

## How to Find a Job in the Non-profit Sector

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I'm contacted at least a dozen times every week by people who are looking for jobs in the non-profit sector. When I teach my graduate school classes, about 20 percent of the students want to move from the for-profit sector to the non-profit sector. It's very apparent to me that a lot of people want to follow their dreams and fulfill their passions of making a positive change in the world.

The non-profit sector is the fastest growing sector of the U.S. economy with over 1.4 million organizations. The number of Americans that are now employed by the sector exceeds 12.5 million and in many states the sector makes up 10 percent or more of the workforce.

Let's take a look at some of the strategies that I recommend for people who want to enter the sector or move up the non-profit ladder.

1. **It's mostly networking** and more networking. Start by asking friends, family, and others who sit on a board of directors or volunteer with non-profit organizations.
2. **Volunteer** with mid-sized organizations (those that have budgets of about \$500,000-\$1,000,000). These organizations are small enough that you probably will be recognized quickly for your talents and skills and you will be aware of job openings before they are advertised. This is a great way for you to get to know the organization and for people to get to know what you have to offer.
3. **Select a couple organizations that excite you.** Contact them and ask them if you can meet one of their staff members for an "informational interview."
4. **Donate \$25-\$50** to an organization that you would like to work for. Call up the development (fundraising) staff and let them know that you want to meet with them to find out more about what they are doing in the community. Use this opportunity to see if they have any job openings.
5. **Check the websites** in your community that usually list these jobs. Frequently, it is the state non-profit association or a university. Sometimes it is the volunteer center that places volunteers in the community.
6. **Develop a resume** and have people review it prior to sending it out. Make sure you list all of your volunteer experiences. Consider developing a bio of your background and make sure to include a digital picture.
7. **When you get an interview** prepare for it well by downloading information from the organization's website; thoroughly read the information including the background of the staff members and board of directors. It is key to anticipate questions that the interviewer is likely to ask. Some of the questions we frequently ask people are: *What excited you about this job? What challenges will you have? Describe an experience that you failed at and tell us what you learned from the experience. Tell us about your strengths and weaknesses. Describe some of your leadership experiences.*
8. **Be prepared to be interviewed by multiple people.** Think about and anticipate how you would respond if you were interviewed by different staff members, volunteers, or kids and youth. Try to anticipate the questions you would like to ask them.
9. **Don't get hung up on the starting salary.** The starting salary might be lower than what you were expecting but build in a six month evaluation and salary review. Make sure you negotiate continuing education, training, and coaching dollars into your package.
10. **Look for an organization** where you will get good training, support, and coaching. This is especially true if you are fairly new to the field. Go to the interview 15 minutes early so you can observe the "atmosphere in the office."