

Working for the greater good

Opportunities in Canada's non-profit sector

By Lisa Evans

Are you socially driven? Do you want to be part of an organization that makes the world a better place? Then a career in the non-profit sector may be for you.

Canada's non-profit sector is as vast as it is diverse. Employing more than two million Canadians, the sector encompasses many fields including education, health, the arts and human services, to name a few. And with a variety of positions ranging from administrative to executive, there's something for every skill level and interest. In addition to being dynamic, the non-profit sector is also one of the most rewarding to work in.

Janice Chu thinks so. When she immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong, the former high school teacher struggled to find work. "There wasn't a high demand for teachers at the time," she says. She put her skills to use at St. Stephen's Community House, first as an adult ESL instructor and later as a newcomer services manager. Today, Chu is the director of community investment at United Way's York Region office.

Chu says passion is what drove her to develop her career in the non-profit sector. As an immigrant, she felt a strong desire to give back to her new country. "I came here, I love this country and I got a lot of support when I first got here and now there's a way that I can give back day to day through my job," she says.



Janice Chu gives back every day through her work with the United Way of York Region.

A high level of job satisfaction is what keeps Chu dedicated to the sector. "In a non-profit, the compensation may not be as great as the

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profit sector. What trumps that is simply your passion; your mission to serve and your desire to make the society a better place," she says.

What opportunities exist?

Charity Village, the number one non-profit job search site in Canada, sees an average of 1,000 new job postings each month. Marketing manager Jennifer Ross says some of the most in-demand positions are fundraising (including grant writing and planned giving) and those in marketing and communications. "We are also seeing an [increase in] positions related to social media, as the non-profit sector realizes the value of those channels in reaching their donors," she says. Although growth in the sector as a whole is currently stagnant, with the same number of job opportunities this year as last, health care, community and social services are the areas that are seeing the most opportunities.

Education and skills

Education and skillsets vary within the sector depending on the industry, but Ross says most postings on CharityVillage.com require a post-secondary education. While work or volunteer experience in the non-profit sector is highly valued, experience in the for-profit sector is also an asset. "The skills required for many positions transfer well to the non-profit sector," says Ross, although she notes that individuals who are "sector-shifters" (those moving from for-profit to non-profit) would benefit from some volunteer experience. "Having volunteer experience shows a non-profit that you are seeking to learn about the challenges unique to the non-profit sector."

Volunteering for non-profit organizations you'd like to work for is also great way to gain experience and make contacts.

A number of Canadian colleges and universities offer certificate or diploma programs in non-profit management, although it's generally

not a requirement to have studied the sector in order to work in it. Gerda Kaegi, academic co-ordinator of the non-profit and voluntary sector management certificate at Ryerson University in Toronto, says many newcomers who have worked in non-profit organizations in their home countries find the program valuable to learn how non-profits operate in Canada.

Enrolling in such courses can also be a great opportunity to make key contracts. "All of our instructors are in the sector [and] have links into various organizations and can help make connections for students," says Kaegi.

“ People work in the sector because of their passion to contribute and help, not because of the money.”
— Jennifer Ross

Individuals who are interested in starting their own non-profit in Canada would also benefit from taking a non-profit management program. Courses in strategic planning, financial management, advocacy and government relations, marketing and dealing with issues of diversity provide students with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful non-profit operators.

Salary expectations

But don't expect to get rich running or working for a non-profit. "Salary ranges are dependent on the type of position, but they are almost always significantly less than the for-profit sector," says Ross. "People work in the sector because of their passion to contribute and help, not because of the money."

Although many non-profits do try to offer competitive salaries to attract top talent, salaries are typically in the low to medium range. Charity Village's 2013 Compensation Survey showed the average salary including bonuses and additional compensation of a CEO or executive director is \$90,315. The average salary for senior management is \$78,832, for management/supervisory staff \$54,409 and for support staff \$38,914.

Salaries also vary by location. The highest paying regions of the country include the Greater Toronto Area and Ottawa, followed closely by Alberta. Non-profit organizations are dependent on funding from government, grants, private donations and fundraising activities, so salaries and job opportunities are often linked to available funds. 🌟



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