

So, You Want to be a Volunteer Coordinator

Communication Studies Department

<http://www.mnstate.edu/cmst>

Overview: Managers of volunteers, often called volunteer coordinators, analyze the mission of an organization to find ways for volunteers to help. Often volunteer coordinators work for nonprofit or charitable organizations where volunteer help is essential to the group's ability to leverage scarce resources for their cause.

Volunteer coordinators ask the paid staff to describe the work that needs to be done and then write specific job descriptions for volunteers to fill. Next, they search for a workforce that is willing and able to complete the tasks. Coordinators contact local schools, churches, community groups and businesses, making phone calls and presentations. They find a way to fit volunteers' hopes and schedules with the needs of the organization. When volunteers apply for a job, coordinators interview them to identify their skills, interests, and potential time commitment. Finding the right posts for volunteers takes insight into personalities.

Volunteer coordinators may begin the training process of the volunteers they recruit. Even after the training period, volunteer coordinators are an important resource for volunteers. Showing appreciation is another important responsibility of volunteer coordinators. Volunteer coordinators also have administrative tasks, such as recording hours worked, conducting reference checks, and following up on the actual work done by volunteers

Education and Training: There are generally no established educational requirements for volunteer coordinators, but most have a bachelor's degree. Social work, psychology, communication, and human resource management are common degree majors for these professionals. Education and communication classes are particularly useful.

Other Qualifications: Volunteer coordinators need to be flexible. They often have to abandon their planned work to help volunteers solve unexpected problems. At the same time, coordinators need to be organized so they can keep the program running smoothly. Experience with technology is another asset. Computer proficiency is becoming increasingly important as more managers create database to keep track of volunteers.

Job Outlook: Employment of volunteer coordinators is expected to grow as organizations struggle to raise funds in an era of economic downturn.

For More Information: <http://www.bls.gov/oco>

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Quarterly