



Careers in Nonprofit Organizations

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to define nonprofit organizations, describe opportunities that exist in nonprofits, outline advantages and disadvantages of working in the nonprofit sector, and explain how you can determine if this is an area for you to consider as a career.

WHAT IS THE NONPROFIT SECTOR?

“Nonprofit” is a legal term that the Internal Revenue Service uses to define tax-exempt organizations whose money or “profit” must be used solely to further their charitable or educational mission, rather than distribute profits to owners or shareholders as in the for-profit sector.

Attempting to classify all the organizations that make up the nonprofit sector is difficult. Some of these organizations are somewhat esoteric by nature, especially single-issue organizations like those dedicated to sickle-cell anemia or the prevention of cruelty to laboratory test animals. Other nonprofit groups are much broader in scope, like the United Way.

Nonprofit can be generally categorized into eight main areas:

1. *Health Services* - kidney disease, rape victim relief, HIV/AIDS resources, community-based hospitals
2. *Education/Research* - religious/private pre-school through post-secondary schools, dropout prevention, public policy research
3. *Religious Organizations* - groups by denominations, missionary activities, religious publishing
4. *Social Service* - transitional care (halfway houses), vocational counseling, homeless shelters, YMCA, credit counseling
5. *Civic, Social and Fraternal Organizations* - minority rights, voter education/registration, United Way
6. *Arts and Culture, including Public TV and Radio* - ballet, folk arts, media arts
7. *Foundations* - community/corporate foundations, volunteerism promotion, international relief
8. *Legal Services* - legal/civil aid, public interest litigation

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS?

Nonprofit organizations can be viewed as organizations that attempt to deliver a wide range of services to society. Typically, the Executive Director reports to

a volunteer Board of Directors comprised of citizens within the community. The Executive Director serves in the same role as a Chief Executive Officer within the for-profit sector. In addition to executive administration, employment is available in development and fundraising, program development, public relations, membership development, publications, marketing, and several other areas, depending on the individual nonprofit organization. There are career opportunities for financial specialists, accountants, human resource managers, program specialists, counselors, doctors, lawyers, nurses, and many more. Nonprofit organizations are not just looking for volunteers, but rather for individuals who believe in the organization and can help it achieve its purposes.

Nonprofits present a variety of entry-level job opportunities. Some positions provide direct service to the public such as tutor, counselor, or early childhood education. Others such as finance manager, program/grants officer, site administrator, and production supervisor are administrative and managerial. For college graduates, multiple entry-level positions exist for a variety of majors. Some examples of entry-level positions are:

- Administrative Assistant/Coordinator
- Campaign Organizer
- Canvass Director
- Case Manager
- Communications Organizer/Administrator
- Community Organizer
- Direct Mail/Marketing Manager
- Associate Editor
- Field Director
- Office Manager
- Planning Analyst
- Policy Analyst
- Press Assistant
- Program Coordinator/Director
- Project Director
- Research Assistant
- Residential Counselor
- Vocational Instructor

Earnings in the nonprofit sector range from none for volunteer service to the six-figure incomes of top executives of some national organizations. To be sure, very few employees in nonprofits earn that much, but many nonprofit organizations offer competitive entry-level salaries, not to mention the intangible rewards that go along with work in this sector.

Typically, individuals seeking a career in the nonprofit sector know that this is not the type of career that provides a millionaire's salary. However, it is a misconception that people in the nonprofit sector cannot make ends meet. In fact, some statistics indicate that in certain sub-sectors of the economy, nonprofit workers are paid better than their for-profit counterparts. The health care field is a good example of this.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF WORKING IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR?

Many professionals mention their work environment as noncompetitive, non-threatening, and less pressured as advantages of working in the nonprofit sector. Because they share a common cause, these professionals have a keen sense of closeness, cooperation, and unity with co-workers. They can also enjoy more autonomy, variety, and challenge than many of their colleagues in equivalent for-profit or government positions. A young professional can be given a lot of responsibility right from the beginning. As a result, there can be greater opportunities to make an impact in the organization earlier on in your career than in the for-profit sector.

In general, nonprofits are becoming more business-like. Economic and political pressures are requiring them to operate as efficiently as possible. Nonprofits are setting more stringent financial goals, discussing strategic planning, and repositioning themselves to take advantage of market niches.

Nonprofit work does have its drawbacks, especially in small organizations. It is still true that salaries and benefits have generally lagged behind the for-profit sector, as mentioned previously. However, this trend is changing and more comprehensive benefit packages and increased wages are being offered. Also, nonprofit organizations are often funded by "soft" sources that can result in funding levels that may be uncertain from year to year. Consequently, job security can be a major concern for nonprofit employees. "Soft" money also hinders the acquisition of adequate equipment and furnishings. However, nonprofits are seeking more and more corporate support versus governmental funding to rectify inconsistent funding problems.

Another drawback to working in the nonprofit sector is burnout. Although the work environment may be less competitive, frequently nonprofit employees work with individuals who may have few material resources.

It is important to consider both the advantages and disadvantages of the nonprofit sector. Only after examining these aspects can you make an informed, accurate career decision. What is most important is to get the facts rather than to jump to inaccurate conclusions based on incomplete information.

ARE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS FOR YOU?

In deciding where to look for employment, you need to consider what motivates you and assess not only interests and abilities, but also your personal values and what is truly important to you.

The following is a checklist that was adapted from the book, *Profitable Careers in the Nonprofit*. It will assist you in deciding if a career within the nonprofit sector is for you.

Questions:

1. Is it important for you to work for a cause?
2. Do you want to do something good for society?
3. Are you more humanitarian than materialistic?
4. Do you have a well-developed sense of right and wrong?
5. Do you have strong ideals?
6. Do you like people?
7. Are you flexible? Creative?
8. Would you prefer working for an organization to which you feel personally committed?
9. Do you want to be part of a team effort?
10. Do intangible rewards truly mean more to you than money?
11. Would you rather be a generalist than a specialist?
12. Are you comfortable working in casual clothing?
13. Do you want the opportunity to have sole responsibility for a project?
14. Does your self-image fit a "non-corporate" work environment?

If you have answered decisively "yes" to most of these questions, you may want to seriously consider nonprofit organizations when seeking employment. Your affirmative answers are an indication that you might find working within a nonprofit organization rewarding.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT ABOUT SPECIFIC ORGANIZATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR?

The next step for you is research. To determine where to look for specific opportunities, you need to gather as much information as you can about the nonprofit sector. Both the Career Resource Center within Career Services and King Library have a number of excellent resources to assist you in the research process. Printed in the back of this guide is a selected bibliography with which to begin the process. You may also wish to consult a staff member at Career Services after you have gained some initial information.

Other sources of information are the organizations themselves. Do not hesitate to contact a nonprofit organization to arrange an informational interview. It is an excellent way to gain first-hand information, establish a contact within the field, and demonstrate your initiative. Sample resumes, cover letter and follow-up thank-you letter for an informational interview at a nonprofit organization are included in this guide. Visit Career Services if you need additional information regarding informational interviewing, resume writing, or cover letter preparation.

CAREER SERVICES WEBSITE

For additional information about Career Services, please refer to our website at www.muohio.edu/careers/ For assistance in using the website, check with our Career Assistants in 205 Hoyt Hall.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW LETTER

October 14, 20XX

114 North Campus Avenue
Oxford, Ohio 45056
jonessa@muohio.edu

Ms. Julie P. Casey
President
Hometown Area Social Agency
39 Main Centre Plaza
Hometown, Ohio 45055

Dear Ms. Casey:

Presently, I am a Miami University senior, and I anticipate graduating in May of 20XX with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. Dr. Robert Owen of our Psychology Department suggested I speak with you about career opportunities within social service agencies and other nonprofit organizations.

At this point, I am attempting to arrange brief informational interviews with individuals such as you in order to gain additional information about various nonprofit organizations. I feel that this will assist me a great deal when I begin my job search in early January. I would like to schedule an interview with you at a mutually convenient time. I understand that Hometown Area Social Agency funds several nonprofit organizations in the Hometown area. I would very much like to learn more about your agency and the organizations it funds. I am sure your perspectives would be very valuable to me.

I plan to be in the Hometown area during the week of November 10th and hope it will be possible to schedule a meeting at your convenience. I will contact your office the week of October 21st to discuss a possible appointment time. I look forward to talking with you next week.

Sincerely,

Susan A. Jones

Susan A. Jones

THANK-YOU LETTER

November 12, 20XX

114 North Campus Avenue
Oxford, Ohio 45056
jonessa@muohio.edu

Ms. Julie P. Casey
President
Hometown Area Social Agency
39 Main Centre Plaza
Hometown, Ohio 45055

Dear Ms. Casey:

Tuesday afternoon has to be one of the most enjoyable afternoons I have spent while completing my informational interviews on nonprofit organizations. Through my internship experience, I had become interested in Hometown Area Social Agency and other nonprofit organizations. However, until we talked, I was not sure of the extent of my interest. Thank you so much for sharing valuable information with me and for giving me several additional resources to pursue. It is extremely helpful to have an understanding of the types of positions, available opportunities, and the skills a person needs in order to be a successful employee within a nonprofit organization.

I am confident that the information you provided will assist me as I further explore noncorporate options. As I mentioned to you, I hope to gain full-time employment with a nonprofit organization by August 20XX. Based on your suggestion, I intend to arrange additional informational interviews with some local social service agencies.

Thank you again for taking time to share information about your organization with me. I hope to be in contact with you in the future as a professional colleague within the social services sector.

Sincerely,

Susan

Susan A. Jones

SUSAN A. JONES

114 North Campus Avenue
Oxford, Ohio 45056
(513) 523-1111
jonessa@muohio.edu

OBJECTIVE To secure a counseling position with a public social service agency in order to use counseling, human relations, and administrative skills.

EDUCATION **Miami University**, Oxford, Ohio
Bachelor of Science, May 20XX
Major: Psychology, with concentration in Social Work
Minor: Sociology
Overall GPA: 3.35/4.00

RELATED EXPERIENCE **Workplace Project Intern**, May 20XX - August 20XX
Human Rights Campaign, Washington, D.C.

- At nation’s largest advocacy group for GLBT equal rights, coordinated research efforts of 3 interns to analyze corporate survey submissions, SEC filings, and foundation giving for Corporate Equality Index.
- Communicated with and educated HR professionals to effectively advocate for GLBT inclusion.
- Researched and drafted corporate implementation of domestic partner benefits packet for presentation to Bill Thomas, Chair, House Ways and Means Committee.

Intern, January - May 20XX
Planned Parenthood, Hamilton, Ohio

- Interviewed clients to compile intake information and to ease concerns.
- Compiled statistical data concerning clientele and use of services.
- Developed and designed brochure to advertise services.
- Performed various administrative tasks at request of Director.

ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT **Waitress**, Summers 20XX and 20XX
Pizza Hut, Oxford, Ohio

- Seated customers and received their meal orders.
- Maintained clean and orderly dining environment.
- Assisted cooks during peak business hours.
- Secured establishment each weekend evening after closing.

HONORS AND ACTIVITIES Dean’s List, three semesters
Psi Chi Psychology Honorary, 20XX - 20XX
Alpha Phi Omega Service Fraternity, 20XX - 20XX
Student Senator, Hahne Hall Government, 20XX - 20XX

References available upon request

EXAMPLE #2

241 Hoyt Hall
Oxford, OH 45056

Kaylan Havighurst

havighka@muohio.edu
513-529-3831

OBJECTIVE

To obtain a summer internship with a visual arts venue using skills in communication and creativity.

EDUCATION

Miami University, Oxford, OH
Bachelor of Arts, May 20XX
Major: History of Art and Architecture; Minor: Arts Management
GPA: 3.66/4.00; Dean's List, 4 semesters

Study Abroad Program, Urbino, Italy, Summer 20XX

Studied art and architecture in Italy via a 6-week cultural immersion program
Improved Italian language skills while living with a host family

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, OH Fall 20XX-present
Volunteer

- Prepare materials and content for presentations to area school children
- Assist staff in set-up and installation of new exhibits
- Serve as a resource to visitors: greet them, answer questions, and direct them to exhibits

Art and Architecture History Association (AAHA) at Miami University, Oxford, OH

President, August 20XX-May 20XX

- Led meetings, recruited members, provided direction and support for upcoming year
- Contributor/Art Editor, August 20XX-May 20XX
- Published regularly in AAHA's art journal
- Designed the layout using InDesign and chose the artwork included in each issue of the art journal

School of Fine Arts Advisory Committee, Oxford, OH, July 20XX-present
Member

- Represent 2000 students in the School of Fine Arts to voice their concerns, vote on new proposals and make recommendations
- Collaborated on a proposal to make the Fine Arts curriculum more interdisciplinary

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Sigma Lambda Gamma National Sorority, Oxford, OH
Vice President of Chapter Operation, August 20XX-May 20XX
Chapter was ranked as having the third highest GPA nationally

SKILLS

Visual exhibit design and set-up experience, excellent presentation skills
Experience with Adobe Photoshop and InDesign
Fluent in Spanish and English; working knowledge of Italian

EXAMPLE #3

Current Address: 513-529-3831
3000 E. Sycamore Street
Oxford, OH 45056
zwithrow@muohio.edu
After May 20XX:
4220 Sunrise Court
Bettendorf, IA 52722

ZOË WITHROW

OBJECTIVE

Obtain a sustainability internship utilizing research, community organizing, and written skills.

EDUCATION

Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, Expected Graduation May 20XX
Bachelor of Science in Business, Overall GPA: 3.74/4.00
Major: Management and Organizations
Minor: American Studies
University Business Honors Program

- Thesis Topic: Initiating and implementing sustainable social projects in a college environment

Division I Varsity Field Hockey Team

- Committed to 20 hours of training and practice a week while carrying a full course load
- Earned a varsity scholarship and starting position due to growth and development as a varsity athlete

Pacific Rim Summer Study Abroad Program: China, Korea, Japan

- Experienced culture and the global marketplace through corporate and cultural visits
- Developed cultural awareness through interacting with host students and families

RELATED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Wilks Scholar Leadership Program-Leadership for Social Change, Assistant** Sept. 20XX-May 20XX
Multi-year community-based research and learning project in American Studies
- Researched projects and wrote proposals focusing on the needs of Ohio immigrant families
- Advised local community agency to help improve business operations and efficiency

Social Entrepreneurship Venture, Associate

- Developed Undergraduate Business Experience Course curriculum

EMPOWER Program, Volunteer Coordinator

- Directed volunteer services at the Family Resource Center for 15 participants
- Led weekly discussion of service-learning and community engagement

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

- Wilks Scholars, Course Facilitator**, EDL 177 Community Engagement
Facilitate, teach and transfer knowledge and learning to 18 Wilks Scholars
- Develop and plan course syllabus and activities and evaluate students' performance

Spencer Beverage Company, Management/Marketing Internship, Davenport, IA

- Researched and investigated potential international investors
- Created and conducted corporate and industry wide survey to gauge customer interest
- Oversaw international phone conferences and provided feedback to operations employees

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES AND HONORS

- Provost's Student Academic Achievement Award
- Mid-American Conference Commissioner's Award
- National Field Hockey Coaches Association National Academic Squad

EXAMPLE #4**Elizabeth W. Johnson**

120 Tappan Hall
Oxford, OH 45056
(513) 529-1234
johnsoew@muohio.edu

After: May X, 20XX
2406 Zinnia Way
Indianapolis, IN 48122
(317) 221-5665

Objective

An internship in museum administration utilizing leadership and communication skills, as well as knowledge gained from course work and volunteer experiences.

Education

Bachelor of Arts, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, expected May 20XX
Major: Philosophy Minor: Arts Management Overall GPA: 3.2/4.0

Related Courses

Aesthetics	Science and Culture	Organizational Behavior
Principles of Management	Principles of Marketing	Essentials of Public Speaking

Experience

Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, OH
Student Volunteer, September 20XX – Present

- Interpret exhibits for visitors and give tours to school groups
- Assist with organizing and implementing special events and fund-raisers
- Train new student volunteers
- Market items in museum gift shop

Kroger Food and Drugs, Oxford, OH

Cashier, August 20XX – Present

- Greet shoppers, scan items for purchase, and handle cash register
- Received "Employee of the Month" award for excellent customer service

Grocery/Courtesy Clerk, December 20XX – August 20XX

- Moved and arranged items on shelves
- Retrieved shopping carts from parking lot and bagged groceries

Alpha Beta Gamma Sorority, Oxford, OH

Philanthropy Chairperson, School year 20XX – XX

- Organized fund-raiser; increased yield 15% over previous year
- Motivated members to participate in fund-raising events

Honors and Activities

Dean's List, 2 semesters
Women's Volleyball Club
Program Board
Miami University Marching Band

Skills

MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, PageMaker
Proficient in Spanish

References furnished upon request.

EXAMPLE #5**Drew S. Warfield**

warfields@muohio.edu
513-529-3831
241 Hoyt
Oxford, OH 45056

OBJECTIVE

To obtain a position at an international healthcare NGO utilizing research, analytical and organizational skills

EDUCATION

Miami University, Bachelor of Arts, Oxford, OH May 20XX
Major: Diplomacy and Global Politics Minor: Political Science
Cumulative GPA: 3.43/4.00 Dean's List, 4 semesters

Study Abroad Program, Pacific Rim Summer 20XX

- o Studied the economy and business practices in China, South Korea and Japan
- o Participated in site visits to Procter & Gamble, Deloitte & Touche, Papa Johns and General Electric

ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS**Summer Business Institute, Miami University** Summer 20XX

- o Six-week program for non-business majors sponsored by The Farmer School of Business
- o Studied the impact of outsourcing on the supply chain process
- o Conducted a SWOT analysis on Toyota Manufacturing
- o Toured Total Quality Logistics and Toyota Manufacturing

Senior Capstone Spring 20XX

- o Researched and presented potential solutions to a committee of international scholars concerning the conflict in Israel
- o Placed 3rd in the state of Ohio in a case competition

RELATED EXPERIENCE

World Affairs Council of Greater Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH Fall 20XX - Present
Volunteer

- o Coordinate travel plans and accommodations for five international speakers per year
- o Create the design, production, and distribution of promotional materials to increase member recruitment
- o Facilitate small group discussions among eight individuals about current events
- o Generated a forum of area experts that drew 300 individuals; scholars discussed global warming and made recommendations for Cincinnati city officials to enact

Ambassadors for Children, Oxford, OH Fall 20XX - Present
President

- o Implemented an aggressive marketing campaign that increased recruitment to the organization by 25%
- o Raised \$2500 for children living in poverty
- o Sponsored an awareness day that educated the Miami community about children living in poverty around the world

CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

Intramural Broomball Fall 20XX - Present
Big Brothers/Big Sisters Fall 20XX - Fall 20XX

**RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN THE CAREER RESOURCE CENTER
FOR STUDENTS SEEKING A CAREER IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR**

100 Best Nonprofits to Work For, L. Hamilton and R. Tragert, Macmillan.
A Guide to Careers in Community Development, P.C. Brophy and A. Shabecoff, Island Press.
Alternatives to the Peace Corps, Joan Powell, Editor, Food First Books.
Be Bold: Create a Career with Impact, Echoing Green.
The Big Green Internship Book, Career Education Institutes.
Career Opportunities in Politics, Government, and Activism, Joan Axelrod-Contrada, Ferguson Publishing.
Career Opportunities in the Nonprofit Sector, Jennifer Bobrow Burns, Checkmark Books.
Careers for Good Samaritans & Other Humanitarian Types, Marjorie Eberts and Margaret Gisler, McGraw-Hill.
Careers in Education, Alan J. Reiman & Roy A. Edelfelt, VGM Career Books.
Careers in Focus: Social Work, Ferguson Publishing.
Careers in Fundraising, Lilya Wagner, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
Careers in Social and Rehabilitation Services, G. Garner, VGM Career Horizons.
Days in the Lives of Social Workers, Linda May Grobman, White Hat Communications.
The Everything Guide to Careers in Health Care, Kathy Quan, Adams Media.
For the Common Good: Internships with Social and Community Service Agencies, Career Education Institutes.
From Making a Profit to Making a Difference, R. M. King, Planning/Communications.
Great Jobs for Political Science Majors, Mark Rowh, VGM Career Horizons.
Great Jobs for Psychology Majors, J. DeGalan and S. Lambert, VGM Career Horizons.
Great Jobs for Sociology Majors, S. Lambert, VGM Career Horizons.
How to Live Your Dream of Volunteering Overseas, Collins, DeZerega, & Heckscher, Penguin Books.
The Human Rights Internship Book, Career Education Institutes.
Winning Strategies to Get Your Next Job in the Nonprofit World, Piemonte Press.
Make A Difference: America's Guide to Volunteering and Community Service, Arthur Blaustein, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
Opportunities in Gerontology and Aging Services Careers, Ellen Williams, McGraw-Hill.
Opportunities in Religious Services Careers, John Oliver Nelson, McGraw-Hill.
Opportunities in Social Science Careers, Rosanne J. Marek, McGraw-Hill.
Opportunities in Social Work Careers, Renee Wittenberg, McGraw-Hill.
Public Interest Group Profiles, CQ Press.
Resumes for Social Service Careers, McGraw-Hill.
Washington Internships in Law & Policy, Career Education Institutes.

What Can You Do With a Major in Psychology?, Shelley O'Hara, Wiley Publishing, Inc.
The Women's Rights Internship Book, Career Education Institutes.
World Volunteers: The World Guide to Humanitarian and Development Volunteering, Universe.

JOB VACANCY LISTINGS

The following are employment bulletins for various fields found under the [Job Postings webpage \(http://www.units.muohio.edu/careers/students/jobpostings.shtml\)](http://www.units.muohio.edu/careers/students/jobpostings.shtml), students home, Searching for Job Postings?, the Job Postings webpage):

- *Current Jobs in Liberal Arts* – the national employment bulletin for the liberal arts professions.
- *Current Jobs International* – the national employment bulletin for the Foreign Language and International Affairs Professions.
- *The Job Seeker* – a bi-weekly publication of current vacancies in the environmental professions.
- *Current Jobs in Performing Arts*
- *Current Jobs in Art*
- *Current Jobs in Writing, Editing, and Communication*
- *Current Jobs in Education*

[Miami CAREERlink](#) – Career Services receives vacancy announcements for Social Services/Nonprofit internships/jobs which are posted on Miami CAREERlink. You must be registered to access these positions.

Career Services Website

Be sure to access our website for additional resources and job-listing information at www.muohio.edu/careers/students/internetsites, click on 'Nonprofit & Social Sciences.' We have links to nonprofit and social service websites from our site. For example, idealist.org is a very useful site.