Community Service Work-Study Guide for Employers

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Overview of Community Service Work-Study Program

Federal Work-Study (FWS) is a form of federal financial aid in which students earn their award through part-time employment. The Community Service FWS program allows FWS-eligible students to earn their awards while working in positions where they are exposed to important social and community issues, learn valuable job skills, and help local organizations better serve the community.

Community Service FWS employment is restricted to local nonprofit, governmental, and community-based organizations working for the public good. On-campus positions qualify only if the service they provide is publicized to the wider community and members of the community use the service.

No Community Service FWS employer may discriminate on the basis of income or charge fees for services without provisions for those less able to pay.

FWS students earn their awards through an hourly wage associated with the FWS job. Students can work until they have either exhausted their award or the academic semester/year ends.

The agency is responsible for a portion of the student’s wages (usually 25%), with the remaining portion paid by the Federal Work-Study fund. The student receives a full paycheck from OSU and the agency receives a bill for its portion of wages from OSU Grants and Contracts Financial Administration.

Definition of Community Service

The U.S. Department of Education (34 CFR 675.2) defines community service as “services which are identified by an institution of higher education, through formal or informal consultation with local nonprofit, governmental, and community-based organizations, as designed to improve the quality of life for community residents (particularly low-income individuals) or to solve particular problems related to their needs.”

In order to be considered community service, the job has to be in an area that is open, accessible, and used by the community at large including:

- Such fields as health care, child care, literacy training, education (including tutorial services), welfare, social services, transportation, housing and neighborhood improvement, public safety, emergency preparedness and response, crime prevention and control, recreation, rural development, and community improvement.
- Work in service opportunities or youth corps defined in section 101 of the National and Community Services Act of 1990 and services in the agencies, institutions and activities designated in section 124(a) of the National and Community Services Act of 1990 (applicable sections are listed in Appendix A of this Guide).
- Support services to students with disabilities.
- Activities in which a student serves as a mentor for such purposes as tutoring, supporting educational and recreational activities, or counseling (including career counseling).
Community Service Job Criteria
While OSU's Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid recognizes the value of having students provide direct services to the community, student jobs sometime involve providing support services for an organization.

- Work performed in a supportive role is acceptable as long as it does not completely shield students from the mission of the organization, and it engenders in them a sense of social responsibility.
- Work is not considered “in the public interest” or “for the public good” for purposes of community service Federal Work-Study if it primarily benefits the members of an organization with membership limits, it involves any partisan or nonpartisan political activity, or if a student’s political support or party affiliation is taken into account in hiring.
- Although it is not a requirement that community service jobs serve only low-income individuals, they should place a priority on the human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs of the community residents.
- No agency/organization may discriminate on the basis of income or charge fees for services without provisions for those less able to pay.

Valid Work Duties
Community Service FWS students can perform a wide range of duties; however, those duties must match those described in the initial Job Request Form for that position. FWS students may not perform duties which are political or religious in nature.

Community Service FWS students employed as tutors must primarily work with children. They may do clerical activities at public schools (grading papers, making copies, etc.), but they must be classified as administrative support, not tutors, and have separate job descriptions.

The duties in the job description must meet any ONE of the following criteria:

- Does the job involve work for an agency that provides support services to students, or others, with disabilities?
- Does the agency provide services designed to improve the quality of life for community residents, particularly low-income individuals?
- Does the actual work performed by the student involve serving as a mentor for such purposes as tutoring; supporting educational and recreational activities; or counseling, including career counseling?
FWS Employment Conditions and Limitations:
All FWS work, whether on-campus or off-campus, has certain conditions and limitations:

- The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as amended, prohibits employers from accepting voluntary services from any paid employee. Any student employed under FWS must be paid for all hours worked.
- FWS employment must not displace employees (including those on strike) or impair existing service contracts. Replacing a full-time employee whose position was eliminated (for any reason) with a student employee paid with FWS funds is prohibited. Replacement is interpreted as displacement.
- FWS positions must not involve constructing, operating, or maintaining any part of a building used for religious worship or sectarian instruction.
- Neither a school nor an outside employer that has an agreement with the school to hire FWS students may solicit, accept, or permit the soliciting of any fee, commission, contribution, or gift as a condition for a student’s FWS employment. However, a student may pay union dues to an employer if they are a condition of employment and if the employer’s non-FWS employees must also pay dues.

Pay Rates
FWS employers must pay students at least the federal minimum wage in effect at the time of employment.

Rate of pay must be appropriate and reasonable according to the type of work performed, the geographic region, the employee’s proficiency and any applicable federal, state, or local law including state or locally established minimum wage rates.

In determining an appropriate rate, the employer must consider:
- The skills needed to perform the job;
- How much persons with those skills are paid in the local area for doing the same type of job;
- Rates normally paid to similar non-FWS employees;
- Any applicable federal, state, or local laws that require a specific wage rate.
- A student’s financial need places a limit on the total permissible FWS earnings but has no bearing on his or her wage rate.
  - It is not acceptable to base the wage rate on need or any other factor not related to the student’s skills or job description.
  - If a student’s skill level depends on his or her academic advancement, the employee may be paid on that basis.
  - However, in most cases, students performing jobs comparable to those of other employees should be paid comparable wages, whether the other employees are students at different class levels or regular employees.
Work Schedules
Employers and FWS students are free to set work schedules which are beneficial to both; however, students may not schedule work hours during OSU classes in which they are enrolled. Students normally work 12-18 hours per week. When determining schedules, employers should know that research shows that working more than 20 hours per week can have a negative affect on students who are enrolled full-time.

Federal Work-Study award is intended to provide regular income for students throughout the year so care should be taken to plan the work schedule so the student does not earn all of the award too early in the semester/year.

To determine the number of hours per week a student could work, use the following formulas:

\[
\frac{\text{Total FWS Award (Fall & Spring)}}{\text{Hourly Pay Rate}} = \text{Total Work Hours}
\]

\[
\frac{\text{Total Work Hours}}{32 \text{ weeks}^*} = \text{Work Hours per Week}
\]

* A typical semester is 16 weeks in length so 32 weeks would be total weeks for the award year. This number does not include breaks (semester break or spring break). If the student plans to work during the breaks, add those to the total number of weeks in the formula.

Payroll
FWS Students are paid through the normal OSU payroll system. Pay periods are biweekly (two weeks in a period) and start on Sunday at 12:00 a.m. and end on Saturday at 11:59 p.m. Employees are paid two weeks after the end of pay period. FWS students enter their time, on a daily basis, via the OSU student portal at my.okstate.edu.

Employers are responsible for verifying the accuracy of the time submitted for FWS students working at their organizations. To verify time submitted, the employer sends an email with the total hours worked to the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid (see contact information for email addresses). Employers who wish to track hours worked on a spreadsheet can email the spreadsheet (the student still has to enter time into the student portal).

OSU must keep separate records for hours paid for work as Math Tutor, Reading Tutor, or Off-Campus Agency. It is very important to our payroll office that only one type be indicated per online timesheet. Students employed in multiple positions will see a drop-down menu when they go to my.okstate.edu to enter time. If an employee tutors in both math and reading, he or she will need to record hours separately and submit both timesheets for that pay period.

Time Entry and Verification Deadlines:

- Students must submit their timesheets online by 9:00 am on the Monday after the pay period ends. At 9:00, OSU Payroll locks the online timesheet. At that point, a paper timesheet must be submitted to the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid, and the student will be paid in the next pay cycle (two weeks later than if submitted on time).
- Employers must provide verification of time worked by 10:00 a.m. on the Monday after the pay period ends.
- The Time Sheet Deadlines for each semester are available at: http://financialaid.okstate.edu/aid/work-study/info-employer
Enrolling as an Off-Campus Community Service FWS Employer
To become an active employer, an organization must submit the documents listed below. For your convenience these forms, as well as other relevant forms, can be found online at http://financialaid.okstate.edu/aid/work-study/info-employers:

- **Off-Campus Agreement:** Details the rights and responsibilities of both the employer and OSU (once every five years, or less if there is a change in agency organization or mission).

- **Off-Campus Payment Plan:** Details which portion, if any, the employer must contribute toward the FWS student’s salary (once every five years, or less if there is a change in agency organization or mission).

- **Job Request Form:** Details the job description, qualifications, number of positions available, and hourly wage (submitted each year).

Interview and Hiring Process
Once a Job Request Form has been submitted, the job will be posted on the OSU Career Services website at www.hireosugrads.com. Employers must submit the Job Request Form to the OSU Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid even if they post the job themselves on the Career Services website. Each job listing will include contact information for the hiring agency. With the exception of reading and math tutors, students are to contact the employer directly to set up an interview.

Employers should follow their normal interview process to determine which student (or students) best fit their needs. When a student has been hired, the employer should complete parts I and II of the **Off-Campus Agency Authorization to Hire** form found at http://financialaid.okstate.edu/aid/work-study/info-employers. The student should then contact the OSU Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid to schedule an appointment to complete the necessary payroll forms.

Authorization to Hire Form and Earliest Authorized Start Date
The **Authorization to Hire Form** verifies that the agency wants to hire the student through the Community Service FWS program. After the student completes required OSU Payroll paperwork and the student’s FWS award amount has been confirmed, the Community Service FWS staff will complete and sign the bottom portion of the form and email or fax it to the agency. The form will include the student’s FWS award amount and the earliest authorized start date of work.

Just as agencies must complete the federal I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification process required by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) on all new employees, OSU must complete the process for new Community Service FWS students. By law, this must be completed before the employee starts work or the USCIS can levy a substantial fine on OSU.

Employers **must not** allow the student to begin working until they can produce the completed **Authorization to Hire Form** signed by the Community Service FWS staff. If a student works for the agency before the date authorized by OSU, the agency will be responsible for 100% of the student’s wages for those hours.
Monitoring Award Balances
Employers should monitor the award balances of their FWS students. If a FWS student works in excess of their total award, the employer may be responsible for the excess wages.

OSU will notify both the student and the employer when a student has $800 or less left to earn. Since students are paid two weeks after the end of the pay period, the balances available to OSU Community Service FWS staff will be two weeks behind information the student and agency would have.

Working During OSU Holidays
FWS Students may work over Fall Break, Winter Break*, and Spring Break; however, there is no Summer FWS employment. Students who work during a holiday may temporarily increase their normal hours but they still may not exceed 40 hours per week. Remember that hours worked during holidays counts as earnings and may require an adjustment to the student’s work schedule during non-holiday periods.

*A student may work during the time between the fall and spring semesters if:
- The student has remaining FWS eligibility; and,
- The student is meeting the OSU Scholarships and Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy at the end of the fall semester; and,
- The student is enrolled in classes for the spring semester.

Termination/Disciplinary Action
FWS students employed off-campus are expected to conduct themselves professionally. FWS students will dress and act appropriately according to the policies and procedures of the Employer for whom they work. If a FWS student is not performing satisfactorily, the employer has the right to terminate the student’s employment with the agency. If this occurs, the employer should immediately notify the OSU Community Service FWS staff of the action and the student’s last date of employment.

End of the Academic Year
FWS students must stop working on or before the last day of the spring semester (Friday of Finals Week). Receipt of FWS in one year does not guarantee receipt of it the next year. Students are awarded on a first come-first served basis according with priority to those who complete the financial aid application process earliest.

Employers who want to re-hire eligible students for the following year must submit a new Authorization to Hire Form to the Community Service FWS staff. As with initial hires, employers should not allow FWS student re-hires to begin working until they receive the Authorization to Hire Form, with the earliest authorized start date indicated, back from the Community Service FWS staff.
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can a FWS student continue to work after their award has been exhausted?
   Yes but not on Federal Work-Study. Employers must hire them and pay 100% of their salary.
   They will be considered employees of the organization, not FWS employees.

Q: Can a FWS student work over the summer?
   FWS students can continue to work for an Employer over the summer but not on Federal
   Work-Study. They must work in the capacity of an employee of that organization. When the
   fall semester begins they can convert back to a FWS employee if they have a FWS award.

Q: When are FWS Job Requests due?
   There is no deadline for FWS job requests. However, the applicant pool is reduced
   considerably throughout the summer and as the year progresses. Therefore, it is to the
   advantage of the employer to have their Job Request Form in as early as possible.
   Community Service FWS staff will contact employers during the summer to solicit job
   requests.

Q: Does the Community Service FWS staff check a student's references?
   No. Students who are eligible to be employed under the FWS program simply set up an
   interview with employer after finding a job listing in which they are interested. You are not
   obligated to hire any FWS student who makes contact with you.
Appendix A:

Applicable Sections of the National and Community Service Act of 1990:

Section 101 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 defines the terms “service opportunity” and “youth corps program” as follows:

- A service opportunity is a program or project that enables students to perform meaningful and constructive service in agencies, institutions, and situations where the application of human talent and dedication may help to meet human, educational, linguistic, and environmental community needs, especially those relating to poverty.
- A youth corps program is a program, such as a conservation corps or youth service program, that offers work with visible community benefits, in a natural resource of human service setting and that gives participants a mix of work experience, basic and life skills, education, training and support services.

Section 124(a) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 provides the following list of agencies, institutions, and activities that include:

- State, local, and regional government agencies
- Nursing homes, hospices, senior centers, hospitals, local libraries, parks, recreational facilities, child and adult daycare centers, programs serving individual with disabilities, and schools
- Law enforcement agencies and penal and probation systems
- Private nonprofit organizations that primarily focus on social service such as community action agencies
- Activities that focus on the rehabilitation or improvement of public facilities, neighborhood improvements, literacy training that benefits educationally disadvantaged individuals, weatherization of and basic repairs to low-income housing, including housing occupied by older adults, energy conservation (including solar energy techniques), removal of architectural barriers to access by individuals with disabilities to public facilities, activities that focus on drug and alcohol abuse education, prevention, and treatment; and conservation, maintenance or restoration of natural resources on publicly held lands
- Any other nonpartisan civic activities and services that the commission determines to be of a substantial social benefit in meeting unmet human, educational, or environmental needs (particularly needs related to poverty) in the community.
- Conservation, rehabilitation, and the improvement of wildlife habitat, rangelands, parks and recreation areas
- Urban and rural revitalization, historical and site preservation and reforestation of both urban and rural areas
- Fish culture, wildlife habitat maintenance and improvement, and other fishery assistance
- Road and trail maintenance and improvement
- Erosion, flood, drought, and storm damage assistance and controls
- Stream, lake, waterfront harbor, and port improvement
- Wetlands protection and pollution control
- Insect, disease, rodent and fire prevention and control
- Improvement of abandoned railroad beds and rights-of-way
- Energy conservation projects, renewable resource enhancement and recovery of biomass
- Reclamation and improvement of strip-mined land
- Forestry, nursery and cultural operations
- Making public facilities accessible to individual with disabilities.
Appendix B:
OSU Community Service FWS Contact Information

OSU Scholarships and Financial Aid Office Contact Information:
OSU Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid
119 Student Union
Stillwater, OK 74078
FAX: 405-744-6438
Phone: 405-744-6604
finaid@okstate.edu

Community Service Program Information and Initial Student Hiring:
• Danielle Cushing, Community Service FWS Graduate Assistant
  405-744-7446
  osfasa4@okstate.edu

• Margaret Betts, Assistant Director for Special Programs
  405-744-6807
  margaret.betts@okstate.edu

Employee Time Confirmation:
Please include all of the following when emailing confirmation:

• Luann Bowman, Senior Financial Assistant
  405-744-8728
  luann.bowman@okstate.edu

• Lori Boyd, Assistant Director for Fiscal Operations
  405-744-8730
  lori.boyd@okstate.edu

• Danielle Cushing, Community Service FWS Graduate Assistant
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• Margaret Betts, Assistant Director for Special Programs
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