

BUILDING A NONPROFIT TOOLKIT

Every applicant to a nonprofit position shares two traits in common:

1. They care.
2. They need a job.

What you can do to stand out – and to be more effective in advancing the causes you care about – is to develop a broad set of tools and experiences that will allow nonprofits and/or advocacy organizations to get the most value out of the financial investment they make when they hire you. This is especially important in the nonprofit world because staff often have to wear multiple hats.

Here are some skills you can develop in college and early in your career to have the greatest impact wherever you work in the nonprofit or advocacy world.

ALL-PURPOSE

- Budgeting
- Data science and analytics
- Experience working on teams
- Facilitation
- Mass email applications (ex. Emma, GovDelivery, MailChimp)
- Mail/email merges (including labels, envelopes)
- Microsoft Office (Excel, Word, Outlook)
- Research
- Strategic planning
- Writing

ADVOCACY & OUTREACH

- Cold calling
- Canvasing
- Interest-based negotiation
- Social media (see marketing)

DIRECT SERVICE

- Content knowledge / technical expertise (ex. economics, soil science, etc.)
- Classroom instruction/ Training
- Curriculum design and lesson planning
- Field experience
- Knowledge of and experience with the targeted community/ constituency

DIRECT SERVICE (cont.)

- Mediation and conflict resolution
- Technical expertise
- Tutoring, mentoring, case management

EVENT PLANNING

- Promotion
- Ticketing systems (ex. Eventbrite)
- Vetting of contractors and bids
- Vendor relations
- Volunteer management

FUNDRAISING & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- Board development/ management
- Customer service/ solicitation/ sales
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and/or fundraising software (ex. Salesforce, Raiser's Edge)
- Grant writing
- Market analysis
- Online fundraising apps (ex. Bloomerang, Classy, MobileCause)
- Prospect/ donor research
- Volunteer recruitment and management

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

- Copyediting and proofreading
- Graphic design and related tools (Illustrator, InDesign, Publisher, Photoshop)
- Media relations
- Qualitative research (ex. focus groups)
- Quantitative research, survey design and related tools (ex. Survey Monkey)
- Social media (ex. Facebook, twitter, Instagram) and Content Management Systems (ex. Hootsuite, WordPress)
- Photography
- Website design
- Video production

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

- Community outreach
- Direct supervision
- Meeting planning and facilitation
- Mediation and conflict resolution
- Hiring
- Recruitment
- Training (of others)

PROJECT & PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- Assessment and evaluation
- Database development and management
- Facilitation
- Project management systems (ex. Asana, Azendoo, Basecamp, Trello)
- Program design and planning

TIPS

1. **Read job descriptions.** Doing so will help you:
 - a. Identify the kind of opportunities and organizations that excite you.
 - b. Develop a clear sense of what skills/experiences are needed to be a strong candidate.
 - c. Pick up current vocabulary used in that industry to write an effective resume.
2. **Intern somewhere you would like to work.** You might not be hired there in the future, but you want your references to be able to speak directly to your qualifications for future positions, and you want them to connect you to opportunities in their networks.
3. **Ask for a living wage.** Part of sustaining a career over the long term is ensuring that you have the financial stability to keep working on the causes you care about. Your base salary when you start out can have a long-term impact on your earnings and wellbeing.
4. **Know that it is okay if your first few jobs aren't at dream organizations or don't include all the responsibilities you hoped for.** Focus on the skills and relationships you can build; over time, you can navigate closer to what you want to do and where you want to be.
5. **Recognize that nonprofit positions are not created equally.** Some career paths have more opportunities for advancement or better compensation. Some positions carry greater risk. Fundraisers, for example, are paid more than volunteer managers, and are fired more frequently. Be realistic about where certain positions can/will take you.
6. **Expect your outside life to influence your career.** If you start a family, for example, you may no longer be able to sustain a direct service position that demands evening or weekend hours.