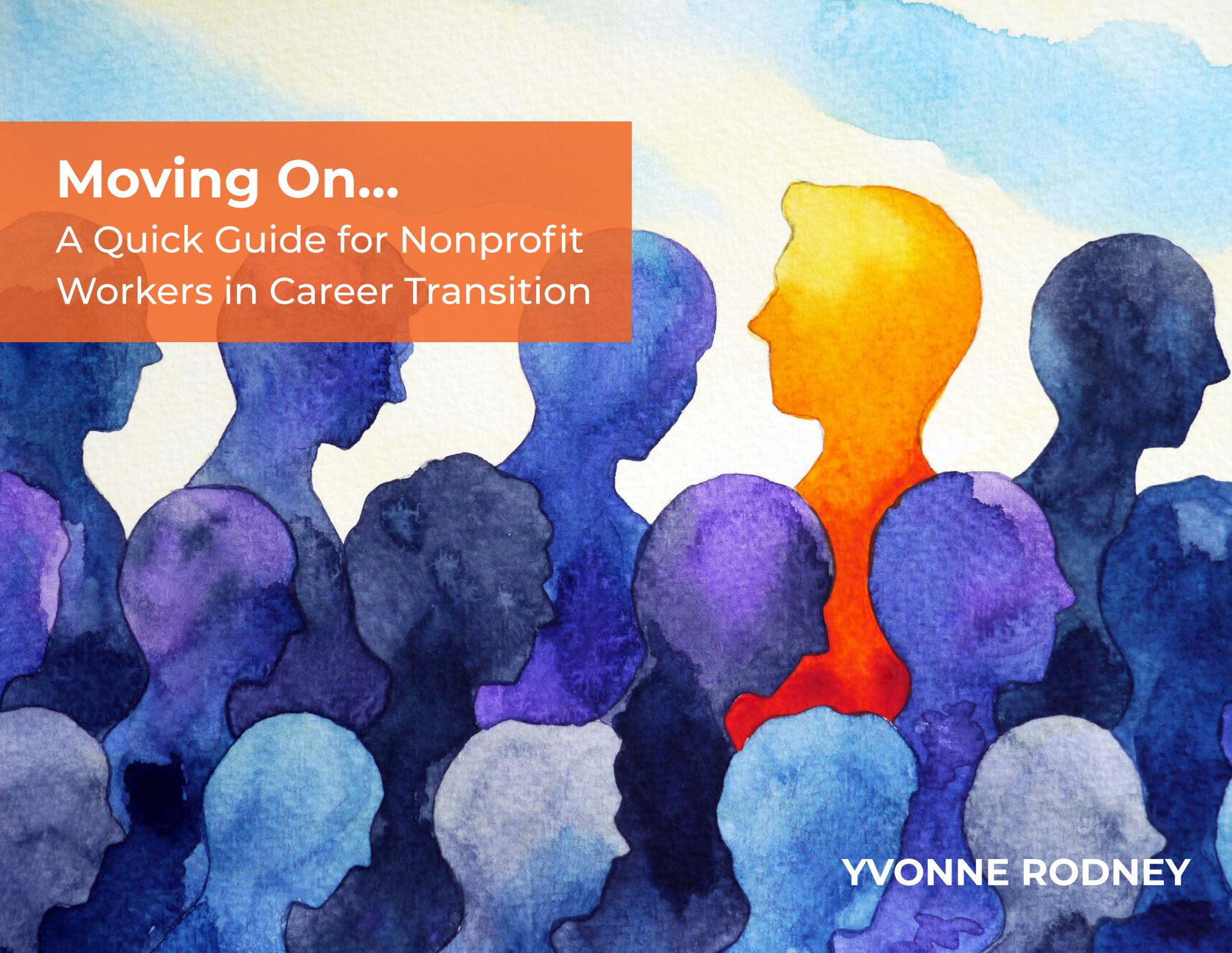


Moving On...

A Quick Guide for Nonprofit
Workers in Career Transition

YVONNE RODNEY

A watercolor illustration of a crowd of people's heads and shoulders in profile, facing right. The colors are various shades of blue, purple, and grey, with one person in the center highlighted in bright orange and yellow. The background is a light, textured wash of blue and white.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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The Counselling
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 04 GETTING STARTED
- 05 SECTION 1: THE JOYS OF WORKING IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR
- 07 SECTION 2: THE IMPACT OF NONPROFIT JOB LOSS
- 10 PROFILE: "MUCH MORE THAN A HELPER"
- 11 SECTION 3: BEFORE YOU START LOOKING FOR WORK
- 20 PROFILE: "STAY CONNECTED!"
- 21 SECTION 4: THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS
- 24 SECTION 5: RESUMES, COVER LETTERS & ONLINE APPLICATIONS
- 28 SECTION 6: THE INTERVIEW
- 34 PROFILE: "YOU HAVE MUCH TO OFFER THE WORLD!"
- 35 SECTION 7: KEEP LOOKING!
- 40 PROFILE: "IDENTIFY THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITIES THAT FIT YOUR SKILLS"
- 41 SECTION 8: PLANNING FOR YOUR NEXT TRANSITION
- 43 PROFILE "WHAT LIES OFF THE BEATEN PATH.."
- 44 A CLOSING MESSAGE
- 45 APPENDIX: USEFUL RESOURCES

GETTING STARTED

Losing a job, whether it's due to funding cuts or other reasons, is never easy. It is our hope that in "Moving On..." you will find tips to help you navigate through the job transition process.

Before you start looking for new work opportunities it is important that you are ready. Finding work takes work. It takes energy and it takes enthusiasm. If you are not clear about what you want to do next, you could end up in a job you hate or not succeed in your search for work. Take a little time to think through your options.

You will get through this. There are many resources and people who can help you design the next phase of your career journey. Most importantly, the passion and purpose that characterized your work in the past will anchor you as you move forward.

So read on. Use what's useful. Ignore what's not.



SECTION 1

The joys of working in the nonprofit sector

Over 2 million people in Canada work in nonprofit and charitable organizations.¹ An additional 13 million people volunteer in these combined sectors. The Ontario nonprofit sector, the largest in Canada, consists of over 1 million workers and 5 million volunteers in 58,000 organizations across the province.² This translates to \$50 billion in economic impact! Not only that, 45 % of the work is done without the support of government or donations.

Why is this information relevant? It's to remind you as you face this first or yet another career transition that you belong to a very large family - people like you committed to doing work that fuels their passion, sense of purpose and making a difference.

¹ Imagine Canada: <http://www.imaginecanada.ca/who-we-are/people>

² The Ontario Nonprofit Network: <https://theonn.ca/about-the-sector/>



SECTION 1

The joys of working in the nonprofit sector

You will find meaningful work again. It was never just about the money or you would have sought employment elsewhere. You chose the nonprofit sector. Maybe it chose you. Being laid off does not mean the qualities that drew and kept you connected to this sector disappear.



Over 2 million

people in Canada work in nonprofit and charitable organizations

Here are some reasons for working in the nonprofit sector. Feel free to add to this list:

- Doing work that I'm passionate about
 - Doing work that allows me to perform a range of duties, use different skills and wear many different hats
 - Doing work where I can have direct impact and make a difference
 - Doing work that is aligned with my values
 - Doing work where every single day
 - Doing work that is a learning experience and an adventure
 - Doing work where I am challenged to create solutions or consider different perspectives
 - Doing work that allows me to make connections with like-minded colleagues and communities
 - Doing work that gives meaning to my life and make me feel useful
 - Doing work for an organization whose goals and mission align with my own
 - Doing work that makes me feel valued
 - Doing work that I enjoy and while it can be exhausting, it is totally worth it
 - Other....
-
-
-

It is important to remember why you chose to work in this sector, especially now. It will help you know what to look for in your next venture.

SECTION 2

The impact of nonprofit job loss

So much of who we are is defined by our job titles. It shouldn't be. But it is. It's a social rite of passage, an expected conversational icebreaker: "So tell me, what do you do?" The mom you are, the part-time potter, the aspiring writer, the nature lover, the foodie, the yoga teacher, the church leader, the computer geek, the traveller... all these might be parts of 'what you do' but the expected answer is supposed to address the issue of what you are paid to do.



SECTION 2

The impact of nonprofit job loss

Whether you saw it coming or it caught you by surprise, when the work that connects with your core values is lost, it can leave you feeling off-center. You may struggle with how to now define yourself.

- ▶ It was when the US Border Agent asked Sara her occupation she realized that in losing her job, she'd also lost her identity. For years she had a job title that told people what she did. As she reached for the automatic response her mind panicked. The file it was trying to access, corrupted. Her mouth opened and closed until finally she mumbled something that must have passed muster and she was allowed to go on. She cried through the flight. Finally.
- ▶ Damien, even though it happened over 12 years ago, describes in detail how he felt and still feel about the afternoon meeting when his ED informed the staff of the 'effective immediately' lay-off notice because funding was cut and the agency forced to close its doors. He recalls the slow walk back to his office and out of the building where he'd put in long hours doing work that was making a difference in people's lives.

SECTION 2

The impact of nonprofit job loss

And once your brain wraps itself around the fact that you no longer have a job, even if funding cuts were the cause, your self-esteem can also take a hit. Then to compound matters, if you also volunteer for organizations connected to your previous place of employment, you might have to deal with frequent reminders of the loss.

Take stock of how you feel. If you are angry, sad, worried, bewildered, distressed... don't dismiss your feelings. Acknowledge them. Talk about them with someone. Write about them, but do not ignore them. Like any kind of grieving, everyone handles it differently. Some are able to quickly bounce back and others may take longer. But the grieving is a necessary and healthy component of the letting go and moving on.

Tips for de-stressing and surviving

- Breathe deeply
- Exercise often
- Surround yourself with people who believe in you
- Join a job loss support group
- Journal your way through the process



Life happens. Change happens. Find the resilience deep inside to help you bounce back. And move on.

On the other hand, maybe you are not sad about losing the job. Perhaps you've stayed or gotten 'stuck' in a particular role or subsector of nonprofits – the arts, social service, health, etc. See this as a chance to look outside those borders to another part of the sector or use this push to get on with other goals in life you've been postponing. Just go for it!

“Much more than a helper!”



In her 5-year career span Suma held many roles within the nonprofit sector. Her background working in homeless shelters, supporting at-risk youth, and providing employment services allowed her to develop a unique set of skills that were very transferable from one job to the next. Suma derives the most satisfaction not only from supporting those who don't have a support system to develop connections and seeing themselves as valued members of society, but also learning from them and discovering shared experiences.

“Having the opportunity to walk alongside someone through their journey and watching them gain the confidence to move forward independently is beyond satisfying.”

Flexibility, for Suma, is one of the most important competences needed to work in nonprofit. This can take the form of adjusting to changes in expectations, changes in clients' situations, or changes in goals. She firmly believes flexibility is necessary to thrive.

On the subject of dealing with job transitions, Suma reasoned that if all the people whose lives touched hers were able to wake up every day and move forward, despite their many losses, she could also.

“What left me feeling the most surprised was the sense of gratitude that I had.”

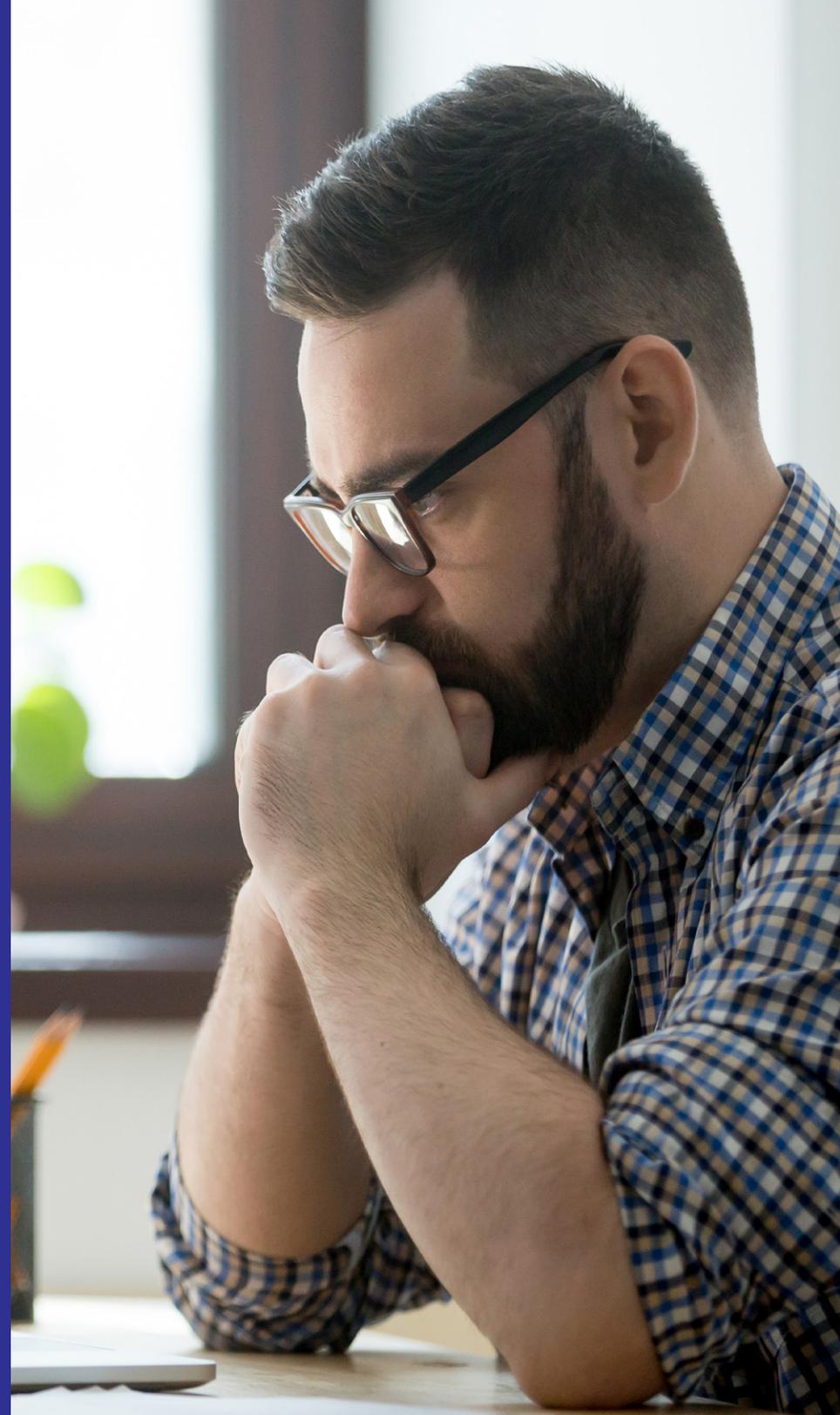
If Suma could offer one piece of advice to someone facing a career transition, it would be this: Reflect on the experiences you gained and the lives that were touched. When she received notification that her position was ending, Suma admits to finding herself floundering, questioning her identity. How would she spend her days? Her entire self-definition was tied up in her role as a helper. But after some soul searching she realized that having some time to herself would give her the ability to truly grow as a person, not just an employee.

“While I was fearful, I had incredible experiences that would come with me to any position, and I had the strength and courage of all of those people I'd worked with to move me forward.”

SECTION 3

Before you start looking for work

You know you need to move on. Your bills are not going to get paid if you don't. Not only that, you enjoy being employed and doing something of value.



SECTION 3

Before you start looking for work

Before you start looking for work however, here are some things to do:

Assess your current situation

Financial

- How much money do you currently have to live on and how long will it last?
- Will you need to apply for Employment Insurance? Where is the closest office? What are you eligible to receive?
- What other financial supports, if any, are available?

Work options

- The loss of a job can make us reevaluate our life and force us to question our next venture. Do you want to return to the nonprofit sector (remember the reasons you stayed) or do something entirely different?

Retraining

- Additional education, training or credentialing can open doors to expanded career options. What resources are there to help you? (See Further Education and Retraining in Section 7)

Determine/clarify your career goals

What do you want to do now? Is there an idea you've wanted to try out but never had the time or the courage to explore? Is this the time? As mentioned earlier, sometimes a lay off, after the dust settles and your mind has adjusted to the new reality, can provide the opportunity and impetus to re-invent yourself. Before you jump into looking for work, consider enlisting the assistance of a career development specialist (SECTION 4) to help you in figuring out the possibilities.

SECTION 3

Before you start looking for work

Identify your High Enjoyment Skills (HES)

Nonprofit workers are multi-skilled. Smaller staff complements mean that everyone plays double or triple roles. You are the office administrator but also the program planning and delivery person. As executive director, your role may include covering agency-wide communications, creating strategy, overseeing building renovations and writing materials for a variety of audiences. As program manager, you facilitate workshops, lead community groups on joint projects and coordinate goody bag pickups for the annual children's fun day.

Did you enjoy facilitating workshops, planning programs, or advising clients more than some of the other tasks in your job description? If yes, these could be career areas worth exploring. And best of all, you already have experience doing it. Document all these different things you had to do and leverage them to your advantage. Here is a sampling of skills and attributes nonprofit workers may have in abundance. (Feel free to include ones that are missing to your list).

Skills & Attributes of Nonprofit Workers

- Interpersonal
- Board management
- Capacity building
- Strategic planning
- Accountability
- Negotiation
- Advocacy
- Multi-tasking
- Adaptability
- Versatility
- Collaboration
- Team management
- Speaking/interacting
- Human resources
- Public speaking
- Project management
- Program development
- Facilitating
- Volunteer coordination
- Counselling/Advising
- Crisis intervention
- Innovation/creativity
- Languages
- Grant writing
- Mediation
- Financial management
- Budgeting
- Community outreach
- Fundraising/revenue generation
- Event planning
- Sales
- Social media
- Marketing
- Self-motivation
- Resourcefulness

Which of the above skills/attributes do you have? A career development professional can work with you to identify the categories where your current skills exist and potential work opportunities where you can use those skills. Alternatively, if you wish to go it alone, complete the **Skills Clusters Checklist** below or find one online to get you started.

Remember: Skills are the foundation for your resume, interview and job performance.

SECTION 3

Before you start looking for work

Skills Clusters Checklist

STEP 1

From the categories below, place a check beside the skills you have.

Communication

The ability to express, transmit and interpret knowledge and ideas

- Listening attentively
- Expressing ideas
- Facilitating group discussion
- Reading nonverbal messages
- Persuading
- Reporting information
- Writing
- Public speaking
- Being sensitive
- Listening
- Conveying feelings
- Providing support
- Motivating
- Customer service
- Counselling/advising
- Cooperating
- Delegating
- Representing others
- Perceiving feelings
- Advocating/mediating

Human Relations

Using interpersonal skills to resolve conflict, help and relate to people

- Developing rapport
- Being sensitive
- Managing time
- Attending to detail
- Meeting goals
- Enlisting help

Analytical

The ability to search for specific knowledge, conceptualize future needs and provide solutions

- Forecasting, predicting
- Creating ideas
- Identifying problems
- Imagining alternatives
- Identifying resources
- Gathering information
- Solving problems
- Setting goals
- Extracting important information
- Defining needs
- Analyzing
- Computing/coding
- Researching

Organizational

The ability to get things done on time and with all the details attended to

- Implementing decisions
- Enforcing policies
- Being punctual
- Accepting responsibility
- Setting and meeting deadlines
- Organizing
- Making decisions
- Choreographing

SECTION 3

Before you start looking for work

Skills Clusters Checklist

Creative/Artistic

Using one's imagination to create a new concept, idea, product or service

- Author/compose
- Using intuition
- Sketching/drawing
- Portraying images
- Brainstorming
- Designing
- Crafting
- Conceptualizing
- Using imagination
- Dancing
- Acting
- Story-telling
- Playing an instrument

Physical/Technical

The ability to skillfully use and manipulate hands, body, tools or elements of the physical world

- Building/constructing
- Repairing
- Restoring/renovating
- Physical agility
- Manual dexterity
- Testing
- Growing crops/plants/flowers
- Installing
- Physical agility
- Assembling

STEP 2

From the skills identified in the Skills Clusters Checklist AND the Nonprofit Skills, place an asterisk beside the ones you most enjoy using. These are your High Enjoyment Skills (HES).

When we enjoy doing something it does not feel like work. We are motivated and engaged. However, we aren't always good at everything we enjoy. Finding where the things we enjoy doing (interests) intersect with our areas of competence (skills) creates your High Enjoyment Skills (HES). Look for work that allows you to use these skills and ensure in your resume they are prominently displayed. Even though you may not always find work that uses only your HES skills, aim for a job that includes a solid representation of them.

SECTION 3

Before you start looking for work

Revisit your core values

Our values are the things that give our lives meaning. A serious investigation of our occupational pursuits should take into consideration how and if it aligns with our values. Why? Most people working full-time spend at least 8-10 hours per day at work. This far exceeds time spent sleeping, maintaining ourselves, or with friends/families. Thus, there ought to be something in the work we do that aligns with the values we deem important.

STEP 3

From the Life/Work Values below (plus any you wish to include), indicate which ones are High Priority (HP), Moderate Priority (MP) or No/Low Priority (LP) to you.

Life/Work Values

- Creativity
- Helping others
- Acquiring wealth
- Structure/stability
- Doing something practical
- Job security
- Moral Fulfillment
- Honesty/Integrity
- Influencing others
- Having status
- Counselling/advising
- Being intellectually challenged
- Working outdoors
- Leadership
- Analyzing
- Solving problems
- Working with my hands/body
- Mobility
- Advocating for others
- Organizing/planning
- Spirituality
- Inner peace
- Humility
- Risk-taking
- Fun/pleasure
- World peace
- Tradition
- Generosity
- Ecology
- Tolerance
- Collaboration/team work
- Beauty
- Challenge
- Family
- Life balance
- Time alone
- Friendships
- Physical Fitness
- Independence
- Competence
- Mastery/expertise
- Hopefulness
- Variety/change
- Fame
- Power/authority

SECTION 3

Before you start looking for work

STEP 4

If your HP list is greater than 10, whittle it down to the 10 most important. These become your Top 10 Priority Values.

Before moving on to a new job, assess and compare how many of your High Priority Values were being met in the work you did prior to the lay-off. If only a small percentage, then it's time to search for work that will incorporate more. If a large percentage were being met, then you must be strategic in your job search to find employment that continues to support these values. You could consider applying to organizations that promote, practice and subscribe to **decent work** – values that drive the work of nonprofits and charities. These organizations are committed to fair wages, respect, integrity, safety, participation in decision-making, equal representation and treatment of all people.

How was decent work a part of your previous organization?

What practices do you want to see in your next one?

Here again, a career development professional can help you sort through and identify the values that are High Priority at this point in your life. (See also **Section 1** where some of the values prized by those working in the nonprofit sector are outlined).

Harness the Power of Your Personality

Knowledge about and understanding of your personality is critical to career or occupational fit. We typically focus on our skills and areas of competence on our resumes. That is good. However, we should also include information about who we are.

SECTION 3

Before you start looking for work

Inventories like the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*³ can help in identifying personal characteristics or preferences. It can give us language to describe how we work best, how we prefer to process information, make decisions, interact with the world, and what energizes us. Armed with this language, we can ask better questions at interviews to help determine if we are a good fit for the job or the organization. For example: If you know that too much social interaction drains you, a service role where you are constantly 'on' may not be a good fit – even if you are good at it. If you decide to take the job anyway, you should build time within each day for recharging your batteries so you don't burn yourself out. Knowing your preferences along with their inherent strengths and weaknesses will help you navigate more effectively the demands of your job. In the best scenario, it is far better to do work that fits you than trying to make yourself fit the work.

Determine Your Life Balance Needs

We are multi-faceted beings. No one job can meet all our needs. We shouldn't expect it to. How we spend our life is what's important. Life satisfaction results when we engage in activities that reflect our High Priority values. If you get a lot of satisfaction in playing an instrument; being active, physical or mobile; writing; being outdoors; thrill seeking; interacting with people; or any number of things that the occupation you are currently hired to do is never going to fulfill, it is important that you carve out time in your life to do these things: once per day, once per week, or once every so often, for 10 minutes to 10 hours. You will find yourself feeling more balanced and satisfied with your life if you do.

Educate yourself about the labor market

When visiting a country for the first time you might wish to know the weather conditions so you can pack the appropriate clothes. You may want to know what language is spoken or something about the culture and customs. Similarly, labour market information can provide you with vital knowledge of what to expect as you search for work. Things like...

- What are the prospects for this career area?
- What do these jobs pay?
- What are the credentials needed?
- Where does this type of work exist?

³ Available from career counsellors or other certified practitioners. Try this free inventory offered by Typefocus : <http://www.free.typefocus.com>

SECTION 3

Before you start looking for work

The Job bank, run by the government of Canada, is a good source for labour market information. Not only does it include job listings and educational requirements, but you will also find information on occupational outlook and salary information for various jobs across Canada.  www.jobbank.gc.ca/home. In addition, Ontario Labour Market,  www.ontario.ca/page/labour-market provides similar information about jobs in Ontario

Informational interviews can also be a valuable way to learn about a career area before committing to it. Simply identify someone working in a job you want to learn about and request an ‘interview.’

Sample informational interview questions

- How did you get started in this field?
- Describe what a typical day in this job is like?
- What skills and attributes are needed to do this type of work?
- What advice would you give to someone looking to enter this field?
- What do you like most/least about what you do?
- What educational requirements are required?

Informational interviews do’s and don’ts

- Do not wear out your welcome. A typical informational interview takes about 30 minutes.
- Do not ask the interviewee for a job. You are there to get information.
- Do send a note of thanks and offer how you may be a resource for them in the future.
- Do send a resume afterwards ONLY if the career area you interviewed about is of interest AND you have the qualifications to do the work. Then kindly ask should they become aware of any vacancies in the field, to pass your resume forward.

Retraining

- If you have no idea where to find a potential informational interview contact ask those within your network. Your mother, father, doctor, accountant, colleague, child, nutritionist or trainer may actually know someone who knows someone that fits what you’re looking for.
- LinkedIn, Facebook groups, professional association Meet & Greet events, career fairs, and networking sessions are also excellent opportunities for meeting people.

Read more about informational interviews in this article at Live Careers:  <https://www.livecareer.com/career/advice/interview/informational-interviewing>

“Stay connected”



Seeing the benefits of his work on others is what has kept Samir going. He has learned well the importance of wearing different hats when working in nonprofits.

During his 19-year tenure, Samir has developed competencies in project management, fundraising, media, web design and maintenance, HR and volunteer management, interviewing, event planning, public speaking, database design and management, and writing – skills basically required to run a small business.

None of these skills or opportunities would hold any meaning for Samir without getting to do work that speaks to his heart: helping others who cannot help themselves and equipping others to do the same.

Working in a nonprofit pushes a person “out of your comfort zone beyond what you thought you could do.” In that vein, his best advice to someone facing a career transition is to:

“... stay connected to those who benefit from what you do. This will give you the energy to create new ideas...find your limits and create boundaries without feeling guilt.”

SECTION 4

Different types of career development professionals



SECTION 4

Different types of career development professionals

As you look for a new job or try to figure out what to do next you can enlist the help of a career development professional. They work in a wide range of venues from employment agencies and private practice to outplacement services. Fees vary from free to over \$150/hour for those in private practice or consulting work. Shop around to negotiate a rate consistent with what you can afford.

Career Counsellors. What should I be doing with my life? How do I know what career is right for me? What is my dream career? What shall I do next? These are some of the big questions a career counsellor can help you address. If you are unsure what you want to do or are thinking of a career change, a career counsellor will help you explore your interests, skills/aptitudes, values, personality, and other factors relevant to making informed career choices. Using formal and informal self-assessment inventories (e.g. Strong Interest Inventory, Myers Briggs Type Indicator) s/he will help you identify thematic elements in your profile and potential career options for consideration. In addition, s/he will help you understand how to use labor market information to determine prospects for the path(s) you are considering then assist you in understanding the requirements needed for further education/training. You should be able to walk away from a career counselling appointment with a working plan or strategy for the next steps in advancing your career development.

Career Coaches. The focus of career coaching is to help you achieve specific career goals. “I want to get promoted to a senior programming or fundraising position.” “I need to know how to negotiate a salary increase.” “I need help in perfecting my interview skills...” If you have a clear idea of what want to do but are unsure of the strategy to get you there, career coaching is for you. A career coach can also help you determine underlying assumptions that could be impeding your career progression. You should be able to walk away from a career coaching session with improvements in your identified goal(s).



Different types of career development professionals



Employment Counsellors. If you are seeking assistance in resume/cover letter writing, how to look for work, where to look for jobs, how to use job search boards, etc., you will benefit from seeing an employment counsellor. The goal of employment counselling is to equip you with the tools needed to succeed in the job search and interview. You should be able to walk away from your employment counselling process with a revamped and targeted resume/cover letter, knowledge about how to source and apply for work using a variety of media, and tips/strategies for succeeding in interviews.

Job Developers. “I want someone to help me find a job.” A job developer (JD) does exactly what the name suggests. They develop jobs for you or more accurately, find a position for you. JDs typically have a pool of employers with whom they regularly liaise who are looking for skilled candidates. The JD works for both the employer and for you – matching the right candidate to the right position/employer. JDs’ work is funded by government or placement services and can save employers the onerous task of recruiting and selecting candidates for their job vacancies. You should be able to walk away from your time with a Job Developer with a job in hand or at the least, a strategy for moving forward.

SECTION 5

Resumes, cover letters, & online applications



SECTION 5

Resumes, cover letters, & online applications

The Resume

This is the primary tool needed for finding work. Its purpose is to clearly detail the combination of skills, experiences, attributes and credentials you have that are relevant to the area in which you are looking for work. Head up your resume with your name and contact information. Next you can add a clearly stated objective, a summary of your relevant skills, a brief documentation of your key competences followed by a listing of your relevant experience. Remember, relevance is the key.

There are 3 general types of resumes:

Chronological Resume:

Strongly preferred by employers this type of resume provides a historical documentation of your employment and education experiences in reverse chronological order. Use this format if your employment history matches the work you are now looking to do.

Functional or Skill-based Resume:

This resume highlights broad or specific areas of competence extracted from the totality of your experiences. The aim is to clearly showcase a more rounded view of what you bring to the employment table. Use this format if you want to showcase your skills and downplay gaps in your work history.

Combination Resume:

Integrating elements of the Chronological and Skill-based formats, the combination resume categorizes similar types of job duties to create a clear portrait of one's areas of expertise. It also includes a work chronology, devoid of job description content, for employers to peruse. Use this format if you want to showcase your areas of skills and solid work history.

The Cover Letter

The purpose of the cover letter is to tell the employer how your experiences and attributes match the requirements of the position being advertised or if unsolicited, the type of work you wish to do. This means that prior to writing a cover letter you should first review the job description and highlight the skills the employer is looking for. Typically, the most important skills/qualifications are listed first. You may not have all the qualifications in the job listing but you stand a better chance of being invited for an interview if you have the most relevant ones. Use your cover letter to highlight 2-3 relevant skills and provide supporting statements.

SECTION 5

Resumes, cover letters, & online applications

Your cover letter should be no longer than 1 page and answer 4 basic questions preferably in the order outlined here: (1) What position are you applying for? (2) Why are you interested? (3) What skills do you have that are relevant to the position? (4) What do you want to happen next?

Bear in mind that the cover letter is more like an appetizer than a main course. Keep it short and relevant. Once you get to the interview, you can elaborate more. Sample Cover Letters and Resume building tools can be found at:

 www.livecareer.com/cover-letter-builder.

Online job applications

If you are using large job boards like Indeed or an organization's website, you will be required to upload your resume. Be aware that your resume is likely one of several submitted for a particular job.

CASE STORY ILLUSTRATION: An already overworked Manager looking to fill an immediate Administrative Coordinator vacancy at a post-secondary institution advertised it on the school's careers portal. When she went online to view the applications at the close of the posting, there were over 600 applications.

Q: *Will this Manager print and read through all 600 resumes and accompanying covering letters?*

A: *No*

Using the tools available within the school's careers database, the Manager attempted to shorten the list by searching for applicants meeting 80%+ of the qualifications for the job. That narrowed the list down to 240.

Q: *Will this busy Manager print and read through 240 resumes?*

A: *NO. It's still too many.*

Next she performed a keyword search and a credentials search, which got her list down to 60. These she flagged for perusal. Later, after a long day spent putting out other work related fires, she returned to the 60 short listed resumes.

Resumes, cover letters, & online applications

Q: After a long workday, is the Manager going to read all 60 resumes from top to bottom? Is she going to take the time to figure out how an applicant's mixed bag of work experiences relate to the requirements of the position? Will she have patience with a resume that rambles, or one where the applicant did not take the time to catch typos and grammar errors?

A: No, No, No, and NO.

So how do you ensure your resume is among the ones that make the short-list?

- Embed **keywords** in your resume that are relevant to the career area to which you are applying. For example, if you are applying for Program Manager roles, keywords for that area could include, program development, workshop facilitator, program delivery, program evaluation, etc.
- Create a **rich text version** of your resume and use this when you are required to upload. Do a document version and a PDF version. Fancy graphics or formatting does not always transfer intact during the uploading process.
- Proofread your resume and cover letter before sending it off. One riddled with careless typos or bad grammar will end up in the discard pile.
- Make the life of the end reader easy by keeping your content relevant, short, and strategically placed, i.e., don't put the most important information about your qualifications at the end of the resume.
- Remember, the person who gets the job is not necessarily the person most qualified. It's the person who is best able to communicate how s/he can meet the needs of the organization. What you say in writing and what/how you communicate during the interview is very important.

SECTION 6

The interview

Your resume has done its job when it results in an invitation for an interview. If the resume and cover letter is the appetizer, see the interview as the main course. Preparation is key.



SECTION 6

The interview

Before the interview

- Determine what you will wear and make sure it is professional and comfortable.
- Anticipate questions you might be asked and how you would answer them.
- Look up how long it will take you to get to your destination based on the time of day you will be travelling.
- Print 1-2 hard copies of your resume, list of referees, or any other documentation you deem relevant to take with you to the interview.
- Prepare 3-4 questions you want to ask. Example: If hired for this position, how will my performance be evaluated and by whom? What do you like most about working at this company?" What are the most important attributes or qualities needed to excel in this role? What success indicators would you expect the person hired for this position to meet within the first 3 months?

After the interview

- Send a thank you email or note.
- Reflect on your performance – what you were proud of, where you felt you could improve.

During the interview

- Stay positive. If you're not feeling so, fake it. A positive, friendly and confident interviewee is much more attractive to an employer than one who looks defeated and tired.
- Be engaged. Look interested. Let your passion for the role shine through in your conversation.
- Take a second or two to collect your thoughts before answering interview questions. If you're not clear on what is being asked, rephrase the question or ask for clarification. Example, "By that do you mean...?" Jotting down key words from the questions is also a good way to ensure your answers are relevant to what's being asked.
- Use short illustrations, examples, or stories to support the answers you provide to the interview questions.
- When asked if you have any questions, pull out those you prepared and ask them. If the interview seems to be wrapping up and the opportunity has not been provided, politely let them know you have a few questions.
- Continue applying for other jobs until you land one.

The interview

6 Tough Interview Questions & Suggested Responses

Relevance is the key to answering all interview questions. Don't forget that! Every thing you discuss or use to illustrate your responses should be relevant to the job for which you are being interviewed. Make the connection clear in your answers.

Below are examples of answers coined to address 6 tough questions. Your answers will be different but hopefully these responses will guide you in coming up with your own should these questions ever be asked of you. Both personal and work related examples have been used in the answers because learning happens in all spheres of our lives.

Q1: Tell me about yourself?

If you have done your preparation this question should not catch you by surprise. In 2 minutes or less tell the interviewer how the combination of your skills, experiences and qualities have led you to this point. For example, if being interviewed for an ED role, you could answer this question by saying:

“As you can see from my resume, I’ve been working in the nonprofit sector for the last 8 years. Prior to that I worked in the corporate sector and while the work paid well and had many perks and benefits, I felt dissatisfied. I wanted to do work that more closely aligned with my passion and values. It’s important to me to leave the planet in a better place, to make a felt difference, to see the direct impact of what I do in bettering the lives of others and I need my work, this largest concentration of hours in my day to reflect that. Outside of my employment, I am a theatre lover. I believe in the power of a great story to move people. In my work I try to listen and hear people’s stories. It helps me to not lose touch with the humanity we all share. So in addition to my skills in fundraising, team management, and capacity building, this is the mindset, approach and motivation I would bring to the position.”

The interview

Q2: What are your weaknesses?

Don't get tripped up by this question. The opposite of our strengths are our weak points.

"I tend to be more of a big picture person. Taking the long view is how I ensure desired outcomes are achieved but in so doing I can neglect taking time with the details. So what I do to compensate is focus first on the long view to keep me oriented in the right direction and then make time to go through each aspect of a plan step by step to flag any missed areas. I also solicit feedback from colleagues whose strengths lie in this area to ensure I do not miss anything. I've learned over the years that I do not have to be good at everything. I can tap into the skills of others on my team when a task requires skills outside my strengths to produce something better than I could have achieved alone."

Q3: Why should we hire you?

"Based on the qualifications outlined in the job description, I think I possess a majority of the skills you are looking for. In hiring me you will gain a committed, responsible, hardworking employee - someone with integrity and compassion. Past employers have commended me for my initiative, creativity and excellent work ethic. I also try to be personable and kind in my dealings with people – be they colleagues or clients. If these are qualities you are looking for then you would benefit from hiring me."

The interview

Q4: *Why did you leave your last job?*

“Due to a significant reduction in funding the organization had to reduce its staffing complement. Unfortunately, I was one of the casualties. However this is the nature of grant-funded work. That said, I am still committed to making a difference in people’s lives through the work I do and will be able to continue doing, if hired for this position.”

Q5: *What negative feedback do you most often receive?*

“When I do workshops, for example, participants often comment that they wished I’d spent more time on topics related to the workshop but outside the scope of what the workshop actually covers. I remedy that by making sure I clearly indicate the learning outcomes at the outset. In my performance evaluations over the years I have never received any particularly negative feedback. However, something a former manager cautioned me about very early in my career has stayed with me. He said, ‘Don’t let your need for expediting things prevent you from being sensitive to the feelings of others.’ You see, immediately after being notified by a staff member that there had been a death in her family and that she would be requiring time off work, I sent her the required forms to complete. The staff member got upset when she received the forms, assuming I did not care about her feelings. Lesson learned: Take time to acknowledge the feelings of others. I could have waited to send the forms. People matter more than paperwork.

The interview

Q6: Describe an obstacle you had to overcome?

Learning comes from different type of life experiences. Here is an example of how you can use a non-work related experience to answer this question. You may choose however to keep all your answers work-related.

*“Last year my dad’s dementia became full-blown Alzheimer’s. He required 24-hour care and being their only child, my mother needed assistance. Someone wrote a book called *The Long Goodbye*. That was our experience. For the next 7 years we watched my dad lose his memories including memories of us. The big obstacle in this for me was the letting go and coming to terms with the reality of who my dad had become and the impact his absence left in our lives. So instead of wishing for what was gone, I gradually learned to take pleasure in the moments when he ‘came back for a visit’ or the days I saw him smile, or say/do something reminiscent of his former self. It taught me that the small moments matter, that there’s joy to be found in the here and now instead of pining for what might have been. This learning further cemented my commitment to making a difference in the lives of people and why I continue to seek out opportunities like this role, to do so.”*

“You have gifts to offer the world!”



A veteran of charitable causes, Leba has spent more than 25 years working in a number of different roles. Currently she serves as the Executive Director for a small charity. Knowing she is able to help and support people is very gratifying and worth dedicating her time to in spite of the challenges.

“You work really hard, not making a lot of money, but you feel great about what you do knowing in some small way you are helping to make the world a better place.”

Leba identifies a wide range of competencies she developed over the years including fundraising, collaboration, creativity, written communication, financing & budgeting, relationship management, human resources, supervision, training and patience. She stresses the importance of operating in a way that is equitable, accommodating, and mindful - understanding your personal advantages, biases and world view so that people are approached and treated with respect and integrity at all times.

In the transition from one charity organization to another, Leba was surprised to find so much similarity in the struggles and challenges. What gives her hope is that the younger generation is infusing new ideas into the field that keeps it growing and thriving. Not only do these young people want to serve but they are also stepping up to the plate to do so. Her advice to those facing transitions is simple and heartfelt:

“Believe in your skills and what you’ve learned to date. Be open-minded and don’t be afraid to challenge yourself. You have gifts to offer the world!”

SECTION 7

Keep looking!

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the first job for which we interviewed resulted in an offer? Alas, this is not typical. The majority of job seekers go to multiple interviews, sometimes for the same job, before landing an offer. It's hard work looking for work. Try not to put all your job search eggs in one basket, so to speak. Use multiple methods, means, and sources to uncover the work opportunities that are right for you. Knowing what you want to do is the first step.



SECTION 7

Keep looking!

Job Boards

- Monster, Indeed, Workopolis and CharityVillage are examples of big job boards. (LinkedIn is also becoming part of this community). Jobs on these sites come from direct employer postings or from postings listed on organizational websites. On these job boards you can customize your search by job title, industry, geographic location, part/full-time and other criteria. You can upload your resume or be directed to the original source of the job posting for application details. You will also be provided with suggestions for similar type of work and can sign up to receive job alerts. Most are easy to use and very customizable.
- The down side of using job boards is the ease. You can apply for 50 jobs in one day. That's an efficient use of time. However of the 50 jobs you applied for, you probably may hear back from 1 or 2. That does not mean there are no jobs. It might just mean that everyone is looking in the same area and somehow your resume is not making it to the top of the list of candidates to interview. You need to do more than just apply online and wait for the calls to come in.

Career/Job Fairs

- In any given week across most cities, there is usually a career or job fair taking place. Job fairs are focused on bringing job seekers and organizations together in one place to discuss available and anticipated vacancies. Career Fairs on the other hand will include employers with vacancies to fill but also organizations providing training opportunities, industry information, employment services providers, and the like.
- Before going to a job or career fair, take the time to learn about the organizations participating (usually available online) and what they do. This way you can predetermine and target the ones with whom you wish to speak and save yourself the task of wandering from booth to booth to learn this information.
- Dress as if going for an interview. The saying is true: You might never get a second chance to make a great first impression.
- Take resumes with you. If you have also created a business card, these are handy to share, especially if you include a note on the back about the type of work you are looking for.
- Follow up. Collect business cards from contacts with whom you wish to follow up later. Write a note to yourself on the card so that when you get home you can remember what you'd discussed and with whom. Then, do the follow up ASAP. Call, email, or send a professionally worded text message reminding the person of your conversation at the fair and your interest in connecting further.

SECTION 7

Keep looking!

Networking

- Many job vacancies are not advertised. Ask any of your family members or colleagues how they got jobs in the past and most will tell you that it was through a connection, a volunteer or internship placement, a referral, or personal networking. We tend to trust what is known, familiar or recommended by someone whose opinion we value. Remember the Case Story Illustration in Section 5? If, within that batch of 60 short-listed resumes, that Manager recognizes someone she knows or met at a job fair, or who'd impressed her at an informational interview, that person will likely be interviewed.
- So how do you connect with the right people? (1) Ask the people you know. There is a good chance that you know someone who knows someone you want to connect with. (2) Job or career fairs, networking events, and informational interviews are other methods. (3) Social

Media: Apps like MeetUp, Peoplehunt, Foursquare or even Facebook Groups can connect you with others sharing similar interests. Networking platforms like LinkedIn (www.linkedin.ca) can connect you worldwide with professional colleagues, groups and communities, build a professional profile and peruse job vacancies (4) Access the resources provided by professional associations. For almost every job family in Canada, there is a corresponding professional association that includes a wealth of career related information, networking opportunities, memberships, professional development and training, events, and even job vacancy ads. Charity Village <https://charityvillage.com/cms/organizations/professional-associations> provides a listing of professional associations. Also, you can peruse the Associations Canada directory at a public library near you.

NOTE: Most employment service agencies will teach you how to network effectively. Some even organize networking events for job seekers.

Further Education/Retraining

As with job readiness, educational readiness is equally important. Research the educational options you are considering as judiciously as you would a job.

SECTION 7

Keep looking!

- ▶ How long is the program and at what schools/training facilities is it available?
- ▶ What will it cost?
- ▶ How will I financially support my family and/or myself while completing the education or training program?
- ▶ What certification/credentials will I obtain once completed?
- ▶ Will it connect me with future work opportunities and/or equip me with job skills through practicums, internships, coops, or other work-integrated learning?
- ▶ What pre-requisites do I need to enter the program?
- ▶ Am I able to commit to the length of time required to complete the program?
- ▶ Am I psychologically ready to return to a classroom?

These are a few of the questions to consider. Do not shy away from discussing your options or plans with a career development professional. They can help you process the questions and provide a degree of objectivity.

If further education is what you decide to do next, the following training and educational websites will prove useful.

- **Second Career:** a government funded program that allows laid off workers to receive funding for skills training 
www.ontario.ca/page/second-career
- **Employment Ontario Adjustment Advisory Program** is for Ontario residents who have lost their job from a company closure or mass layoff. The company must have employed 50 or more employees and have filed a termination notice.
 www.ontario.ca/page/adjusting-after-job-loss
- **Apprenticeships** are formalized training for those wanting to work in the skilled trades. It combines classroom and job site training.  www.ontario.ca/page/start-apprenticeship

Sample informational interview questions

- **Jobs & Employment:**  www.ontario.ca/page/jobs-and-employment
- **Ontario Community Colleges:**  www.ontariocolleges.ca/en
- **Ontario Universities:**  www.electronicinfo.ca/universities

SECTION 7

Keep looking!

Rejuvenate your spirit

The daily grind of looking for work can sap your energy. When days turn into weeks and weeks to months with no job offer, even the most optimistic person can lose heart. So how do you keep going when you are feeling defeated? How do you keep your spirits up when you have no spirit left?

- Engage in positive self-talk. Even when you don't feel like it, fake it till you make it. Our brains are wonderfully pliable. Remind yourself every day that you are smart, gifted, talented, and special.
- Do one small thing every day that gives you personal satisfaction. Treat yourself to that decadent cookie or cupcake you've been eyeing, exercise, play a sport, laugh with friends. This signals to your mind that you are okay and prevents it from taking a downward spiral.
- Volunteer. This can help you identify organizations or types of work you might be interested in doing next. It can also expand your network, build your resume, and keep you busy.
- Go back to school, retrain, or apply for a temporary 'getting by' type of job.
- Give yourself a time out. Take a day or a week to see friends, focus on a hobby, or go on a retreat where you can listen to your heart and refresh your soul.

“Identify the right opportunities that fit your skills”



“It is inspiring to be part of a sector that operates to make the world a better place ... the opportunity to work as a professional ... while simultaneously channelling my efforts to solve problems that affect people’s lives significantly.”

Jennifer is a newcomer to Canada but not to the nonprofit sector. She worked in international development as part of cross-country programs and initiatives. Given her background and experience she expected a fairly smooth transition to similar work in Canada. It took her 6 months of networking and job applications before she found work in her field. She still considers herself lucky because other newcomers do not fare as well.

For Jennifer, the most satisfying aspect of her work is being pushed to think creatively about how to make a difference in people’s lives. As a researcher, she helps organizations explore solutions to address the challenges of marginalized people. Most of the problems faced by the clients she works with require out-of-the-box thinking. She has to determine how to mobilize resources to achieve the most impact, convincing “different stakeholders to commit their resources, time and efforts to different causes.”

When you keep applying for jobs and do not hear back from employers you might be tempted to start blaming yourself. Jennifer’s best advice is not to question your worth, skills and achievements during the transition phase.

“There are others who are experiencing the same too – and discussing and supporting each other makes a big difference ... Get to know the right people and pitch your competencies to them.”

SECTION 8

Planning for your next transition

No matter how long we hover we eventually land. We find a new job, start on a new career path, or point our arrow in a completely different direction. When you land the new job, don't forget the lessons learned on your journey there. The first of those being that no employer can guarantee you a job for life. That means you could be laid off again. Plan for that possibility even as you are settling into the new chair at the new workplace.



SECTION 8

Planning for your next transition

Here are some tips for taking control of your own job future:

- 1.** Develop an entrepreneurial mindset. This means that you must constantly monitor the job market.
 - ▶ Assess where you are vulnerable – lacking training or skills.
 - ▶ Monitor market changes and determine how equipped you are to navigate the changes.
 - ▶ Identify unmet needs and map out what solution you could ‘sell’ to someone or do yourself to address the issue.
 - ▶ Know what you do well and find ways to do it even better.
- 2.** Keep connected with people doing work that you would like to do. Networking is not just for when you need a job. Make it a part of your life.
- 3.** Do work, voluntary or otherwise, that is related to your other interests or passions. Start freelancing as a writer, editor, musician, poet, interior designer, de-clutter expert, fixer-upper or social justice advocate – to name a few. These activities may allow you to make some extra money or connections and could develop into something sustainable.



“What lies off the beaten path ...”



Monique has worked in the nonprofit sector for the entirety of her career. Knowing that her work is helping others is what gives her the most satisfaction. In reviewing her 25-year career, Monique identifies “**creativity** in finding new ways to do more with less” as a key competency. She backs up her claim:

“Working in nonprofits with limited to no resources, I have learned to be a jack-of-all trades, due to the limited staff. No tech support, so if there were technical issues I had to resolve the situation independently. No Marketing/Communications department, so I had to develop marketing materials and write copy. I edited publications both in print and online, had to develop superior sales skills when I worked as a Job Developer, convincing employers to take a chance and hire disadvantaged street youth ...or... Foreign Trained Professionals and why the latter would be assets to their work teams. I learned how to furnish an office using recycled or used office furniture, as well as to always ask if a supplier offered a discount for nonprofits.”

Monique appreciates the flexibility that work in the nonprofit allows; time for family and work/life balance. Mostly she values the great colleagues with whom she gets to work, who share similar values and who do their work from a place of passion and purpose.

“Despite the financial instability, loss and sadness of a job ending, by going through the transitions I feel I can better relate to the transitions my clients experience. Finding myself new jobs in the sector has also forced me to expand my networks considerably, which is always a good thing.”

To those facing an imminent job transition she offers this bit of wisdom:

“Do not expect job stability in project-funded nonprofits. Plan for those periods when you may be between contracts/jobs. Use career transitions as an opportunity to take a turn off of your anticipated pathway to explore what lies off the beaten path.”

A CLOSING MESSAGE

The nonprofit sector is known for its resilience in serving communities and adapting as needs change and new issues arise. As part of this sector, you too are resilient. See this transition, this change, as an opportunity to grow even more into the person you aspire to be.

“Attitude is a choice. Happiness is a choice. Optimism is a choice. Kindness is a choice. Giving is a choice. Respect is a choice. Whatever choice you make makes you. Choose wisely.”

— Roy T. Bennett, *The Light in the Heart*



APPENDIX 1: USEFUL RESOURCES

Below is a selected list of employment services, job listing and career information sites/resources that may prove useful to you in your search for work or further education/training. This list is not exhaustive. Search online for other resources that better fit what you are looking to do next. There's a wealth of information out there!

Employment services

- **Times Change Women's Employment Service:** Career planning, job search, educational counselling, training, job placement and matching, tutorials, are just some of the workshops offered specifically for women.  www.timeschange.org/services.html
- **Jewish Vocational Services:** With 5 locations across the city of Toronto, JVS offers job finding, career exploration, disability programs, newcomer services and a whole lot more.  www.jvstoronto.org
- **Next Steps Employment Centers:** Operated by the Toronto District School Board and funded by Employment Ontario, Next Steps

operates through 7 locations across Toronto. Job search assistance, resume writing, job matching/placement, career exploration, skill development & training are some of the services provided.  www.tdsb.on.ca/Adult-Learners/Employment-Services/Next-Steps-Employment-Centres

Financial Aid

- **Ontario Works.**  www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/social/ow/

Job Listing sites (Nonprofit & related)

- **Good Work:** Provides job listings, information and resources on work in the environment, nonprofits, nature and sustainability.  www.goodwork.ca

- **Work In NonProfits:** Free posting of nonprofit work opportunities across Canada.  www.workinnonprofits.ca
- **Charity Village:** Provides job postings, training modules, career and job search information, resources, event listings, and other tools relevant to work in charitable or nonprofit organizations.  www.charityvillage.com
- **Connect Jobs:** Run by the Ontario Nonprofit Network, allows you to search listings across the province by job categories, part/full-time/internships, etc. and region.  www.connectjobs.ca/job-listings

Financial Aid

- **Ontario Works.**  www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs

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- **Charity Village:** Provides job postings, training modules, career and job search information, resources, event listings, and other tools relevant to work in charitable or nonprofit organizations.  www.charityvillage.com
- **Connect Jobs:** Run by the Ontario Nonprofit Network, allows you to search listings across the province by job categories, part/full-time/

internships, etc. and region.  connectjobs.ca/job-listings/

Other Options

- **Work in Culture:**  www.workinculture.ca/The-Job-Board
- **Work Cabin:**  www.workcabin.ca
- **Humanitarian Coalition:**  www.humanitariancoalition.ca/job-opportunities
- **B Meaningful:**  www.bmeaningful.com/search

Job listing sites (General)

- **Indeed:** Self-proclaimed as the #1 job site in the world with over 250 million unique monthly visitors and access to 7,400 global employers, Indeed is free to job seekers. Job listings, resume uploads, company information are a few of the services offered.  www.indeed.ca

- **Workopolis:** Since 1999, Workopolis has been providing Canadians with access to job listings. Users can access services in English or French with special resources dedicated to users with disabilities.  www.workopolis.com
- **Monster:** More than just a job board, Monster provides an array of job search, recruitment, career and talent management products and services.  www.monster.ca
- **LinkedIn:** Is the largest professional network. In addition to connecting you with people and companies, you can also access advertised work opportunities.  www.linkedin.ca
- **Company and organizational websites** often advertise current vacancies

APPENDIX 1: USEFUL RESOURCES

Career information sites/resources

- **211 Ontario:** This database provides a comprehensive listing of over 60,000 community and social service agencies across the province and can help in identifying organizations doing work of interest. Organizational profiles include services provided, target audience, hours of operation, contact information and more.  www.211ontario.ca
- **Live Careers:** On this USA site, Canadians can benefit from the resume/cover letter building templates and interview tips. While the site has other useful information, it may not be relevant if one is looking for work in Canada.  www.livecareers.com
- **Career Cruising** ( www.careercruising.com): Provides detailed information on over 600

different careers – job descriptions, education required, salary, a day in the life, profiles, related careers and more. Available to secondary and post-secondary students through their career services office, this resource can also be accessed through public libraries like this one:  bit.do/tpledu

- **Skills Ontario:** For youth interested skilled trades or technology careers, Skills Ontario offers classroom presentations across Ontario, skill development summer camps, skills competitions, and employer connections within the construction, technology innovation, and hospitality services sector.  www.skillsontario.com
- **Associations Canada** ( greyhouse.ca/assoc.htm) provides a comprehensive collection of

Canada's nonprofit sector and international groups information. Updated annually it is available online as well as hard copy but very expensive. Most public libraries will have a reference copy you can use at no cost to you.  bit.do/tplref

