



Community Engagement & Volunteer Center

Federal Work Study (FWS) Overview and FAQ

Thank you for your interest in partnering with the Federal Work Study program (FWS) administered by the Community Engagement & Volunteer Center (CEVC) at JMU, which matches student employees with schools and community organizations based on compatibility of interests, skills, schedules, and transportation options. Students participating in this program are paid for their time working with partner organizations by JMU through the students' financial aid packages. Partner organizations do not pay a fee but are required to provide ongoing supervision and meet program expectations. The program is designed to increase the capacity of community organizations and schools while providing students with meaningful work and learning experiences.

Student Requirements:

- Be enrolled as a student at JMU at least part-time (6 credits for undergraduates, 5 for graduate students)
- Be awarded Federal Work Study funds in the financial aid package (must be verified every semester)
- Participate in FWS orientation and regular workshops (coordinated by CEVC staff)
- Complete online time sheets after each shift and submit completed timesheets each pay period (approximately every 2 weeks)
- Commit to a regular schedule of an average 6-8 hours weekly (exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis)
- Maintain a position during [JMU's academic year](#) (some exceptions made for semester-long positions)

Community Partner Requirements:

- Submit a completed application online (released via email in May)
- Sign the Community Partner Agreement (please see the CEVC website for a copy of the [Agreement](#))
- Agree to meet with students weekly to check in on tasks and responsibilities – we strongly recommend establishing a consistent meeting day / time at the beginning of your partnership.
- Develop a detailed position description along with necessary and desired skills
- Participate in FWS Supervisor Training at the beginning of the fall semester (August)
- Be responsive to communications - we recommend responding within 48 hours (especially during hiring so students can begin background checks/other required forms/etc.)
- Conduct an initial meeting (in-person/phone/zoom) with assigned student to ensure compatibility of schedule and skills.
- Provide on-site orientation and training
- Oversee and provide regular feedback on performance
- Review and confirm student timesheets twice each month; identify at least one proxy to approve timesheets and provide supervision when the primary supervisor is out of the office.
- Maintain safe working conditions (please refer to the Community Partner Agreement for more details)
- Cover any fees associated with required checks (i.e., background checks, TB testing)
- Inform CEVC of any concerns about the FWS student's performance or well-being if an initial intervention of verbal feedback did not result in improvement.

Timeline:

When determining what projects and roles would be most beneficial for FWS students to support, please remember that students typically average 6 to 8 hours of work per week during JMU's academic year (see [JMU calendar here](#)). Additionally, students' skills and availability vary, so some specific skillsets may be difficult to accommodate.

May 6	CEVC emails request for Community Partner FWS Applications
May 31	Deadline to Submit FWS Application for 24-25 academic year
June 14	CEVC posts FWS positions for JMU students to view and apply
June 17 – July 19	CEVC interviews, selects, and hires students. CEVC matches selected students with Community Partners based on student interests, skills, class schedule, and transportation options, and the requirements, duties, and interests listed by the Community Partner in their application.
By August 15	CEVC office will email Community Partners to let them know status of student placements
Wednesday, August 21	First Day of Classes at JMU
Friday, August 23	Mandatory Supervisors Training and Kick-off event with FWS students. Students complete paperwork (students may NOT begin working until they have BOTH completed their onboarding AND it is after the first day of classes).
Last week of August/First Week September	JMU Students begin working at Community Partner sites

Frequently Asked Questions:

Does my organization qualify to host FWS students?

Host site Community Partners must be 1) a K-5 school or 2) a private nonprofit organization “in which no part of the net earnings of the agency benefits any private shareholder or individual. An organization must be incorporated as nonprofit under federal or state law.” In other words, you must be a registered nonprofit organization, but are not required to have a 501c3 tax-exempt designation. If you are unsure if your organization meets these requirements, please email cevc@jmu.edu. Priority is given to local organizations in the Shenandoah Valley, serving local community members.

How are students chosen for our organization/school?

FWS students apply to work with our office and are connected to a Community Partners based on the compatibility of the student's skills, interests, availability, and transportation options, as well as with the goals and needs of the Community Partner as described in the Community Partner Application.

Will our organization have a chance to interview potential students?

CEVC completes all interviews and selects students that we assess will best align with your organization depending on the requirements listed in your completed Community Partner Application.

How will our organization meet our FWS employees?

Site supervisors and students will meet in person at the Annual August Supervisors Training and Kick-off Event. You will also be electronically introduced via email by CEVC staff. If you do not believe the student is a good match, please inform CEVC and we will try to connect you with another student depending on student availability.

Is there a fee for Community Partners to participate?

There is no program fee; however, Community Partners are required to meet program expectations listed above. Community Partners are also expected to cover any fees associated with required checks (i.e., background checks, TB testing, etc.).

How many hours can students work?

Each FWS student receives a financial aid award that determines the maximum number of hours they can work during an academic year. Typically, students hired by CEVC work 6-8 hours per week during the academic year. Students cannot exceed 20 hours of work per week when classes are in session. Students may work up to 40 hours/week during breaks

(i.e., Spring Break). Please note: hours per week must factor-in ALL JMU positions (for example, if a student has a CEVC federal work study job and a position at JMU Libraries, those total hours must fit within limit.) The work week runs from 12:01am on Sunday through 11:59pm on Saturday. Please also keep in mind that if students work over fall, winter, and spring breaks, they may run out of funding earlier in the semester.

I've been paired with a Madison Community Scholar (MCS) and not a Federal Work Study (FWS) student – what does that mean?

Federal Work Study (FWS) and Madison Community Scholar (MCS) students work with Community Partners consistently throughout the academic year. FWS students are paid according to their timesheet, which is reviewed and approved by their supervisor bi-monthly. FWS students are then compensated out of their available Federal Work Study aid bucket. MCS students are awarded a scholarship at the beginning of each semester, which covers about 6–8 hours of work/week. Consequently, MCS students are not required to maintain / submit a timesheet by JMU (although as their community partner, you may request that they maintain a log of their time for tracking purposes). Outside of timesheet maintenance, the overall experience – for both the student and the community partner – is essentially the same.

If you have questions or ideas you would like to discuss, please email cevc@jmu.edu or call our office at: 540-568-6366.