



Job Description: Program Coordinator, Chicago

Spark seeks an experienced educator and exceptional relationship manager with strong connections to the Chicago education community. Interviews begin immediately for an expected start date in June 2012.

Background:

Spark (www.sparkprogram.org) is an award winning, growing youth apprenticeship program. Spark works to reduce the high-school dropout rate with a unique apprenticeship program, focused on at-risk middle-school students. In partnership with district and charter schools, Spark creates one-on-one apprenticeships in real workplaces, where youth explore careers and develop the skills and motivation to succeed academically. Funded by a number of major foundations, including the Steans Family Foundation and Field Foundation of Illinois, in addition to corporate supporters like CareerBuilder.com, Spark is demonstrating a powerful new approach to the high-school dropout crisis, one that draws in new resources by turning workplaces into learning places.

Spark has managed rapid growth in the past two years, moving from a local to a statewide California-based organization, and eventually to a multi-state organization by branching to Illinois in 2011. In 2012, the organization grew to a budget of approximately \$2.2 million. This growth is guided by a core management team and an experienced Board of Directors, drawing together leaders from the business, education, and philanthropic communities.

Spark was awarded the prestigious Draper Richards Fellowship in 2008, given to five early-stage non-profits from around the world with the highest potential for “broad social impact.” In January 2010, Spark won the Ashoka Fellowship, one of the top honors for social innovation worldwide. With this and other support, Spark is building a foundation for national scale.

Position Overview:

Reporting to the Chicago Program Manager, the Program Coordinator will be responsible for supporting a vibrant program that impacts the high-school dropout crisis. In Chicago, Spark’s programs are currently active at five schools, with plans to grow in 2012. The Program Coordinator role has two key components: to lead the recruitment and support of mentors who host apprenticeships at their workplaces, and to support Spark’s partner schools in implementing a leadership class for students currently participating in apprenticeships.

To support these goals, the Program Coordinator will draw upon Spark’s staff at the organization’s headquarters office in San Francisco, as well as on the credibility, relationships, and training materials provided by Spark’s national team. Key responsibilities of this role include supporting 2-4 partner schools’ program operations, overseeing the recruitment, support, and systems for volunteer recruitment and coaching and training partners on Spark’s leadership curriculum. There is potential for the Program Coordinator to manage interns. The role requires regular visits to schools and apprenticeship workplaces, and collaboration with other Spark staff in Los Angeles and the Bay Area.



Spark's Core Values:

- **Self-Actualization:** Empowering people to confidently pursue their interests and live their values, driven by intrinsic motivation.
- **Community:** Fostering connections among people and organizations to meet individual and shared goals.
- **Democracy:** Collaboratively involving all stakeholders in decision-making.
- **Transparency:** Encouraging honest communication and actively seeking feedback for understanding and growth.
- **Positivity:** Planning for and expecting the best from every situation and person, and finding the opportunities in each challenge.

Specific Responsibilities:

Direct Partner School Coaching, Support & Operations

- Manage 2-4 school partnerships in order to ensure the successful implementation of Spark;
- Develop and maintain a strong system of communication and support with school staff to support their successful management of program operations;
- Lead and document weekly support and coaching calls with partner "Spark Coordinators" and staff who facilitate Spark's leadership class;
- Develop and lead ongoing Spark apprenticeship orientations, and other trainings for school principals and Spark Coordinators in implementing the program operations as well as the leadership class, and trainings for volunteers in working with middle-school youth in our program;
- Implement Spark's evaluation methods: lead collection and input of post-program surveys, demographic data and school district data.

Volunteer Recruitment, Management & Operations

- Lead the recruitment, screening, matching, and support of all volunteer mentors (caseload of at least 50 volunteers each semester); potentially manage and coach interns in this process;
- Leverage and build alliances in the private, government, and not for profit sector to establish a network of individuals in diverse fields of work to draw upon for apprenticeship matching;
- As part of the program team, develop seasonal and year long apprenticeship recruitment strategy plans to be presented to organization on a semester wide basis;
- Actively cultivate new relationships with companies and individuals through networking and direct outreach to secure partnerships to create apprenticeships for students;
- Liaise with the Program Manager and the national staff in providing timely data for grant applications as well as supporting potential or existing donor visits to program in action at schools and/or apprenticeship locations;
- Oversee matching efforts for placement of students with Apprentice Teachers throughout the region and support the planning of student transportation to and from their apprenticeships with volunteers, partner school, and families;
- Lead external communication about volunteer recruitment in media outlets, organizational newsletters, websites and blogs, and bulletins;



- Ensure Spark compliance steps for all volunteers including management of background checks, approving workplace locations, and other Spark policies;
- Coach, support and lead partners to manage “Discovery Night” or “Career Day,” the culminating celebration event of each Spark session at each school partner site.

Qualifications:

- Bachelor’s degree required, teaching/counseling credential or Master’s Degree a plus.
- Prefer experience working with school administration and teachers, preferably at the middle-school level.
- Experience in volunteer recruitment and management a plus.
- Experience in training and coaching preferred.
- Demonstrated passion for and commitment to helping students become self-actualized, empowered learners.
- Excellent attention to detail.
- Strong interpersonal skills in working with diverse groups of adults and youth, including leadership experience and outstanding written and verbal communication skills.
- Comfortable giving and receiving honest, constructive feedback.
- Highly proficient with internet and computer usage.
- High-energy, creative, and has a sense of humor even under stress.
- Sophisticated personal networking and relationship-building skills.
- Experience working in a fast-paced professional environment, prioritizing multiple tasks with limited time and managing complex projects.
- High level of professionalism and resourcefulness-- an ability to work independently and as a team player, to take initiative and to manage multiple tasks, relationships and projects.
- Spanish proficiency a plus.

Compensation & Benefits:

- **Salary:** Competitive and commensurate with experience.
- **Health Benefits:** Full health coverage is provided, including medical, dental, vision, and life insurance, with Spark covering 100% of monthly premiums. Spark also covers a portion of the monthly premiums for dependents.
- **Learning Benefits:** Spark staff and students are fellow learners, and the organization highly values the staff’s personal learning pursuits. To that end, there are several opportunities for staff to “walk the talk” and experience the excitement of being a Spark student:
 - **Annual Paid Sabbatical:** Seven paid working days off each year, in addition to other paid time off, for the pursuit of a personal learning opportunity. Learning stipend included.
 - **Professional Training Account:** To pursue your choice of professional training opportunities, including workshops, conferences, books, etc.
- **Retirement Benefits:** For all contributions through Spark’s SIMPLE IRA plan, Spark will match retirement contributions dollar-for-dollar up to 3% of total salary.
- **Paid Time Off:** Spark has a unique flexible time-off policy, which empowers staff to collaboratively determine and schedule time off as needed. Rather than setting and tracking specific numbers of days off, Spark staff may take time off based on the status of their work-related goals and results within the organization. This policy is part of Spark’s focus on a balanced and healthy life for staff.



- **Non-monetary compensation:** The opportunity to be an integral member of an energetic, innovative, hard-working and rapidly growing team, within an organization that has the potential to significantly change American middle-school education.

Application Timeline:

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled. Target start date is mid-June 2012.

To Apply:

Please email your resume and cover letter to **Meha Davé, Chicago Program Manager** at chicagojobs@sparkprogram.org. Please indicate "Program Coordinator, Chicago" in the subject line.

Spark is an equal opportunity employer. We encourage applications from all individuals regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, and evaluate all candidates based on merit.