and tighter financial resources.

## Research on Value of Volunteering for Job Seekers

Some of the strongest data on the connection between volunteering and employment comes from the United Kingdom. TimeBank in the United Kingdom commissioned reed.co.uk to carry out research amongst over 3,000 employers and employees across the UK in June 2009. The research found:

- 84% of those responsible for hiring agree that volunteering is a way to help people find work
- Over 70% of employers believe that those who volunteer have a better chance of earning a higher salary and gaining promotion
- When recruiting, 80% of employers value volunteering on resumes. <sup>3</sup>

Another TimeBank study of businesses found:

- 73% of employers would employ a candidate with volunteering experience over one without
- 94% of employers believe that volunteering can add to skills
- 58% believe voluntary work experience can actually be more valuable than experience in paid employment. <sup>4</sup>

A 1998 article in the Canadian Journal of Economics focused on the monetary gain from volunteering. The research found that the return from volunteering amounts to a 6-7% increase in annual earnings.<sup>5</sup>

The question of the value of internships was documents in a National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) 2008 Experiential Education Survey that found Employers say they extended job offers to nearly 70 percent of their interns.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://timebank.org.uk/key-facts> downloaded 5/6/2011

<sup>4</sup> <http://volunteering.city.ac.uk/volunteers/information/why-volunteer.aspx> downloaded 6/7/2011.

<sup>5</sup> *The Canadian Journal of Economics / Revue canadienne d'Economie* © 1998 [Canadian Economics Association](http://www.jstor.org/pss/136465), downloaded from <http://www.jstor.org/pss/136465> on 5/6/2011.

<sup>6</sup> "Employers Seek Experienced Workers: Internship Experience Counts"  
<http://internships.about.com/od/internshiptip1/a/hiringinterns.htm?r=et> on 6/7/2011

## **Benefits to Volunteering for the Job-Seeking Volunteer**

The MAVA Advisory Task Force on Volunteerism and Workforce Skills identified four key benefits to a job-seeking volunteer that may increase employability.

### **Build References and Contacts**

If an individual has been out of the job market for a period of time, volunteering can provide a current reference and develop a network of associates in a field they wish to pursue. For many job search hopefuls, this network may be their own realistic connection to prospective employment opportunities. Additionally, gaps in employment filled with volunteer experiences may look more appealing to employers seeking to hire proactive, engaged employees, as this can speak to the passion and ambition of an individual. Many nonprofit employees began as volunteers within the organization where they now work as their fit within a philanthropic culture and workplace was noticed by hiring managers. The latter can be a prospective benefit for any organization considering using job-seeking volunteers.

### **Support Confidence and a Strong Self Image**

Volunteers report that when searching for job opportunities, service experience provided them with a way to stay busy and feel useful. This contributed to enhanced self-esteem and a positive attitude.

### **Develop Key Skill Sets**

Volunteerism can build “soft skills” necessary to being a solid, well-performing employee, such as timeliness, customer service and teamwork. Growing, updating or strengthening skill sets are also reasons that job-seeking volunteers find service opportunities appealing, as they can add new skills to their resume or perhaps provide recent examples of how they have been utilized in the pursuit of a good cause.

### **Career Exploration Opportunities**

For those entering the job market for the first time, or for those wishing to change careers mid-life, service may provide the opportunity to learn if one’s interest in a field is worthy of serious pursuit.

## Assessing Readiness

Accepting job-seeking volunteers into your program often means working with time commitments and expectations that differ from those of other types of volunteers. If the volunteer is coming from a workforce center or school, their aim is employment and an expectation is that working with your organization will strengthen their chances.

To be ready to engage job seekers as volunteers:

- It is essential that position descriptions are in place and supervisors are identified to provide training and support.
- It is advisable to have a variety of pre-determined projects with identified skill sets to be able to respond to job seekers interested in using and developing workplace skills.

While many organizations can successfully involve job seekers as volunteers, it is important to recognize that every organization might not be a good fit for job seekers that have specific expectations for the volunteer experience. If it is not a good fit, you can refer the volunteer to your local volunteer center or another organization.

### Overall Readiness

	Completed	Partially Available	Not Developed
Have identified volunteer positions that would be a fit for a job seeker			
Have detailed written position descriptions with identified skill sets			
Ready to assign a supervisor for training and supporting the volunteer position			
Have available initial orientation and ongoing training			
Have written expectations of volunteer conduct			
Have a volunteer termination policy and a system to resolve potential volunteer performance issues			
Have capability to give structured feedback and evaluation			
Have policy in place for providing recommendations			

### Readiness for Skills Based Volunteers

	Completed	Partially Available	Not Developed
Have an identified "wish list" of potential projects in place			
Able to partner with key personnel to design a skills-based volunteer position or project			
Able to develop written project description with volunteer			
Have staff buy-in on empowering a skilled volunteer to take ownership of a project			

# Designing Volunteer Positions

Organizations that have the most experience engaging job seekers as volunteers select from their full range of volunteer positions to offer job seekers. They recognized that every volunteer position does not work well for job seekers and channeled the job seeking volunteers to the position that maximized what they had to offer and minimized the impact if they might need to leave on short notice to take paid work. Throughout this project, the factor identified as the most critical for a good experience by a job seeking volunteer was having a good balance between the position and their skills and expectations.

## What Are Optimal Job-Seeking Volunteer Positions?

Leaders of volunteers reported the important aspects of volunteer positions for job seekers are:

- Positions that do not require a long training period
- Positions with an opportunity to utilize or gain skills that might be useful for employment
- Positions where there is hiring potential
- Positions that include interaction with other people to gain networking

## What Skills Might Job Seekers Want to Gain?

While there is wide variety in the skills job seekers might want to build, several clumps of skills came up in the research as common ones of interest to job seekers that could be built through volunteering:

- For entry level workers, there is an important opportunity to gain and demonstrate "soft" skills such as being on time, appropriate dress, flexibility, professional interaction with co - workers and worksite conflict resolution.
- Computer skills are often popular for volunteers to keep skills current and build new ones.
- Cash register skills are transferable from volunteer positions to work positions.

## Why Offer Project Leadership Volunteer Opportunities to Job Seeking Volunteers?

Projects often work well for job-seeking volunteers. They are time limited and can be focused to take advantage of specific skills the volunteer brings. To be prepared to offer volunteers projects it is important to have staff in your organization develop "wish lists" of projects they would like to have done to be ready for volunteers that come through the door. Three factors to keep in mind when designing a volunteer project:

1. The project is based on attracting volunteers with specific skill sets.
2. It will be appealing to resume-builders.
3. It is flexible and adaptable if volunteer leaves.

*See Attachment C for a Sample Volunteer Project Description.*

## What type of positions are adaptable to volunteers that might be short term?

- Positions where it is possible to build in regular training cycles to replace volunteers that leave.
- Positions where a staff person is happy to turn work over, but is available to pick it back up when needed.
- Positions that can be paired with a longer term volunteers to create continuity when the volunteer leaves.
- Positions or projects with flexible ending points that allow job-seeking volunteers to assess their ability to renew their commitment more easily.

## Tips from the Field

- Look at existing positions and see if there are ways they can be retooled to add more of a skills-based focus.
- Design positions where volunteers not only acquire skills but can demonstrate acquired skills.
- The project or volunteer position description should have a vision, mission and a goal so that the volunteer understands the value of the opportunity.
- Build in a rotation of duties so that volunteers can try out different skills.
- Positions that include professional development opportunities are a draw.
- Use internships as an example of designing a position that fits for a job seeker – clear end point and the plan to fill the position again when the intern leaves.
- Some volunteers who are out of work are satisfied to fit into a regular volunteer positions and do not expect or need extra support or positions that will help them gain skills. Don't assume all volunteers who are out of work have the same expectations.
- Redesign the title of the volunteer position to make it more like a skills-based work position.

# Gaining Organizational Support

Most leaders of volunteers reported mixed support in their organization for involving job seekers as volunteers. Some staff were excited about what the volunteers could do and interested in helping them with job hunting. Others staff shied away from getting involved with job seeker volunteers with the realistic concern that they might invest a lot time in the volunteer who would then leave.

The keys cited to gaining organizational support were:

- Acknowledge the concern that job seeking volunteers might leave on short notice and demonstrate how this is being addressed by designing positions that minimize the impact of a short term volunteer and maximize what they have to offer.
- If your organization's mission is related to reducing poverty or benefiting the community, discuss how job-seeking volunteers align with the organizational mission. Portray job seeking volunteers as a "two-for-one" where you get both the volunteers help and meet the organization's mission.
- Start with the staff or department that is the most interested. This is likely where the best fit is for job seeking volunteers and where success can be demonstrated.
- Highlight the value for future hiring of being able to observe how the job seeking volunteers work first hand and having a possible good pool of applicants when a position opens up.

## Tips from the Field

- Expect some hesitation and work with initial interest. It is harder to get departments willing to take on a short term volunteer. Providing an organization with a single successful pilot will be more effective than attempting to integrate a program where there is understandable resistance.
- Partner with colleagues to identify the benefits of engaging job seeking volunteers. Assist them with brainstorming and all aspects of the position design.
- Developing ideas of how a job seeking volunteer may advance mission-driven work is important preliminary work.
- Skilled job seeking volunteers sometimes are quicker to get up and going in a position. Telling staff this increases willingness to take on job seeking volunteers.

# Recruiting

If you would like to target recruiting job seekers for volunteer positions, you can design recruitment messages that will be particularly appealing to job seekers and design recruitment strategies that will reach job seekers.

## **Crafting Recruitment Messages: What to Include**

For every potential volunteer, it is important to show the value of volunteering and target the message to his or her situation. For job seekers, it is finding the message that will resonate with them.

- Have clear and specific details about the position to facilitate an informed decision.
- Provide specific skill sets they will have the opportunity to learn or use.
- Mention training, networking and professional development opportunities.
- Indicate if background checks are required to allow for self screening. Be clear in the recruitment what would prevent a volunteer from being hired, health screening needed, etc. This will avoid wasting their time and yours.

*To see sample messages, please see Attachment D.*

## **Recruitment Strategies**

The key recruitment strategy for targeting job seekers to volunteer is to identify workforce centers, job clubs, coaches and schools that are good places to reach job seekers interested in volunteering.

- Take a specific volunteer position and identify what would be a good place to reach job seekers with those skills and interests. For example, if you are seeking volunteers for administrative work, schools that prepare students for administrative work would be a good recruitment partner.
- Work to develop good partners in the job preparation fields where they understand who is a fit as a volunteer in your organization and where you understand their expectations for the experience the volunteer will have.
- Look for who will become your advocate to steer the right potential volunteers your way and who will say volunteering at your organization is a good thing to do. For example a teacher in a class, a staff person at a workforce center or career coach.

## **Places to post volunteer positions to reach job seekers**

- Be aware that workforce centers will post volunteer positions in their job bank, which is an excellent way to have the volunteer positions seen by job seekers. At the workforce center, contact the business service specialist to post volunteer positions in their volunteer category.
- Post positions with your local volunteer center and indicate in the recruitment message it is a good position for a job seeker.
- Put in trade publications related to fields that would be appropriate for the position.
- Post at schools that train skills related to the position.

## **Tips from the Field**

### Workforce Centers

- Build partnerships with the local Workforce Center, so they know what you offer for volunteer positions and your track record for being a good placement.
- Keep them updated on positions looking for volunteers
- Let them know what the requirements for a position are so that they only send people who fit them – for example, background checks. Saves everyone time.

## Colleges and schools

- Build partnerships with colleges and schools in the area to be a source for Intern placement. Seek an ongoing relationship where the schools will have a next group of interns to replace a group that finishes up their internships.
- Most schools will post intern positions.

## Other tips

- Go to career fairs with volunteer opportunities.
- Connect up with job coaches and provide information about volunteer opportunities.
- Find out if there are job clubs, support groups that meet in your area, or places that offer classes for job seekers. Offer to speak about volunteer opportunities.
- Post volunteer positions in places job seekers might see them such as Facebook, e-bulletins, newsletters from associations, local newspapers
- Ask volunteers who are job seekers for ideas they have for reaching other job seekers. They might have interested friends or be part of an informal job seeker support group.
- Design some volunteer roles that can be easily handed over from one volunteer to the next.

## **Recruitment Resources**

### **Workforce Preparation Programs**

#### **WorkForce Centers**

WorkForce Centers help job seekers find employment, help businesses find workers, and help anyone at any stage explore and plan careers. There are 50 WorkForce Centers in Minnesota. They are good partners for involving job seekers as volunteers. Ask about listing volunteer positions with them. A listing of WorkForce Centers in Minnesota can be found at [http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/WorkForce\\_Centers/See\\_All\\_WorkForce\\_Center\\_Locations/index.aspx](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/WorkForce_Centers/See_All_WorkForce_Center_Locations/index.aspx)

#### **Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)**

The Minnesota Family Investment Program, or MFIP, is a state program for low-income families with children. MFIP helps families move to work and focuses on helping families. As part of this program, individuals may have the opportunity work in a volunteer capacity. For further information, contact your local MFIP program and ask to talk with the Supportive Work Coordinator. Locations of MFIP programs are at:

[http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET\\_DYNAMIC\\_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=id\\_008774volu](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=id_008774volu)

#### **Experience Works**

The goal of the Experience Works Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is to provide people age 55+ who meet income guidelines with the training, experience, supportive services and information they need to improve their lives, gain self-sufficiency, realize their goals, obtain permanent employment and meet the needs of a demand-drive workforce.

Based on their employment interests and goals, participants are assigned to qualified nonprofit organizations or government agencies on a part-time basis where they are trained and receive work experience by performing their community service training assignment. While participants receive training, supervision and experience directly from their host agencies, their training wages and fringe

benefits are paid by Experience Works. For a listing of Experience Works programs go to: <http://www.experienceworks.org>.

### **Minnesota Work Study**

The federal and state work study program is open to undergraduates and technical college students. It provides part time on-or off-campus jobs to help students pay the cost of their higher education. Schools award work study as part of financial aid. This can provide an opportunity for a student to have a paid internship with you. Although most work study is done on campus, schools are required to have 10% of federal funds used for off campus work. If it is a Title III school, due to low income population, there is no charge for the student time. If it is not a Title III school, the organization needs to pay 25% of the student's salary. Local academic institutions may be contacted to learn about the deadlines and criteria for applying for this program.

### **Other Resources**

#### **Listing of Metro Area Job Network Clubs**

List developed by Positively Minnesota is at:

[http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/WorkForce\\_Centers/See\\_All\\_WorkForce\\_Center\\_Locations/WFC - Hennepin South/Metro Area Job Networking Groups 3.aspx](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/WorkForce_Centers/See_All_WorkForce_Center_Locations/WFC_-_Hennepin_South/Metro_Area_Job_Networking_Groups_3.aspx)

#### **AmeriCorps**

Each year, AmeriCorps offers 75,000 opportunities for adults of all ages and backgrounds to serve through a network of partnerships with local and national nonprofit groups. AmeriCorps service members gain new skills and experiences in a variety of areas of the nonprofit sector, ranging from literacy issues to hunger and homelessness. In addition, full-time members who complete their service earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of \$5,500 to pay for college, graduate school, or to pay back qualified student loans; members who serve part-time receive a partial Award. Some AmeriCorps members may also receive a modest living allowance during their term of service.

<http://www.americorps.gov/about/ac/index.asp>

#### **Senior Corps**

Senior Corps connects today's 55+ volunteers with the people and organizations that need them most. Senior Corps helps them become mentors, coaches or companions to people in need, or contribute their job skills and expertise to community projects and organizations. Conceived during John F. Kennedy's presidency, Senior Corps currently links more than 500,000 Americans to service opportunities. Senior Corps offers several ways to get involved. Volunteers receive guidance, training and sometimes a modest stipend.

\* The **Foster Grandparent Program** connects volunteers age 55 and over with children and young people with exceptional needs. Volunteers mentor, support, and help some of the most vulnerable children in the United States.

\* The **Senior Companion Program** brings together volunteers age 55 and over with adults in their community who have difficulty with the simple tasks of day-to-day living. Companions help out on a personal level by assisting with shopping and light chores, interacting with doctors, or just making a friendly visit.

\* **RSVP** connects volunteers age 55 and over with service opportunities in their communities that match their skills and availability. From building houses to immunizing children, from enhancing the capacity of non-profit organizations to improving and protecting the environment, RSVP volunteers put their unique talents to work to make a difference.

**Women Venture**

WomenVenture is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to helping women gain economic prosperity. They are national leaders in our proven processes for guiding, training and networking women to achieve their true potential. Provides consulting, coaching, and training to women and men who need effective career management assistance. <http://www.womenventure.org/index.cfm>

**Employment Action Center**

EAC empowers and prepares individuals to achieve their employment potential, while building diversity and actively opposing racism. EAC's goals are to provide comprehensive education, employment and family support services to low income youth, adults and families and to ensure their academic achievement, economic success and family stability.

<http://www.eac-mn.org>

# Interviewing, Placement and Orientation

## The Interview

For job seeking volunteers, the interview is especially important because it offers the opportunity to practice interviewing in a real setting. Emulate a process similar to what they would expect in a paid position. The interview is also critical for learning the volunteers expectations and if they are referred by a workforce center or school, what the expectations are from the referral organization. For the interview:

- Create questions that address their motivation for volunteering, expected length of commitment, skill sets and goals for their service experience.
- Find out clearly their employment goals and what they hope to gain from the volunteer experience. For volunteers with higher end skills, use the interview to explore ideas they have for bring their experience to the needs of your organization.

## Tips from the Field

- Discuss the mutual benefit of the partnership – what they will gain from the organization and what the organization hopes to gain from their involvement as a volunteer.
- Be prepared with a clear list of opportunities that match specific skill sets you are seeking.
- List the tangible benefits received from volunteering, which can include things such as professional development opportunities, ongoing training and enrichment, etc.
- Though the intake process, look out for people that would be better referred to Human Resources for job information. Screening should catch people whose interest in volunteering is purely for personal gain or career advancement. At the interview, ask why they are interested in volunteering to make sure that is what he/she wants to do.

## Be upfront on the potential of job seekers finding paid work.

Organizations that have had good success with job seekers as volunteers report that all through the interview, screening and placement process they address the potential that the volunteer could obtain a position and have a change in availability.

- Before placement, this is discussed with both the volunteer and the person who will be supervising the volunteer.
- The placement needs to fit the reality that the volunteer likely cannot make an ongoing commitment.

Organizations that involve a number of job seekers as volunteers usually offered a selected group of positions to the job seeking volunteer that best meet their availability.

## Streamline Orientation

Look at redesigning orientation to take less staff time as a strategy to more efficiently engage job seekers as volunteers.

- Do group orientation when possible to reduce time spent on individual orientation.
- Use video or online orientation when it makes sense.
- Involve veteran volunteers in the orientation and showing new volunteers how to start.

## Tips from the Field

- In application and screening, be clear about the minimum time commitments.

- Have a policy on the length of time volunteering needed to get a reference letter.
- Check references and have a probationary work period or trial work experience. Develop questions you can ask a reference that will assist you in understanding the volunteer's potential motivation for joining your organization.
- If a workforce center or school referred the volunteer, ask what the organization and volunteer expect to gain. Ask what type of screening they have had for job interests and any training they have received.
- Ask the volunteer if their interest in your organization involves using existing skill sets or trying new opportunities.
- Handle the potential for leaving upfront. If the volunteer is involved in a project, talk about ways it could be flexibly transferred if needed. Ask what their plans would be if they find work before the project is done and discuss this potential situation with the department where the volunteer will be working.
- Look at training for new volunteers as ongoing, not just one time. Develop a training schedule for positions open to job-seeking volunteers that regularly brings in new volunteers to replace those that leave.
- Using lead or mentor volunteers in training job-seeking volunteer will reduce employee time particularly with job-seeking volunteers who might be short term. Though, be careful not to burn out the volunteers doing the training in doing this.

## Supporting Job-Seeking Volunteers

For job-seeking volunteers who are using the volunteer experience to gain increased employability, there are special considerations of support.

- Be prepared to meet requirement of the referral agency. If it is a workforce preparation referral agency, specific requirements will need to be met.
- Check in periodically with the volunteer to compare how their experience matches their expectations.

### Supporting Entry Level Job Seekers

Gaining experience with the “soft skills” – being on time, how to follow instructions, importance to ask questions, how to relate to co-workers, conflict resolution, etc are often important goals for this group. It is important to provide clear guidelines and expectations. One workforce center staff described what she sees as the ideal –“Think of model of a staff person coming alongside the new volunteer to mentor on soft skills and work skills.”

### Supporting Highly Skilled Volunteers

Volunteers in this category need to be empowered to complete projects without a great deal of hands-on management.

- Set up mechanisms that allow for check-in and quality assurance without stifling the volunteer's passion and creative input into a project
- Create a formal work experience that engages their professional skill sets.
- Provide a clear job description, orientation to the organization and mission and who their supervising manager will be.
- Ask the volunteer for his/her ideas. View as a consultant that you can learn from.

### Supporting the Job Search - Resume Tips and References

Although it is not your job to help the job-seeking volunteer find employment, you should be prepared to:

- Provide resources on [how to place volunteer experience on their resume](#). Suggest they go to [www.MAVANetwork.org/jobseekers](http://www.MAVANetwork.org/jobseekers) to find this Tool Kit that includes tips for including volunteer experience on a resume in Attachment A.
- Provide letters of recommendation.
  - Have a policy for when letters of recommendation are provided.
  - Develop a "formula" for a written reference letter, for example:
    - How you know the person - relationship and for how long
    - Work they did for your organization, highlighting the work most closely related to the position he/she is planning to apply for
    - Your observation on the quality of the work
    - Comments on abilities and personal qualities related to the position of potential interest
    - Include several specific examples of work you observed.
    - Close with a wrapping up statement about the person, abilities, etc.

- Have a template for a reference on your computer ready to fill in.  
*See example reference letter in Attachment F.*
- Know the policy of your Human Resources Department or legal council on providing a verbal or written reference for a volunteer. Some organizations will apply the same policy for employee recommendations to volunteers. Other organizations will have more flexibility on what can be given as a reference for a volunteer.

## **Volunteers Seeking Work at Your Organization**

In the course of research for this project, several problematic aspects were raised related to volunteers seeking work at the organization where they volunteer.

1. Aggressive job seekers. We heard reports of occasional volunteers that would annoy staff by being overly aggressive in job hunting at the organization where they were volunteering. While this is not the norm, it does occur. Suggestions for creating a positive understanding about job seeking at the organization.
  - Be transparent from the beginning on how volunteering will factor into possibly being hired.
  - Do not advertise that a volunteer may have an advantage in a hiring process unless it is absolutely true. Assist the volunteer in understanding the steps and criteria for hiring. Be upfront and accurate on the likelihood of a paid position opening up.
  - Be alert for people who arrive at your department that might be more interested in employment than volunteering. Ask what their interests are. Be ready to refer to human resources.
  
2. Giving the volunteer priority for an interview. Another problem raised was that some organizations on-line work application does not have a place to indicate the person has been a volunteer at the organization. This could cause a good volunteer not to get an interview because HR was not aware of the volunteer work. One organization reported that a place was added to the on-line paid work application to indicate if the applicant had volunteered there. Another organization reported that they have a policy that if a volunteer who applies for a paid position has the endorsement of a staff member they will guarantee that volunteer an interview.
  
3. If the volunteer is not hired. Be prepared to handle volunteers who apply for job and might not get the position. In larger organizations, this is often handled by it being a separate department hiring. In a smaller organization, or if the opening is in your department, to create a positive outcome:
  - Be transparent all through the hiring process about the hiring criteria and how volunteering might affect the potential for hire.
  - If possible, offer an interview so the volunteer feels taken seriously and provide feedback on their interview performance to aid them in their job search.
  - If not hired, explain why.

Some volunteers will get discouraged if not hired and may quit. However, many organizations have reported that the volunteer, when treated respectfully, especially if he/she has had a strong affiliation with the organization, will stay volunteering.

## **Saying Good-bye: When the Job Seeking Volunteer Finds a Paid Position**

If the volunteer does obtain a paid position while volunteering it can sometimes work for him/her to continue volunteering if there is the flexibility for the volunteering to be done outside of work hours. However, for many volunteers the demands of a new job make volunteering difficult. Suggestions:

- If possible, offer options to stay involved as a volunteer. It is important not to expect this, but many volunteers will find a way to stay involved.
- Look at the volunteer's potential to be useful to the organization in other ways, such as becoming a donor or a fundraiser who is supportive of the agency. Interns often reappear later in important roles to the organization such as funder, legislative assistance or another key role.
- Realize the value of networking does not stop with gaining a job. He/she may need a job reference in the future and may want to stay involved.

### **Tips from the Field**

- Use access to key events as recognition strategies. Provide opportunities for job-seeking volunteer to join a staff person at meetings or events.
- Look for opportunities for the job seeker to network with other nonprofit organizations, not just your own. Let others know that you have a job-seeking volunteer if they have a position open.
- Be encouraging and help them see how what they are doing is developing skills and experience. Provide timely and constructive feedback as a tool in supporting this goal.
- Keep a file of the recommendation letters you have written to make it quicker when you need to write a recommendation.
- If the volunteer would like to gain more understanding of the field, offer the possibility of informational interviews.
- For a valued job seeking volunteer, offer to set aside a half hour to talk together about his/her interests and ideas that you have on who to contact for informational interviews.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Attachments for Organizations**

## Attachment A: Promising Practices for Engaging Job Seekers as Volunteers

Job seekers are one of the fastest growing new groups of volunteers. For job seekers, volunteering offers opportunities to keep skills current, build new skills, fill in gaps in resumes, obtain a current reference and gain self confidence. While many job seekers fit easily into regular volunteer opportunities, their time availability and motivation can be different enough to require adaptations by organizations to create a “win win” for both the organization and volunteer. Here are some promising practices contributed by volunteer resource managers and workforce preparation organizations from a year-long project of the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration in Central Minnesota.

1. **Assess your organization’s readiness to engage job seekers as volunteers.** Work with the organization’s staff to identify a wide range of volunteer positions and to develop a list of ideas for projects for volunteers that would be advantageous.
2. **Anticipate that all colleagues may not share your enthusiasm to engage job-seeking volunteers. Be prepared to present a case statement of the value the extra volunteer power will bring.** If it fits, tie in how involving job seekers as volunteers fits with the organization mission to serve the community, while also increases resources to accomplish the mission.
3. **Understand the varied motivations of job seekers to volunteer.** Align your program’s design with the expectations of organizations that refer job seekers.
4. **In designing how job seekers are involved as volunteers, build in strategies to address the main challenge of job seekers as volunteers at all steps of the process – their time availability may change suddenly if they find employment.** Have some volunteer position and project descriptions that are time limited and do not require extensive training. Discuss the scenario of what happens when employment is gained in advance with both the volunteer and supervisory staff. Try to provide flexible options so that the volunteer can continue after finding employment, but do not expect this will always work out.
5. **Develop recruitment messages that appeal to job seeking volunteers.** Develop partnerships with workforce centers, schools and other organizations that support job seekers in finding employment.
6. **When interviewing job seekers for volunteering, emulate a process similar to what they would expect in a paid position.** Ask questions on their motivation for volunteering to better understand their expectations and assess if and how you can meet their expectations. If s/he is referred by a work preparation organization, find out their expectations, too.
7. **The “win win” for the organization and volunteer happens when there is truly a good fit of the volunteer in the position.** This starts with good, detailed position descriptions and partners who know who to refer and takes a careful match of the volunteer with the position or project.
8. **Be ready to offer extra support to meet expectations of the volunteer or referring organization,** and be prepared to address special situations that might develop with job seekers such as hopes for employment at your organization.
9. **Be ready to provide recommendations on the work done** and to refer the job seekers to the tools developed by MAVA on how to put the volunteer work on a resume and discuss in an interview.

Thank you to Central Minnesota Advisory Taskforce Members for contributions to these practices and to the Initiative Foundation for funding.

# **Attachment B: MAFEL's Orientation Strategies for Interns**

## **Provide Overview of the Organization**

As interns come into an organization they may only have a vague understanding of the organization and its mission. By providing an overview of the organization, interns become familiar with different aspects of the organization such as structure, chain of command, community impact and budget breakdown.

## **Go In Depth with the Mission**

Coming into the organization, interns may know the mission, but might lack any information beyond the words. By taking time to go over the history of the organization, highlighting key changes and/or growth that the organization has experienced or highlighting information specific to the population or clients served, it will help give the interns a more well rounded understanding of the organization.

## **Review the Position Description**

Take time to review the position description for the internship. Orientation is a good time to go over expectations related to the position, lay out a timeline for the work, set goals and discuss any academic requirements.

## **Policies and Procedures**

Interns will only know as much as you tell them, so be specific about the types of policies and procedures that are important to their success at the organization such as drug/alcohol policies, sexual harassment policies, confidentiality and intellectual property. Look at what kind of information is provided to staff to see what type of information should be included for interns.

## **Set Expectations**

It's important to set expectations with the intern from the beginning to ensure success. Is the start and end time strict or is a flexible schedule appropriate? What is the timeline for the position? Making sure interns know what is expected of them will help make them feel more comfortable at the organization and help give them a better understanding of their role.

## **Organizational Culture**

Every organization will have its own unique culture, so help the interns understand the culture of the organization by introducing them to staff, making sure they feel comfortable in the common spaces, showing them where they can eat lunch and explaining things like company internet policies, dress code, and how general communication works at the organization.

## **Tour of Facility**

Take the intern on a tour of the office. Make sure to include things that are unique to the office. Are there separate eating areas for staff and volunteers? Can interns use the refrigerator? Explaining things like how technology works and showing them their work space can help the intern feel like part of the team. This is also a good time to introduce the interns to key staff at the organization. If staff isn't available to meet each intern in person,

consider having staff bios be part of the intern paperwork so they can learn about each person's role at the organization.

### **Explain Communication Procedures**

Is it appropriate to stop by someone's office or does an intern need to make an appointment first? What is the chain of communication at the organization? What will the structure be like for check-ins or receiving feedback? Explaining how communication works within an organization can help ensure a productive and effective work environment.

### **Paperwork**

Set aside time for the intern to complete any necessary paperwork. This could include demographic information, a background check, waivers or releases or any academic paperwork. This is another opportunity for interns to ask any lingering questions.

### **Upcoming Events**

Make sure to invite interns to any upcoming trainings or events that are happening. It could help give them additional information about the organization and make them feel as if they're a valued member of the organization.

*From the Minnesota Association for Experiential Learning (MAFEL) website at <http://www.macalester.edu/mafel/resource.htm#orient>*

## **Attachment C: Sample Written Description for Volunteer Project**

When a volunteer is responsible for leading project, it is advised to have an agreement for their work on the project. Developing the agreements starts with what the organization would like to have done, but is worked out jointly with the volunteer. Here are some possible items to include in that agreement.

### **Possible items to include in project description:**

Title of project:

Goal of project:

Project time frame:

Name of volunteer project manager:

Person volunteer project manager reports to on staff/Board:

Outcome project will accomplish (including date):

Checkpoints or benchmarks as steps towards final outcome (if applicable):

Members of team working for volunteer project manager (if applicable):

Legal requirements or policies followed (if applicable):

Budget (if applicable):

Responsibility for raising funds (if applicable):

Other resources or duties that organization will provide (i.e. office space, work by staff, etc.):

Documentation provided by project manager at end of project for agency files (if applicable):

From the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration workshop on Engaging Boomers and Future Generations as Volunteers

## **Attachment D: Sample Recruitment Messages**

### **Public Relations Volunteer**

Many elderly in our community live lonely stretches without a warm smile or embrace. A Public Relations intern is needed to help tell their stories. Your work could bring a family could in to 'adopt' one of these senior residents. Use your talents to help others experience some rare quality time together while giving someone's grandma or grandpa a real lift.

### **Human Resources Intern**

Paperwork, interviews, hiring and firing- not for the weak of heart! People Organization's Human Resources team is offering an unpaid internship to the right candidate with a background in human resources management to help with their employee compensation project and needs analysis. Candidates with a legal experience strongly encouraged to apply. Help organize us today!

### **Youth Engagement Coordinator**

Do you remember the mentors in your life? The Rise Up Foundation is seeking a Youth Engagement Coordinator who can help develop and implement a mentorship program for at-risk inner city youth. Experience in developmental psychology, youth development and volunteer management a plus. Step up and make a difference with your talents today.

## Attachment E: Sample Interview Questions

*Interviewer* – frame the interview by summarizing the mission of agency, goal of project/position, value/impact project will have, culture/work style of agency & your own management style. Ask if volunteer has any questions.

1. Based on what I've shared with you so far, what interests you about this organization/project/position?
2. How do you see yourself connecting to our organization's mission of ....?
3. What do you hope to gain from your work with us?
4. Tell me about your skills & experience as it pertains to this organization/project/position. Do you want to use these skills or do something different?
5. What other skills, experience or interests do you have that you would gladly share with our organization if we would make it possible for you to do so?"
6. Tell me about previous volunteer activities you've been involved in – what you enjoyed, wouldn't do again.
7. Tell me which situation you prefer & why:
  - a. working alone or with other people
  - b. time limited projects or on-going assignments
  - c. assignments where you are a leader & decision maker or where you are part of an influential team
8. Insert specific info about one of your agency's programs & ask volunteer what he/she would do to improve it.
9. Describe a situation where you were a leader of other people – what went well, what didn't go well & what would you do differently?
10. What change or impact do you want to have result from your volunteer work?
11. If you were to design your ideal volunteer involvement here, what would it be?
12. What questions do you have of me?

From the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration workshop on Engaging Boomers and Future Generations as Volunteers

## Attachment F: Sample Recommendation Letter

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of Shirley Adams. I hired Shirley for a Volunteer Office Assistant position with the Salvation Army in Tucson, Arizona in November of 2009 and she has been volunteering with us ever since. Shirley has proven herself to be an exceptionally poised and articulate professional, with a level of maturity and wisdom beyond her years.

Shirley is a team player, and a leader, who is driven to solve problems in an ethical manner. She is intelligent and motivated to improve herself and the people and world around her. Shirley is a values driven person who shows empathy and a broad base of knowledge from which she makes decisions. In addition, she is open to hearing others' points of view and reflecting on how new information meshes with what she knows, believes and values.

Shirley has willingly taken on challenges and met them with creativity, attention to quality and a spirit of collaboration. For example, when we organized a large fundraising dinner, Shirley offered assist the Marketing Committee. She served in a staff function for the Committee, monitoring details and seeing the work plan was completed. The Committee members reported that she was fun to work with and very well organized. The Committee exceeded their goal of selling tickets to the dinner.

She is dedicated to human services and creating a community, locally, nationally and world-wide, in which all citizens thrive. She is a dedicated to meeting the needs of the organization and constituents of her place of volunteering. In addition, she dedicates an extraordinary amount of her personal time to causes and opportunities where her social service skills and values can have a positive impact on others.

It is a pleasure and inspiration to work with Shirley and witness her dedication and compassion as she embraces opportunities to improve herself and the world. I believe Shirley will excel in meeting whatever challenges are put before her and will most definitely create a better world for all. Her skill base, passion and values driven motivation will allow her to succeed in any role.

If you need further information, please feel free to contact me at 555.777.2222.

Sincerely,

Tammy Broderick  
Director  
Salvation Army, Tucson Arizona

Information adapted from RSVP- Twin Cities

(<http://www.voamn.org/Services/SeniorServices/RSVPTwinCitiesmetroarea/tabid/3031/Default.aspx>)

## **Attachments for Job-Seeking Volunteers**

### **Attachment A: Volunteer Experience & Your Resume**

Placing volunteer experience on your resume is a way to demonstrate your full range of skills and capabilities, show productivity in employment gaps and to set yourself apart as an involved citizen, willing to take on new experiences and make things happen. Now the tough question is where to place this experience on your resume. *Volunteer work should be presented with the same value, importance and level of achievement as paid work.*

There are three common placement options for volunteer experience on resumes:

- For a traditional chronological style resume, add a section to your resume called "Community Service" or "Community Engagement." Use "Professional Experience," not "Employment History" as a heading.
- For a skills-based style resume, integrate skills gained from volunteer experience with paid work experience, giving ongoing volunteer service the same weight and importance as a paying job.
- For a combined style resume, integrate experience from volunteer and paid work, indicating which experiences are from paid work and which from volunteer work.

General tips for including volunteer experience on a resume:

- It is recommended that you not use "volunteer" as a job title, but work with your volunteer manager in advance to arrive at a title they are comfortable supporting within a reference.
- As with posting your paid work experience, try to include as many similarities between the prospective position and your experience.
- Position volunteer experience on a resume to illustrate your activities while unemployed.
- Select the volunteer experiences most closely related to the position you are applying for. Do not list unrelated volunteer experience.
- If the volunteer position was full-time or ongoing, clearly note that on the resume. Most employers will assume that volunteer work is very part-time, short-lived, and/or sporadic.
- Make sure there are no gaps in the time sequence. If there are, explain them in the cover letter.
- Continuing education and on-the-job training should be placed after high school and college information. The volunteer manager's records should help volunteers recall various training sessions. This information serves to verify that skills presented elsewhere in the resume were learned in a formal setting.

Information adapted from <http://www.energizeinc.com/art/resumes.html>

# Attachment B: Sample Resumes

## Traditional Chronological Style Resume

Shirley Adams  
1234 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85725  
(520) 555-5555

Highlighted text is experiences from volunteering

### OBJECTIVE

Dependable **General Office Worker** with more than 10 years of transferable experience. Proven clerical, customer service, and communication skills in a variety of settings. Upbeat, positive attitude with a history of producing quality results and satisfied customers. Computer literate.

### RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

#### Family Manager

December 2008 – January 2011

Self-employed, Tucson, AZ

- Welcomed customers and visitors in a friendly and courteous manner
- Provided customers/clients with desired information in a timely manner
- Listened, calmed, and assisted customers with concerns
- Established friendly and lasting relationships
- Scheduled appointments and assured timely arrival

#### Event Coordinator

April 1999 – May 2006

Neighborhood Involvement Program, Phoenix, AZ

- Coordinated services such as accommodation and transportation for participants, facilities, catering, signage, displays, special needs requirements, printing and event security
- Monitored event activities to ensure compliance with applicable regulations and laws, satisfaction of participants, and resolution of any problems that arise. Reviewed event bills for accuracy.
- Met with sponsors and organizing committees to plan scope and format of events, to establish and monitor budgets, or to review administrative procedures and event progress

### SERVICE TO COMMUNITY

#### Office Assistant

June

2006 – Present

Salvation Army, Tucson, AZ

- Answered phones and took accurate messages
- Utilized email as an effective communication tool
- Answered phones in a courteous and professional manner
- Located desired information using the Internet

#### Elected Secretary February 2001 – January 2006

Parent Teachers Association (ISD 01) Tucson, AZ

- Demonstrated ability to express ideas in a team environment and influence action
- Prepared reports and created documents using MS Word and WordPerfect
- Set up and maintained paper and electronic filing systems for records and correspondence

#### Group/Activities Leader May 2000 – April 2004

Girl Scouts of America, Phoenix, AZ

- Organized and implemented group activities in an efficient manner
- Created and implemented a system for evaluating satisfaction of activity participants
- Established rapport with diverse individuals and groups

### EDUCATION

GED: Maricopa County Action Program, Phoenix, AZ

Source: Adapted from [Creative Job Search](#), a publication of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

# Skills-Based Style Resume

Highlighted text is experiences from volunteering

**Shirley Adams**  
1234 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Tucson, AZ 85725  
(520) 555-5555

## OBJECTIVE

Dependable **General Office Worker** with more than 10 years of transferable experience. Proven clerical, customer service, and communication skills in a variety of settings. Upbeat, positive attitude with a history of producing quality results and satisfied customers. Computer literate.

## SELECTED SKILLS

### General Office

- Organized and implemented group activities in an efficient manner
- Scheduled appointments and assured timely arrival
- Maintained accurate financial records, and paid all invoices on time
- Answered phones and took accurate messages
- Prepared reports and created documents using MS Word and WordPerfect
- Located desired information using the Internet

### Customer Service

- Welcomed customers and visitors in a friendly and courteous manner
- Provided customers/clients with desired information in a timely manner
- Listened, calmed, and assisted customers with concerns
- Established friendly and lasting relationships

### Communication

- Utilized Internet email as an effective communication tool
- Answered phones in a courteous and professional manner
- Established rapport with diverse individuals and groups
- Demonstrated ability to express ideas in a team environment and influence action

## RELATED EXPERIENCE

Office Assistant	Salvation Army – Tucson, AZ	5 Years
Elected Secretary	Parent Teachers Association (ISD 01) – Tucson, AZ	5 Years
Event Coordinator	Neighborhood Involvement Program – Phoenix, AZ	3 Years
Group/Activities Leader	Girl Scouts of America – Phoenix, AZ	4 Years
Family Manager	Self-employed – Tucson, AZ	7 Years

## EDUCATION

GED: Maricopa County Action Program, Phoenix, AZ

Source: Adapted from [Creative Job Search](#), a publication of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

## Combination Style Resume

Shirley Adams  
1234 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Tucson, AZ 85725  
(520) 555-5555

Highlighted text is experiences from volunteering

### OBJECTIVE

Dependable **Administrative Professional** with more than 10 years of transferable experience. Proven clerical, customer service, and communication skills in a variety of settings. Upbeat, positive attitude with a history of producing quality results and satisfied customers. Computer literate.

### RELATED EXPERIENCE

**Office Assistant**, Volunteer, Salvation Army, Volunteer Position, Tucson, AZ  
June 2006 – Present

- Answered phones and took accurate messages
- Utilized email as an effective communication tool
- Answered phones in a courteous and professional manner
- Located desired information using the Internet

**Family Manager**, Self-employed, Tucson, AZ  
December 2008 – January 2011

- Welcomed customers and visitors in a friendly and courteous manner
- Provided customers/clients with desired information in a timely manner
- Listened, calmed, and assisted customers with concerns
- Established friendly and lasting relationships
- Scheduled appointments and assured timely arrival

**Event Coordinator**, Neighborhood Involvement Program, Phoenix, AZ  
April 1999 – May 2006

- Coordinated services such as accommodation and transportation for participants, facilities, catering, signage, displays, special needs requirements, printing and event security
- Monitored event activities to ensure compliance with applicable regulations and laws, satisfaction of participants, and resolution of any problems that arise
- Met with sponsors and organizing committees to plan scope and format of events, to establish and monitor budgets, or to review administrative procedures and event progress
- Reviewed event bills for accuracy, and approved payment

**Elected Secretary**, Volunteer, Parent Teachers Association (ISD 01), Tucson, AZ  
February 2001 – January 2006

- Demonstrated ability to express ideas in a team environment and influence action
- Prepared reports and created documents using MS Word and WordPerfect
- Set up and maintained paper and electronic filing systems for records, correspondence, and other material

**Group/Activities Leader**, Volunteer, Girl Scouts of America, Phoenix, AZ  
May 2000 – April 2004

- Organized and implemented group activities in an efficient manner
- Created and implemented a system for evaluating satisfaction of activity participants
- Established rapport with diverse individuals and groups

### EDUCATION

GED: Maricopa County Action Program, Phoenix, AZ

Source: Adapted from [Creative Job Search](#), a publication of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

## Attachment C: Tips from the Field for Job-Seeking Volunteers

During work on the project, volunteer resource managers shared these tips for job-seeking volunteers.

1. Ask for permission before putting your volunteer supervisor down as a reference. Keep the supervisor posted when he/she might expect a reference call.
2. Be accurate about the extent of experience received and level of responsibility as a volunteer. Do not overstate your experience as a volunteer.
3. If you would like to seek employment opportunities at the place you are volunteering, ask your supervisor how it is best to proceed. You will create the best impression as a potential employee if you do your volunteer role well and are appropriate, and not overly aggressive in seeking a paid position.
4. Inquire about the organization's policy on how long you need to volunteer to receive a recommendation and their procedure for requesting a recommendation, and for how long after you complete your volunteer work recommendations are given.
5. For a successful volunteer experience and good reference, make sure you are clear what the organization expects from volunteers overall and what the expectations are for your position. Many organizations have a volunteer handbook that outlines expectations for volunteers. Most organizations will have a written position description for your volunteer role that will outline expectations for the role. For most organizations, general expectations for volunteers include:
  - Arrive at the time expected.
  - If you cannot make a volunteer shift, provide as much advance notice as possible.
  - Dress in a manner appropriate for the position and similar to how staff dress for work.
  - If the position has a minimum time commitment, honor it.
  - Ask questions if anything is unclear.

### Final note for job-seeking volunteers

Hats off to you for making the effort to volunteer while you are hunting for a job! This effort should assist you with the job search and aid the organization(s) you volunteer for in meeting their mission. Thank you for volunteering.