

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA MORRIS

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# *Center for Small Towns*



*"BELIEVING IN A BRIGHT, PROSPEROUS  
FUTURE FOR SMALL COMMUNITIES"*

## **Student Employee Orientation** A Guide for Students Working With Community Organizations

Informational Handout

[www.centerforsmalltowns.org](http://www.centerforsmalltowns.org)

# **The Center for Small Towns**

The Center for Small Towns (CST) is a community outreach program housed at the University of Minnesota, Morris (UMM) that serves as a point-of-entry to the resources of the University of Minnesota. Small towns, local units of government, K-12 schools, non-profit organizations, and other University units are able to utilize CST's resources as they work on rural issues or make contributions to rural society. CST's mission is to focus the University's attention and marshal its resources toward assisting Minnesota's small towns with locally identified issues by creating applied learning opportunities for faculty and students.

For more information about CST and its other programs, please give us a call or visit our webpage at <http://www.centerforsmalltowns.org>

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# **I. Introduction**

## **Welcome to the Center for Small Towns!**

This orientation packet has been designed to help you become better acquainted to the benefits and challenges of working with a community organization. It is designed to provide you with what you need to know in order to help make the experience a positive one for yourself and the organization you are working for.

There are many ways for students to be involved in community projects:

- Student employment
- Volunteerism
- Internships
- Directed studies
- Service learning through course offerings: contact Argie Manolis, the Service Learning Coordinator, at (320) 589- 6273 for course offerings

**This information will primarily cover your roles and responsibilities as a student employee working through the Center for Small Towns.**

## **II. Roles and Responsibilities**

**The CST student employment process involves three primary participants:**

1. UMM Undergraduate Student(s)
2. A Community Supervisor and
3. The CST's Student Involvement Coordinator

**The responsibilities of the UMM student(s) include:**

- Complete orientation with the SI Coordinator;
- Complete all paperwork required for UMM student employment;
- Make sure you clearly understand the unit procedures and expectations about issues such as scheduling, timecards, dress codes, and personal phone.
- Work diligently on the specific project;
- Maintain regular communication with the Community Supervisor and the Student Involvement Coordinator; report any irregularities or difficulties;
- Submit formal documentation to the Student Involvement Coordinator when requested;
- Attend all CST and community organization training sessions; and
- Complete and turn in bi-weekly time sheets in a timely manner to the Community Supervisor for a signature and then the Student Involvement Coordinator.

**The responsibilities of the Community Supervisor include:**

- Provide the needed information, guidance, support, and oversight to student employees to successfully complete the project;
- Provide the training and supervision necessary for success;
- Assign tasks and responsibilities to the student, and establish/follow fair work rules and standards of performance;
- Become the person that student employees report progress and activities to;
- Verify the accuracy of, and sign student time sheets in a timely manner; and
- Make sure students are performing work as assigned.

**The responsibilities of the Student Involvement Coordinator include:**

- Recruit students and coordinate the hiring process;
- Set up payroll documents;
- Act as a liaison between the community organization and the student employee(s);
- Provide an open door to students for questions and support;
- Request reflection papers and mid point assessments;
- Organize and facilitate the student trainings;
- Process timesheets for Financial Aid; and
- Monitor student earnings so that earnings do not exceed the student's contract.

**Note that failure or unwillingness to fulfill the requirements of the position will result in the termination of your contract. If you experience difficulties with your contract, contact the Student Involvement Coordinator to find out how you can begin to fix the problem. We can only help if we know what is going on!**

## **III. Adjusting to a Work Environment**

For many of you, this may be your first paid work experience. In addition to the orientation that every new employee needs, be sure to ask questions about anything you don't understand.

### **The workplace**

Your supervisor has made many preparations for your arrival that may include:

- Workspace;
- A place to store personal belongings;
- Mailbox or “in” box;
- Necessary equipment, such as a phone or computer access;
- Copies of unit handbooks, work procedures, manuals, etc.; and
- An overview of the mission of the University, the unit, and your position. The community supervisor will take time to explain their unit’s mission and how your responsibilities relate to it.

### **Worksite orientation**

When you arrive you will be provided with a tour of the physical workplace as well as introduce you to other staff members in the unit. This will help you understand where things are – from the nearest vending machines to the office photocopier. Be certain you are clear about safety considerations including exits and procedures in emergency situations.

### **Your major focus is school**

It is important to remember that your most important focus as a student is your commitment to academic study. Your job should not interfere with what you need to do for school. Employers are responsible for recognizing that school is the most important priority and should make an effort to be flexible with needed changes in schedule. Along with this, you as an employee should make every effort to be flexible in working hours including evenings or weekends to make up for hours you miss for school. Make an impression, and be willing to complete more routine tasks or work on projects that other staff members may not have time to accomplish.

### **Office 101**

In addition to working with your community organization, there are many pieces of "office etiquette" that you should be aware of as you interact with the other people in your area.

- Show up when you are scheduled to work. If you cannot make it to work, contact your supervisor by phone or e-mail so they know not to expect you.
- Turn off your cell phone while you're at work.
- Check with your supervisor to find out their policy on personal printing.
- Keep personal internet use to a minimum, focus on your work.
- Check with your supervisor about the use of iPods and other personal music devices -- if they are ok, at least keep the volume at a level where you can hear other people if they need to talk to you.

## **IV. Student Reports for CST**

CST strives to create opportunities that are meaningful and worthwhile for students and communities. In order to do this, we need your feedback. Throughout the semester, you will be asked to write short essays during your scheduled work hours. These essays are designed to help you reflect on your experiences and connect them to your academic interests. These will also give our staff an idea of how the project is going, and ways that we can improve our program for the future.

Essentially, the reflection papers should be an indication of what you expect to learn from your position and about the community you will be working with. You will be allotted work time to write these reflection pieces.

Both student employees and community supervisors are required to complete feedback surveys at midterm and at the end of the semester. The Student Involvement Coordinator will send these surveys to both of you along with deadlines for completion. If there is the need, the Community Supervisor, Student Involvement Coordinator, and the student employee will meet to assess the development and progression of the project.

Additionally, all CST student employees are asked to attend 1-2 mandatory training sessions each the semester. These sessions provide helpful strategies in completing projects and communicating with other people. They are also a great opportunity to get to know other student employees. We always have free food as an added benefit!

## V. Frequently Asked Questions

### Question: What are “community organizations” anyway?

**Answer:** Community organizations are local units of government or non-profit organizations interested in bettering their community.

### Question: Where will I work?

**Answer:** CST student employees work either at the CST office on-campus or at a community site with the Community Supervisor, depending on the project. For example, one project may require a student to travel once every two weeks to a community outside of Morris, but the rest of the student’s hours will be worked at the CST office. Travel logistics vary with each position.

### Question: How will I get to an off-campus job site?

**Answer:** Travel costs are factored into the project’s budget when hiring a student. Accommodations will be arranged between the Community Organization, CST, and the student.

### Question: What hours will I work?

**Answer:** Generally, there is a limit of 10 hours of work each week during the fall and spring semesters. If you need to make up hours missed please talk with the Student Involvement Coordinator to schedule extra time. Students can work up to 40 hours each week during winter break and during the summer.

### Question: How much do I get paid for my work?

**Answer:** UMM student employees receive wages of \$7.10 -- \$9.50 an hour based on experience.

Pay Rate	Hours/Week	Weeks	Total Contract
\$7.10	10 hours	15 weeks	\$1,065
\$7.50	10 hours	15 weeks	\$1,125
\$8.00	10 hours	15 weeks	\$1,200
\$9.00	10 hours	15 weeks	\$1,350 (Research)
\$9.50	10 hours	15 weeks	\$1,425 (Research)

### Question: Where do I turn in timesheets?

**Answer:** Timesheets first need to be completed and signed by you and your Community Supervisor (if working outside of the CST office). The timesheets are then turned in to the Student Involvement Coordinator in the yellow folder located in the student work area at the Center. The deadline to turn in timesheets is noon on Monday of a pay week. If you turn your time sheet after this deadline, you will not receive your check until the following pay period.

### Question: Where do I pick up my paycheck?

**Answer:** Paychecks can be picked up at the Financial Aid Office on Wednesday, the week after timesheets are due. Be sure to talk to Financial Aid if you want your check to be directly deposited into your checking or savings account.

**Question: Whom do I talk to if I am having difficulty completing project activities or an issue with my Community Supervisor?**

**Answer:** It is essential that issues be addressed promptly to ensure the success of the project. If you are having difficulty getting along with your Supervisor, first try to work with your Supervisor to resolve the issue. However, if this does not solve the problem, contact the Student Involvement Coordinator. If necessary, the Student Involvement Coordinator can set up a meeting with all parties involved to discuss and address the issues.

## **VI. Tips for Students**

- Communication is key to making your project successful! Do not hesitate to ask questions or ask for help – all those involved want this project to be successful.
- Make sure you understand why the community organization needs the research or project and how they intend to use the results. Also, learn about the community and the organization's relationship with it. Understanding why the project is important to others will help you shape your work.
- Make sure roles and expectations are clearly defined before starting the project. Help the Student Involvement Coordinator and Community Supervisor establish an activity timeline for what you can accomplish. Find out exactly what the community organization wants from you.
- Plan ahead and manage your time well. Work with your Community Supervisor to map out a realistic timeline for your work and stick with it as closely as possible.
- Self-motivation and working independently are part of the job; be sure to keep in contact with your Community Supervisor and the Student Involvement Coordinator so everyone stays on the same page.
- This is a great opportunity to apply academic work to the real world.
- Try to be flexible. Don't be surprised if the goals of the project need adjusting as the work proceeds. It is always important to keep both an open mind and an open line of communication.