

Motivation Paper: Upward Bound

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Introduction

Federal TRIO Programs are Federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes eight programs targeted to serve low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress from middle school to post baccalaureate programs.

Purpose and Environment

Upward Bound is a national program that serves high school students from low-income families and families in which neither parent attended college. The goal of the program is to increase the rate at which participants complete secondary education and enroll in and graduate from institutions of higher education. Upward Bound exemplifies an organization that motivates volunteers and staff to perform their jobs in a manner that fulfills the organization's goals and the needs in an environment that intrinsically motivates volunteers and staff.

Upward Bound provides an environment where feedback is given on a consistent basis. Staff indicated they receive direct supervision at least once per week and constant electronic communication. Feedback is important regarding whether perform duties and responsibilities according to the organization's mission, goals, and objective. Providing supervision and training in an environment where questions and comments are encouraged leads to volunteers and staff feeling competent and confident in their roles.

Upward Bound also provides an environment where the volunteers and staff have the opportunity to use multiple skills and there is a certain degree of autonomy. Duties are well defined and include responsibilities such as mentoring, intentional interactions, taking students to dinner, listening and providing support, planning activities and facilitating enrichment programs.

The volunteers and staff value what they do and reported that what they enjoyed the most is making a difference and improving the lives of the participants.

Literature Review

Clary, Snyder, and Stukas (1996) in *Volunteer's Motivations: Findings from a National Survey*, provide considerable support for the functional approach to volunteer motivations and that the scales of the Volunteer Functions Inventory contribute to our understanding of volunteerism. The study suggests the functions of volunteerism are related to the types of volunteer activities to which an individual might be attracted. According to the functional approach to volunteerism, individuals are motivated to perform volunteer work to satisfy basic functions. These functions include values, understanding, enhancement, protective, and career. The study found a strong association between values and volunteering and that the rank of the six motivations as values, enhancement, social, understanding, protective, and career. Younger respondents placed more importance on career, understanding, and protective functions. Less educated individuals tended to report career and protective functions were of greater importance.

Maslow's *Theory of Human Motivation* (1943) is based on people seeking fulfillment and change through personal growth. He proposed there are five categories of needs that must be sequentially satisfied: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow's theory can be applied to volunteerism as volunteers often seek fulfillment and change through personal growth and giving oneself to some higher goal. Organizations can meet those needs and motivate volunteers by finding meaningful opportunities for volunteers to use their skills and to be recognized (Maslow, 1943).

Methods and Data Collection

In determining our youth-serving organization, we chose Upward Bound because of connections with the organization, staff, and volunteers. We analyzed the impacts of it in the South Carolina upstate.

We selected two counselors and two evening volunteers because they had the most direct contact with participants and therefore the ability to share information about interactions. All four agreed without hesitation. In determining a research design, we chose a qualitative study with open-ended questions.

We created the list of qualitative questions (listed in Appendix A) and emailed them. These questions determined how and why they are involved with Upward Bound, the best and most challenging aspects of their respective positions, and how they learn. Following this, we talked with each interviewee to better understand some answers. This way, we received written and verbal answers to gather a comprehensive view of their experiences with Upward Bound.

Results

In terms of involvement, Volunteer 1 and Counselor 1 got involved with Upward Bound in high school. Volunteer 1 participated in Educational Talent Search, a branch of the Federal TRIO programs. Counselor 1 began in high school and attended the Upward Bound academic component during the school year and the summer component for two years. Volunteer 2 and Counselor 2 responded to position postings through the technical college website. Both did not know much about Upward Bound before applying, they were simply searching for summer employment.

A typical day looks similar for both counselors and volunteers. Everyone goes to dinner together and participates in activities and discussions. In terms of responsibilities, Counselor 1

and 2 discussed their roles as counselors in terms of leading and mentoring. Counselor 1 said, “I act as a leader and mentor and supervise activities each day.” Counselor 2 said, “My main responsibilities are intentional interactions with students and mentorship...Knowing that their thoughts and feelings matter is important to their success in the academic portion of the program.” Conversely, Volunteer 1 and 2 discussed their positions as more of an assisting role as they did not feel as much leadership.

Counselors and volunteers had positive and challenging aspects in their positions. Volunteer 1 mentioned being able to connect with the students on a personal level and Volunteer 2 mentioned enjoying the conversations with students. Counselor 1 and 2 also mentioned relationship building. Counselor 2 said, “I love learning about the students' lives and being a support for them as they grow.” The challenges, however, varied much more. Volunteer 1 mentioned coming up with activities as a difficult aspect. Counselor 1 had difficulty adjusting to students of different backgrounds. Counselor 2 found the position difficult when students challenged authority.

Both staff and volunteers communicate with their supervisor about twice a week via text messages and phone calls. Everyone found this to be on par with what they expected and Counselor 1 said this is enjoyable because, “...she entrusts us to perform our duties.”

Interestingly, staff and volunteers shared similar motivations. Counselor 1 said, “What motivates me to come to work everyday is knowing that I am a part of an organization that is truly making a difference in student's lives and helps them achieve their goals.” Counselor 2 said, “Investing in these students motivates me.” Volunteer 1 and 2 said that being able to make the difference in the students' life as well as being a positive influence are major motivators.

Volunteers and staff alike learned from their positions. Counselor 1 said, “I have learned from both other counselors and students by being an attentive listener. When we discuss real world issues such as race relations, sexuality, and mental illnesses, I am able to learn more about my coworkers and students as well as gain additional insight or viewpoints that I didn't think of.” Volunteers and staff also learned more about themselves. Counselor 2 said, “This job has made me more accepting of other people. The students are incredibly diverse, and it has shown me where I fit into different aspects of the community.” Volunteer 2 said, “The role changed me as a person because it helped me to become a better role model and want to inspire students more by continuing to work with them.”

Analysis

Staff and volunteers shared similar motivations. Interviewees shared knowing they make a positive difference with participants, enjoying building relationships, and mentoring.

The motivators and aspects of enjoyment with their jobs can be closely correlated to theories of motivation as discussed in Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), specifically love, affection, and belonging. Maslow states, “He will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group, and will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal” (1943, p. 381). The staff and volunteers are motivated by this need to have positive relationships and sense of belonging with the participants.

The findings from our interview can also be compared to the work of E. Clary, Mark Snyder and Arthur Stukas and what they call the Functional Approach to Volunteering, (1996, p. 486). Within this approach there is the values function, “whereby they participate in volunteer work to express and act on values important to the self (e.g., humanitarian values or altruistic concerns)” (1996, p. 487). This function correlates with our staff and volunteers being motivated

to be mentors and positive influences. Clary, Snyder and Stukas also stated the following motivations, “(1) I feel it is important to help others; (2) I can do something for a cause that is important to me; and (3) I feel compassion toward people in need” (1996, p. 491). These factors closely relate to the findings from our interview. Volunteer 1 stated, “[I enjoy] being able to connect with the students on a personal level and being their mentor, which allows them to grow and mature.” Also closely related Counselor 2 stated, “Relationship-building is my favorite part. I love learning about the students' lives and being a support for them as they grow.”

Works Cited

- Clary, E. G., Snyder, M., & Stukas, A. A. (1996). Volunteers' Motivations: Findings From a National Survey. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 25 (4), 485-505.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50 (4), 370-396.
- Upward Bound Program. (2015). Retrieved from: www2.ed.gov/programs/trioupbound/

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about how you got involved with this organization.
2. How long have you been involved with the organization?
3. Describe your main roles and responsibilities in your position.
4. Describe a typical day in your position.
5. Describe one of your favorite aspects of your position.
6. Describe one of your least favorite aspects of your position.
7. Describe one of the most challenging aspects of your position.
8. How often do you meet or communicate with your supervisor? Is this on par with what you want, or do you expect more? Why?
9. Describe what motivates you to come to work/volunteer at this organization.
10. Tell me about a time you found yourself learning from others in your position.
11. Tell me about a time you reflected on your development in your position and how the role has changed you as a person.