

What is the Nonprofit Sector?

Overview: The purpose of this workshop is to provide participants with basic information about the nonprofit sector in the United States. Participants will learn about the definition, size, and scope of the U.S. nonprofit sector, including the various career opportunities available.

Level: Beginner

Type: Discussion-based workshop; suitable for a multi-part workshop series

For the trainer: This workshop is largely designed to be paired with another, more in-depth workshop. If you have enough time, it might be helpful to use this as “part one” of a two-part workshop series. Good ideas for “part two” might be “Career Paths in the Nonprofit Sector” or “Creating a Resume,” depending on the experience level of your audience (“Career Paths” is more of a beginner level, while “Creating a Resume” is more of an intermediate level). Another option, if you are short on time, is to couple this workshop with a brief conversation about the “Top Ten Myths About the Nonprofit Sector” handout and/or do a question-and-answer session. Your choice of a paired workshop offering really depends on your grasp of and comfort with the material.

Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- Define the nonprofit sector and its characteristics
- Identify the range of nonprofit organizations around the world, particularly in the United States
- Begin identifying career paths within the nonprofit sector

Materials:

- Flipchart paper and markers (or whiteboard, chalkboard, etc.)
- Any appropriate resource handouts (see back of IOC Institute binder for many handout options; you should use the handouts that you think will be more appropriate and interesting for your audience)
- Index cards, placed on seats before participants arrive

How to Prepare:

Read the trainer guide carefully to become comfortable with information and activities and prepare all worksheets and activity materials.

Reflect on your own career path and evolution of involvement in nonprofit sector. For student trainers, you might want to reflect on your search for information about nonprofit jobs and/or your job search process. Place index cards on participants' seats before they arrive, and ask someone to be a recorder.

How to Do/Brief Outline:

Total suggested time for this session is 60 minutes:

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|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Introduction | suggested time 15 minutes |
| 2. What is the Nonprofit Sector? | suggested time 15 minutes |
| 3. Size and Scope of the Nonprofit Sector | suggested time 15 minutes |
| 4. Closing and Evaluation | suggested time 15 minutes |

For the trainer: Pacing and timing are very important in any workshop. The “suggested time” in this workshop gives you a guideline that will help you get through all of the material and end on time. It is very important to respect the time of your workshop participants and end when you say that you will end. This shows respect and a good grasp of the material; you can always offer to answer questions afterward if there is additional interest in the workshop content!

For the trainer: When leading this workshop, keep people, content, and logistics in mind.

People: This is probably the key determining factor in making any modifications to a workshop. You should make modifications based on the experience level of participants (adjusting up or down) and your experience level as facilitator. As you gain more experience, you can prepare less and you can have a more flexible format that assesses participants' experience with the material and responds appropriately, rather than relying on the trainer's guide.

Content: It may help to consider a few things as you deliver and/or modify sessions:

- Review and determine the “teachable” content that you hope to convey, i.e. ideas (overarching themes), skills (concrete takeaways), approaches (methods and/or styles), facts (statistics and/or other data).
- You may want to consider the variety of ways and modes in which you can deliver content, such as lecture, simulation, interactive activities, discovery (deduction), group inquiry, group discussion, and/or analysis. (For more information on different adult learning styles, see the material at the end of the IOC Institute binder.)

Logistics: Sometimes the adaptations and “last-minute” changes you need to make will be driven by logistics, like space, time, and even supplies:

- *Time:* If you have to make alterations, you should concentrate on: focusing in on the most important “teachable” ideas or processes; leaving a few helpful “takeaways” (like key insights or good handouts); opening the door for continued conversation (email, discussion groups, etc.); and leaving participants hungry and ready to continue the process on their own.
- *Space:* Awkward seating, temperatures, or even architecture (like poles in the middle of the room) may require you to make quick changes. Be flexible, and do your best to deal with unexpected twists.
- *Supplies:* Try to have a back-up plan when supplies or other details leave you in the lurch. For example, having a PowerPoint presentation on transparencies or paper in case the AV doesn't work is a good idea. However, don't let problems with supplies ruin your session! A sheet of flipchart paper and markers is often more than enough to provide focus for an interactive discussion and activity that participants find truly engaging.

1 Introduction

Suggested time: 15 minutes

Once participants have entered the workshop space, share with them a bit about who you are and your story/career path, and tell them the purpose of the workshop. Let them know that you are open to questions at any time. For student trainers, again feel free to talk a bit about your search for information about nonprofit jobs and/or your job search process.

For the trainer: Activities should be approached as a hands-on way to encourage workshop participants to learn. As a trainer, you must make sure to include everyone in the room during activities. If your group needs convincing to participate in the activities, be transparent – explain that often the best learning happens when there is a personal application and active engagement. Adults are likely to learn more effectively when the learning tasks are seen as relevant, meaningful, interesting, and useful. Activities help bring workshop content to life, so make the most of them!!

 Ask participants to stand as each of the statements below is read, if it applies to them:

Statements

1. I have had a paid or unpaid internship with a nonprofit organization.
2. I am fairly sure that I want to work in the nonprofit sector after graduation.
3. I have a good sense of what *nonprofit* means.
4. I am not sure what I want to do after graduation.
5. I want my career to make a difference in the world.

For the trainer: This particular activity is a great way for you to find out the experience level of the workshop participants. Based on whether their answers to these questions are about what you expected or a surprise, you may want to make adjustments to the workshop. For example, if participants are more experienced than you thought they would be, you may want to spend more time on some the details in this trainer guide. If they are less experienced than you expected, you may want to allow for more question-and-answer time at the end. Regardless, you should feel free to be transparent with the group that this activity is especially helpful to you as you gauge how best to gear the session.

Encourage workshop participants to recognize the value of these experiences as they start applying for jobs. Volunteer and internship experience is one of the best ways to learn about and find pathways into working in the nonprofit sector!

For the trainer: Working bullet-pointed material into your presentation is a bit tricky. As the trainer, you should be familiar enough with the principles outlined in bullet points that you can engage workshop participants in conversation about the material, rather than simply reading off the page. As you become more comfortable with the material, you should also feel free to include some of your personal experiences and ask participants to add in their own, as well.

- The immediate goal of this workshop is to give you information about what the nonprofit sector is like and some hints on how to approach a nonprofit job search.
- The larger goal of this workshop is to encourage you to connect your values and passions to your career plans.
- Many people look to the nonprofit sector as a place to find a meaningful career, doing something that makes the world a better place and working with people who have similar values.
- That being said, the nonprofit sector is not the only place to have a meaningful career; this is not a nonprofit recruitment session!! Compassionate and engaged people are needed in all sectors of the U.S. work force; the nonprofit sector is just one way of doing good in the world.
- You can make a difference in government and business, as well. In fact, it is of utmost importance that there are people passionate about changing the world for the better in both government and business.

2 What is the Nonprofit Sector?

Suggested time: 15 minutes

It is important to consider why people choose to work in the nonprofit sector in the first place. Ask participants to think a little about what is most important to them through the next activity.



- Index cards should be on your seats.
- On this card, write down three issues you really care about (i.e. children's literacy, LGBT equality, environmental conservation, etc.), three places in the world in which you would like to live, and three contacts you have that might be able to help with your job search (employees of nonprofits, well-connected friends, etc.).
- Give them about five minutes to write.

For the trainer: Depending on your audience, you may want to substitute other “threes” in this activity. For more experienced participants, you may work in things like three nonprofit organizations you really love, three job titles you think would be a good fit for you (real or imagined), or three skills you would like to build a career around (fundraising, event planning, community organizing, etc.). For less experienced participants, you should make these “threes” as concrete and understandable as possible.

Tell them to hold on to their card for later. They will use this list at the end of the workshop and, hopefully, after they leave the workshop.

Next, ask the group to answer questions by naming nonprofit organizations with which they are familiar.

Name a nonprofit organization that:

1. Works locally (research an example, depending on your location)

2. Works nationally (for example, United States Students Association)
 3. Works internationally (for example, Oxfam)
 4. Has over 1,000 paid staff (for example, a university or a hospital)
 5. Has been around for 100 years or more (for example, a university)
 6. Supports a politically liberal platform (for example, Center for Third World Organizing)
 7. Supports a politically conservative platform (for example, National Rifle Association)
 8. Work on two different sides of the same issue (for example, Planned Parenthood & National Right to Life, or MoveOn.org & Heritage Foundation)
- This quiz is simple, but emphasizes the different types of nonprofits that exist.
 - The nonprofit sector is very diverse, and career opportunities in the nonprofit sector are very diverse.
 - Nonprofits need people from many different backgrounds (accounting, IT, management, administrative, marketing, PR, etc.).

Transition into the next part of this section by asking:

So we've leapt in to talking about the nonprofit sector, but we haven't defined that phrase. Can anyone define "the nonprofit sector"?

Give the group just a moment to think about the question and encourage a few people to provide an answer. After a few people have had a chance to share their answers, you can follow with the information below.

- This is sort of a trick question, since "*nonprofit sector*" refers to the U.S. tax code.
- In the U.S., there are basically three "sectors" of the work force: private, public, and nonprofit:
 - The private sector consists of businesses, companies, and corporations that attempt to earn the highest revenue possible, then pay their shareholders with that revenue.
 - The public sector consists of local, state, and federal government offices and programs. The work that the public sector does is funded, in large part, by tax dollars.
 - The nonprofit sector consists of organizations (local, state, national, and international) that attempt, through a variety of means and from a variety of perspectives, to use community resources (financial, experiential, emotional, etc.) to address a range of social, economic, political, and environmental issues. The nonprofit sector is also known as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), third sector, independent sector, social sector, and other descriptive phrases. "Nonprofit" is the most commonly-used term in the U.S.
- It's not a great term – being defined by something you are "not" is less than ideal!
- The nonprofit sector is actually "for" quite a bit. Nonprofit organizations tackle a wide variety of important issues and fill the gap between businesses and governments. They give voice to communities and rely on the goodwill of private citizens to do so.

For the trainer: Only go into the detailed tax information below with more sophisticated groups. You might just want to mention the notion of a 501 (c) 3, a term with which they should become familiar. Other types of nonprofit organizations:

- 501 (c) 3: majority of nonprofits, must show broad public support, donations are tax-deductible (for example, Action Without Borders/Idealist.org)
- 501 (c) 4: advocacy work, lobbying, donations not tax-deductible (for example, ACORN)
- 501 (c) 6: professional and trade associations, donations not tax-deductible (for example, Chamber of Commerce)

For the trainer: If you're interested in learning more about the nonprofit sector, for your own use or for use in this workshop, check out these web links:

<http://www.idealists.org>
<http://www.guidestar.org>
<http://www.nonprofits.org>
<http://news.gilbert.org>
<http://www.npgoodpractice.org>

3 Size and Scope of the Nonprofit Sector

Suggested time: 15 minutes



Begin this activity by writing three figures on flipchart paper:

1.4 million
\$670 billion
1 out of 12

Ask workshop participants to guess what these figures mean, in relation to the nonprofit sector. The answers are:

1.4 million is the number of nonprofit organizations in the United States

Note that the majority of nonprofits have budgets less than \$500,000 and 0-5 paid staff. This number is not necessarily representative of the number of career opportunities available. To give you an idea of larger-scale organizations, the American Red Cross had revenues just over \$3 million and expenditures just over \$3.3 million in fiscal year 2003.

\$670 billion is the amount of revenue generated annually by nonprofits in the United States—more than the GDP of Brazil, Russia, or Australia

Note that it is important to dispel the idea that nonprofits do not make money! They do generate revenue, but the difference between nonprofits and businesses is that nonprofits return their earnings into the community they serve, rather than to their shareholders.

1 out of 12 Americans are employed by nonprofits

Note that many of these jobs are with universities and hospitals, which may employ over 1000 staff members.

For the trainer: Before training others in this material, you should double-check the currency of the statistics quoted above. Go to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) at <http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/FAQ/index.php?category=31> to see up-to-date statistics on the nonprofit sector. Depending on the interest of your group, you might also want to check out more detailed statistics on the NCCS website about the organizations with the greatest total expenses and the greatest total assets. You can find that information in the NCCS Data Web at <http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/PubApps/showTopOrgs.php>

- Keep in mind that these statistics are very U.S.-focused; statistics from international nonprofits are very different, depending on the country.
- Researching the nonprofit sector is a relatively new field, and the minimal data we have tends to be for the U.S.
- Imagine how large the sector is when you consider the rest of the world!

4 Closing and Evaluation

Suggested Time: 15 minutes

Close the workshop by returning to the index cards on which workshop participants wrote their “threes” at the beginning of the workshop. Let them know that a great way to begin exploring career options in the nonprofit sector is to put together various combinations of their “threes” from those cards. For instance, if someone is passionate about housing and homelessness and desperately wants to live in Kansas, they can go to www.Idealist.org and search the database for organizations with those parameters (and they’ll actually get several results!). Then, using their list of contacts, they can try to find people who can help them revise their resume, practice interviews, find contacts/networks to plug in to, etc. Be sure to advocate that they actually go home and do this! And they can let Idealist.org do a lot of the work for them by subscribing to “My Idealist” (there’s a link on the top of the homepage), creating a profile, and letting the site send them updates that suit their profile.

You should close the workshop with both realistic bad news and encouraging good news:

- **Bad news:** The process of entering the nonprofit sector is very different from the traditional job search processes for which many of us have been prepared. It’s pretty unlikely that you’ll open up a newspaper one day and find the specific nonprofit job under the specific job title that you’ve been looking for. It’s much more varied and organization-specific than the private and public sectors, which makes the job search more tedious and more complicated.
- **Good news:** There is lots of opportunity to enter into and “climb the ladder” in the nonprofit sector. Also, the sector tends to be a close-knit community, and many people find it very rewarding to work in. Finally, the sector is so diverse that anyone can find a place in it, and contribute toward making the world place where all people can live free and dignified lives.

For the trainer: You might want to do a short question-and-answer session, if you have extra time and if you feel comfortable doing so. There is a fine line between knowing when to answer a question and when to defer to another resource. **DON'T FAKE IT!!** If you don't know the answer to a question, either point toward a resource you know (such as Idealist.org), ask other workshop participants if they have any input, or offer to contact the person who asked later when you can find the answer to the question.

For this workshop, evaluation can take several different forms. If you are pairing it with another workshop, you should do an evaluation at the end of that additional part. However, if you are only doing this segment, there are a few ways to evaluate both the material presented and the manner in which it was presented:

Evaluation Method 1: One simple, yet effective, evaluation tool is “Plus/Delta.”

Using a piece of flipchart paper, divide the paper in half with a vertical line. On the top of the left side draw a “+” and on the top of the right side draw a “ Δ ” (delta, the chemical symbol for change). Ask workshop participants to call out things that they liked about the workshop (plus) and things they would have changed (delta). Record these comments on the flipchart paper and incorporate them into your next training session.

Evaluation Method 2: Ask a series of open-ended questions, recording the answers on flipchart paper for everyone to see. Take these pieces of paper home with you in order to make changes to the content and/or your presentation style.

Some sample questions might include:

- What did you hope to get out of this workshop?
- What was the most useful part of the workshop for you, and why?
- What was least useful, and why?
- What would improve this workshop?

For the trainer: Whether or not you do a formal or informal evaluation at the end of a workshop depends on your plans for using the feedback. As you begin to do trainings, you might want to do a more formal evaluation to get a sense of what worked and what didn't. If you're using this workshop in a recurring setting (i.e. annual retreat, annual training, etc.), you should definitely do an evaluation in order to learn how to improve the session next time.

Be sure to distribute handouts as workshop participants prepare to depart. As referenced in the “Materials” section of this trainer guide, you should distribute copies of the handouts you can find at the end of the IOC Institute binder. For this workshop, it probably makes the most sense to distribute the “What Are Nonprofit Jobs,” “Top Ten Websites,” and “Top Ten Myths” handouts. And, finally, thank the workshop participants for taking time out of their schedules to attend the workshop. Wish them luck in their own job search and provide them with a way to be in touch with you if they have further questions.

And thank you, for taking the time and energy to offer this workshop on your campus or in your community. Public speaking is one of the most highly-ranked activities for stress levels, and it takes a unique person to stand up in front of people and offer them information and resources. We, at Idealist.org, thank you for your commitment to and efforts in creating a world where all people can lead free and dignified lives!!