



Volunteering and Gaining Workforce Skills Central Minnesota Survey of Volunteer Programs

In April 2011, the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) conducted a survey in Central Minnesota to learn about the experiences of volunteer programs in engaging job seekers as volunteers. Sixty five leaders of volunteers responded to the survey. Key findings:

Most volunteer managers have had volunteers who are job seekers, but they are a small portion of the volunteer core.

- 87% reported currently having or in the past had volunteers who are job seekers
- For 63%, the portion of job seeking volunteers was less than 5% of all volunteers

Few volunteer managers (only 12%) reported that they intentionally recruit job seekers as volunteers. For those that have intentionally recruited job seekers as volunteers, word of mouth was their number one recruitment method. Only 2 respondents had worked with a Workforce Center to recruit job seekers to volunteer.

The most common type of job seeker volunteer was people who have been laid off from a job or students

- 50% reported people who have been laid off from a job as most common type of job seeking volunteer
- 35% reported students as the most common job-seeking volunteer

Most, 71%, offer all their volunteer positions to job seekers as volunteers.

- 19% reported the offer a selection of volunteer positions
- 12% reported they create positions to use the job seekers' skills

When asked what resources would be useful in working with job-seeking volunteers

- 80% wanted suggestions for volunteer positions that could be mutually beneficial to volunteer and organization
- 47% wanted sample wording for recommendation letters for job-seeking volunteers
- 46% wanted a list of common skills that job seekers might want to gain when volunteering
- 44% wanted tips for advising volunteers on how to list volunteer experience on resumes
- 37% wanted a list of places that offer stipends to job seekers while volunteering
- 33% wanted a list places to post recruitment information that job seekers are likely to see
- 33% wanted sample recruitment messages to appeal to job seekers

When asked to indicate the benefits they thought job seekers would receive from volunteering at their organization, respondents indicated the following:

- 90% -experience to list on their resume
- 75% - reference
- 74% - contacts or networks
- 67% - confidence in his/her abilities
- 63% - positive mental attitude
- 63% - obtaining work-related skills
- 44% - opportunity to apply for jobs at the organization
- 16% - advice on job seeking
- 5% - other

Dozens of strategies were shared for effectively engaging job seekers as volunteers. The strategies are included in the Tool Kit for Engaging and Supporting Job Seekers as volunteers that will be available at www.MAVANetwork.org in June 2011.