

CAREERS IN NON-PROFIT & GOVERNMENT

NON-PROFIT

What is a non-profit?

A non-profit is an organization that conducts business for the benefit of the general public without shareholders and without a profit motive. A non-profit uses any surplus revenues to further achieve its mission rather than distributing surplus income to the organization's directors (or equivalents) as profit or dividends.

According to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) there are [29 different classifications](#) for 501c non-profit organizations; in addition, there are other types of organizations that qualify for non-profit or tax-exempt status.

Examples of non-profits include (these are just some examples; there are many more):

Advocacy groups	Trade Associations	Religious institutions
Private foundations	Colleges and Universities	Museums
Chambers of Commerce	Charitable Organizations	Fraternal Societies

Elon alumni hold some of the following positions in the non-profit arena:

Community Outreach Manager	Web Developer	Public Relations Manager
Video Production Coordinator	Attorney	Certified Public Accountant
Development Associate	Volunteer Coordinator	Case Manager
Social Media Community Manager	Outreach Coordinator	Policy Analyst
Research Assistant	Communication Specialist	Program Coordinator
Graphic Designer	Community Planner	Operations Manager

The biggest difference between non-profit and for-profit work is that businesses are expected to make a profit; non-profits are expected to make a difference. Almost any type of job that you find in the for-profit or public sectors you would also find in the non-profit world. Non-profit organizations aim to address needs that are not met by companies or governmental agencies.

Pay and Benefits:

Many misconceptions exist about pay in the non-profit arena. Just as some companies pay more than others and provide better benefits, pay and benefits vary greatly from one non-profit to another. No matter what sector the position is in, it is important for you to understand completely what your full compensation package is before you take a position.

How do I get started?

The job/internship search process in the non-profit arena is very similar to that of the corporate world. You will need to research the field and organizations you are targeting, develop a tailored resume and cover letter, and successfully market your skills and talents during an interview in order to secure a position. There are, however, a few key differences to be aware of when applying for non-profit positions:

1. Speak the language of the field

For-Profit/Corporate	Non-Profit	Government
Company, Business	Organization	Department, Agency
Sales Quota, Projected Earnings	Fundraising goal	
Customers, Investors	Donors	
Strong leadership, vision	Strong leadership, vision	Strong leadership, vision
Profit-driven, Result-driven	Mission-driven	Mandate-driven
Customer service	Community ownership	Responsive governance
Long-range strategic plan	Long-range strategic plan	Long-range strategic plan
Quality product or service	Quality product or service	Quality product or service
Accountability, budget, competition	Accountability, budget, competition	Accountability, budget, competition

*The chart above is based on information from [The Idealist Guide to Nonprofit Careers for First-time Job Seekers](#) (p. 128).

2. Network, network, network

Non-profit organizations tend to rely heavily on existing relationships when making hiring decisions. According to a study conducted by the Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Project, the 6 most common ways of hiring new employees in non-profits are: **(further citation required?)**

- Word of mouth (99%)
- Current employee referrals (93%)
- Local newspapers (80%)
- Postings on others' websites (73%)
- Recruitment from recent interns (67%)
- Postings on organization's website (64%)

Because the majority of non-profit organizations rely on personal and professional contacts for hiring referrals, it is critical to get involved in the non-profit community to get your name out there.

Below are some of the best ways to effectively establish your professional presence in the field:

- Volunteer with non-profit organizations
- Do an internship to enhance your skills and explore career options
- Join a board of directors to learn how a non-profit operates
- Talk with people working in non-profits. Learn more about [networking](#) and view [sample questions](#) to ask.

3. Demonstrate commitment to the mission (p. 128)

Non-profits are mission-driven. Hiring managers are seeking evidence of your interest in and passion for the organization's work. Throughout the application process, including the resume, cover letter and interview, be sure to incorporate key words that reflect the goals and values of the non-profit.

Where can I find internships and jobs?

General Resources

- [Idealist.org](#)
- [Chronicle of Philanthropy](#)
- [Opportunity Knocks](#)
- [National Council of Nonprofits](#)
- [Council on Foundations](#)
- [Dot.Org.Jobs](#)
- [Nonprofit Connect](#)
- [Philanthropy News Digest](#)
- [NGO Database](#)
- [Professional Associations](#)
- [Certified Nonprofit Professional](#)
- [Young nonprofit professionals network](#)
- [NC State Institute for Nonprofits](#)
- [Service year opportunities](#)
- See state and local United Way websites to locate additional resources

State Resources

- [NC Center for Nonprofits](#)
- [United Way of North Carolina](#) United Way of North Carolina
- Massachusetts Nonprofit Network <http://www.massnonprofitnet.org/>
- Connecticut Association of Nonprofits <http://www.ctnonprofits.org/> (also includes jobs for MA, NY, RI)
- Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations <http://www.pano.org/>
- <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/find-your-state-association> (find resources by state)

International Opportunities

- [Teach, work, intern or volunteer abroad](#)
- [Devex/International Development and Aid](#)

GOVERNMENT

The public sector, which consists of federal, state, and local government agencies, utilizes tax dollars to serve the common good by providing a variety of programs, including public transportation, infrastructure, and public education.

As in the non-profit and for-profit worlds, there are many career opportunities available in the public sector. For example, just within the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Elon alumni are serving in the following roles:

- Rehabilitation Counselor
- Public Health Program Consultant
- Press Assistant
- Assistant, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Below are additional positions Elon alumni hold in government agencies:

- Financial System Designer at Commonwealth of Virginia
- Legislative Director at US House of Representatives
- Survey Statistician at US Census Bureau
- Foreign Service Specialist at US Department of State
- Attorney at the Department of the Navy
- Emergency Management Division Director at Guilford County Emergency Services
- Health Educator at the Guilford County Department of Public Health
- Legislative Assistant at Office of Governor Pat McCrory

Resources

- www.UAjobs.gov
- www.idealist.org (search for government agencies)
- Visit the websites for state and local government agencies to find internships and jobs

Need more help?

Visit the Student Professional Development Center in Moseley 140 or call 336-278-6538 to request an appointment with either Rhonda Kosusko or Sara Shechter, our non-profit advisors.

[The Idealist Guide to Nonprofit Careers for First-time Job Seekers](#) and [Idealist Careers College Series](#) also provide tips and strategies for first-time job seekers, including how to format your resume, write a cover letter and prepare for an interview at a non-profit organization.