

# Finding Your Place in the Non-Profit Sector



Career Services Office  
The Catholic University of America  
202 Pryzbyla Center  
Phone: (202) 319-5623  
Fax: (202) 319-4480

<http://careers.cua.edu>  
[careers@cua.edu](mailto:careers@cua.edu)

## **What is a Nonprofit?**

Perhaps the best way to describe nonprofit organizations is to describe how they are different from their corporate counterparts. In the book, *Careers in the Nonprofit Sector*, Terry McAdam makes 8 distinctions of non-profits:

- Nonprofits generally do not attempt to make a profit and return it.
- The main purpose of nonprofits is to carry out a good work or to advocate, pursue, or advance a cause.
- Nonprofits are deeply rooted in our religious heritage.
- Nonprofits are viewed by many as tied to the health of the entire society.
- The heart of the sector is voluntary in nature.
- There exists a greater diversity in the sector.
- Advocacy and activism are among the most important functions.
- The sector is labor intensive.

Of Nonprofits, McAdam says: "Nonprofit jobs provide more challenge, variety, satisfaction, and intrinsic rewards than those in private enterprises or the government. Most of the great movements in society have had their origins in the independent sector."

## **What Jobs are Available in the Nonprofit Sector?**

If you can name a job, it most likely can be found in a nonprofit organization. McAdam distinguished between hard and soft NPO's (Nonprofit organizations) as the places one can find work.

- Hard NPO's – More established services and organizations, such as cultural centers, colleges, hospitals, churches and research labs.
- Soft NPO's – Consist of groups devoted to causes and change, collectively called social action movements.

The types of organizations run from one end of the spectrum to another. Here is just a sample:

- Religious Organizations
- Private non-profit educational organizations
- Arts, cultural, historical, and community-educational organizations
- Health Services
- Human and Social Services
- Scientific Researching
- Business, Professional, Farming, and Labor Groups
- Mutual Benefit Groups
- Community Development Organizations
- Legislative, legal, political and advocacy groups.

These organizations offer many job opportunities including:

- Executive Directors

- Development Officials, whose main job is fundraising, but who also work to better the office
- Social Workers
- Attorneys
- Librarians
- Guidance Counselors
- Nursing Supervisors
- Physician's Assistant
- Professor at Community, Metropolitan, or larger colleges
- Membership Directors (i.e., of a YMCA, a member-supported radio station, historical society)
- Public Relations at a University
- Public Affairs in an art museum
- Administrative assistant
- Governmental Jobs
- Accounting
- Office Manager

## **What are some specific organizations in the Nonprofit Sector?**

Many of the big names that you hear are service organizations that also provide jobs! Here are just a few examples:

- Red Cross
- YMCA/ YWCA
- Goodwill
- Junior Achievement
- Girl and Boy Scouts
- Volunteers of America
- American Society of Association Executives
- Common Cause
- CASE: The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education

## **What are the advantages of working in the nonprofit sector?**

Working in the nonprofit sector provides you with more than just a job. Nonprofit opportunities are vast and can encompass most types of skills. Freedom of action and a caring workplace are all characteristic of the nonprofit environment. Although lower pay often comes with a move to the nonprofit sector, the advantages of a less competitive, more people-oriented atmosphere can outweigh this cut in pay. In the book *Profitable Careers in the Nonprofit*, Maryann Alfano states why she values her experience in the non-profit sector:

“You feel like you are doing something, although the pay is so much less. I took a \$10,000 pay cut at first. You have to love it, or it would be crazy to make all these sacrifices. The atmosphere is more

relaxed in nonprofit, so the work environment is more pleasant. Everyone knocks themselves out for the same reason.”

## **Where can you find more information?**

Books and information on nonprofits and nonprofit organizations are available in the Career Services Office and on the Internet. Along with the books mentioned in this handout, Career Services also houses company information, part and full-time job listings, and the Alumni Career Network, a database of over 400 CUA alumni that you can contact for advice.

Here is a selection of the books available on topics relating to non-profits:

Eberts, Marjorie and Margaret Gisler. *Careers for Good Samaritans and Other Humanitarian Types*. Lincolnwood: VGM Career Horizons, 1991.

Lewis, William and Carol Milano. *Profitable Careers in Nonprofit*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1987.

McAdam, Terry. *Careers in the Nonprofit Sector: Doing Well By Doing Good*. Washington: The Taft Group, 1986.

In addition, the Internet sites are plentiful:

IdeaList

<http://www.idealists.org>

National Opportunity Nonprofit Organization Classifieds

<http://www.opportunitynocs.org>

Community Career Center

<http://nonprofitjobs.org>

Career Action Network

<http://www.careeraction.org>

Internet Nonprofit Center

<http://www.nonprofits.org>

The Society for Nonprofit Organizations

<http://danenet.wicip.org/snpo>

Nonprofit Charitable Organizations

<http://nonprofit.about.com/careers/nonprofit>