

# UTM CAREER CENTRE TIPSHEETS:

Volunteering



## **VOLUNTEERING**

Volunteering continues to be an important way to contribute to society, develop practical skills and do some career exploration. There are many challenges in volunteering during a pandemic including safety at in-person volunteer opportunities and the transition of in person services to on-line services. We encourage you to consider those opportunities which best meet your personal goals in a safe and supportive environment.

Understanding your skills and being able to articulate your skill set is an essential component of any job search or career exploration. Employers want to see skills on your resume and in your covering letter; you also make employment decisions based on the skills you have acquired or want to acquire. In today's competitive labour market it can be challenging to develop marketable skills and gain experience. However, upon closer examination there are many opportunities.

The primary benefits of volunteering are as follows:

1. **Career Exploration:** Volunteering affords an opportunity to investigate a career area and discover the skills necessary for success in that field. This is a chance to answer questions such as "Is this what I want to do? And do I fit in here?" Volunteering offers a hands-on approach to self-assessment and is an easy way to explore career choices while in university or prior to looking for employment in a new field.
2. **Develop Skills and Gain Experience:** How do I get a job without experience and experience without a job? Easy, volunteer! Most volunteer positions offer the same opportunity to develop skills as paid positions. You can develop the communication, interpersonal, organizational, problem solving, and computer skills, among countless others, that employers are looking for. For many positions and careers, the only way to get started is through volunteer work.
3. **Develop and Cultivate Contacts:** The majority of all work opportunities are never advertised. With this in mind, it is clear that you must either be in the right place at the right time or have contacts who can alert you to openings before they are advertised. In addition to actual openings, contacts can also provide the critical information regarding career areas that allow for informed and intelligent career choices. An important way to develop contacts while making a valuable contribution to an organization is by volunteering.
4. **Participate in Your Community:** In these busy times, it is easy to neglect the community in which we live. Volunteering affords us the opportunity to give back to the organizations that have supported us or that have selflessly given to others. Through this practice we can strengthen both our community and ourselves. That accomplishment can provide an important sense of satisfaction and allow us to balance personal and professional needs.

## WHERE CAN I FIND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES?

The short answer is everywhere, but a few good places to start looking are:

- You can access volunteer postings on-line through CLNx: <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/career-centre-online> or in person at the Career' Centre.
- You can access on-line volunteering opportunities by going to our **COVID 19** document which provides links to many organizations in need of on-line volunteers <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/covid-19-employment-tips-and-resources>.
- **The UTM Career Centre Volunteer Resources Section:** This section is filled with a wide variety of current opportunities. The opportunities have been conveniently categorized to allow you to target the area that best fits your skill and career development needs.
- **Get Experience Fair:** Attend the Get Experience Fair at UTM in September. Full details are available at <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/get-experience-fair>
- **The Career Centre Library:** Many of the same resources that provide links to the labour market can provide the links you need to find a volunteer opportunity in your area of interest. You can approach an organization directly and inquire about the availability of a volunteer opportunity. It may be possible with some organizations to design your own position. As with any employment search, the most important factor is research and preparation.
- Try some of the resources listed below to give you information on some of the opportunities available within their community:
  - Peel Region Volunteer Services: <https://www.peelregion.ca/volunteers/>
  - Canadian professional associations: <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/professional-associations>, and click on “Comprehensive listing of Canadian professional associations”)
  - The Canadian Environmental Directory <https://earthdirectory.net/canada>. You can also access ECO Portal for a range of environmental groups and organizations in Canada. <http://www.planetfriendly.net/ecoportals.html>
  - Charity Village: <http://www.charityvillage.com>
  - United Nations Association of Canada: <http://unac.org/>

## **OVERSEAS VOLUNTEER INFORMATION:**

We've all seen the reports, not only about the health implications of COVID-19, but also the effect on international travel. It is important to be aware of any travelling and safety restrictions before you consider volunteering abroad. Here are some resources:

**UTM Career Centre** has a number of relevant resources:

- *What in the World is Going On? A guide for Canadians wishing to work, volunteer, or study in other countries*
- *The Canadian Guide to Working and Living Overseas*
- *Volunteer Vacations*
- *GoinGlobal found on the Career Learning Network under the Resources tab <https://cln.utoronto.ca/home.htm>*

**The UTM International Education Centre** can help in locating international volunteer opportunities and provide invaluable support in making the necessary arrangements for living abroad, call them at 905.569.4716 or visit their website:

<http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/international>

### **Additional Volunteer Centres:**

**Volunteer MBC (Mississauga, Brampton, Caledon)** <http://www.volunteermbc.org>

**Volunteer Centre of Burlington-Oakville**  
<http://volunteerhalton.ca/vhome>

**City of Toronto**  
<http://www.volunteertoronto.ca>

### **A FEW IMPORTANT TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND...**

- Set clear and realistic goals for your volunteer experiences. Remember to reflect on what you are learning to ensure that this experience is meeting your goals.
- The preparation and research that you undertake is crucial. Without adequate information, you are unlikely to find what you are looking for.
- Tailor your volunteer position to your specific needs and wants.
- Take your commitment seriously. The organization is relying on you to show up for all of your shifts for the complete time you've agreed to volunteer.

Please note that this information is subject to change. It is best to refer to the original sources for the most up to date information. (Updated May 2020)