



THE NONPROFIT JOB SEARCH

Undergraduate Resource Series

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MIGNONE CENTER
FOR CAREER SUCCESS

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If you're interested in helping to further a mission or cause that seeks to make a positive impact in the world, you may want to consider working at a nonprofit organization. Nonprofits cut across every type of industry and function area—including education, communication, healthcare, and technology—and working in this sector can be a great way to combine a subject area interest with a desire to make a difference. There are opportunities to work directly with people through human services, teaching, or advocacy and indirectly through marketing, policy or fundraising. Nonprofit organizations exist both domestically and internationally, and can vary in size from large organizations, such as the American Red Cross, United Way or Oxfam, to smaller and local community organizations. You may also be interested in foundations or philanthropic organizations which work toward the social good by providing grants and financial support to nonprofits and other mission-driven organizations.

As you start to think about your summer and post-grad plans, consider these questions:

- What causes/missions excite you? Are there certain populations you hope to work with?
- What organizations interest you or are doing work in this area?
- What type of position or job function would you like to have?
- Where would you like to be geographically?

Some typical nonprofit entry-level positions include "assistant," "associate," and "coordinator." For example, you may apply for a program coordinator role, or a communications assistant role. At larger nonprofits these roles may be more specific and defined, whereas at smaller nonprofits you may be expected to wear many different hats and take on additional projects and responsibilities.

Nonprofit Sector Hiring Timelines

Internships and Funding Sources

You may want to pursue an internship to explore and test out working in your area of interest, gain experience working with a certain population, or build and develop a new skillset. **If possible, begin to plan for summer in November or December.**

To find summer nonprofit and public sector internships and funding, start by considering opportunities offered at Harvard. These 8-10week internship opportunities are funded and cover a wide array of areas including education, public interest law, environment, advocacy, policy, research, health, and technology:

- [Center for Public Service and Engaged Scholarship's Mindich Service Fellowship Program](#)
- [Center for Public Service and Engaged Scholarship's Fellows at the Forefront Program](#)
- [Center for Public Service and Engaged Scholarship's Grant Funding](#) (Harvard Clubs Summer Community Service Fellowship Program; Arthur Liman Public Interest Law Summer Fellowship Program; Summer Federal Work Study Program for Public Service; Priscilla Chan Summer Service Stipend Program)
- [Harvard Global Health Institute \(HGHI\) Internships](#)
- [Institute of Politics' \(IOP\) Director's Internship Program](#)
- [Institute of Politics' \(IOP\) Summer Stipend Program](#)
- [Mignone Center for Career Success Funded Independent Internships Outside the U.S.](#)
- [Phillips Brooks House Association \(PBHA\)'s Summer Urban Program](#)
- [Presidential Public Service Fellowship](#)

- Other programs offered by Harvard Centers such as the [David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies \(DRCLAS\)](#), [Center for European Studies \(CES\)](#), and [Harvard China Fund](#)

These programs have early spring semester deadlines, so it is important to plan and prepare your application materials early. There are also many internship opportunities that you can apply for beyond those offered through Harvard. Most summer internships are posted in the spring, particularly in February or March. If you plan to apply for Harvard funding, it's important to plan early and pay careful attention to deadlines.

Full-Time Opportunities

Full time entry-level opportunities in the nonprofit sector generally **become available in the spring and continue into the summer**.

For many students this may seem challenging, since they may hope to have a job secured in the fall; however, the nonprofit sector uses **"just-in-time hiring,"** which means that they can't predict their hiring needs in advance. They know of their hiring needs once someone leaves their position, gets promoted, or if the organization

"I began my job search in the spring of my senior year but didn't begin in earnest until after I submitted my thesis in March. I applied to dozens of jobs and had loads of informational interviews over the next several months and didn't get a job until July. By all accounts, this is very normal. Be patient. Be patient with potential employers. Be patient with friends and family who may not understand the timeline."

- Recent Harvard Alum

"Don't stress if you still don't have a firm offer at the same time as your peers who are seeking employment in the private sector; public service opportunities don't open up with the same annual regularity, and the application process works differently. Reach out to people you have worked with in the past, and ask if they know anyone you can submit your resume to. Make it clear that you genuinely want to get involved in public service, because it speaks loudly to potential employers that, given everything you could do with a Harvard education, you want to use your newly minted credentials to make a positive difference."

- Recent Harvard Alum

receives additional grant funding for a position. In addition, many nonprofits don't recruit in the same way that for-profits do, and are usually only hiring for one or two individual positions as opposed to a large cohort of new hires. Once an organization posts an opening, they are usually looking for someone to start immediately (although some organizations may have flexibility with the start date). Because spring is the most common time for entry level jobs to be posted, it's not uncommon to find nonprofit, government, and social sector jobs after graduation. However, if you're interested in national security and/or State Department opportunities, plan early because you will need to apply about a year in advance. (Many of these opportunities require a security clearance that generally takes 9-12 months to complete.)

During the fall, begin to think about your interests, what you might want to do, and where you want to be after Harvard. To help you get started, schedule an appointment to meet with an adviser, attend relevant programs and career fairs, and connect with alumni/professionals in your area of interest. The fall is also

a great time to ensure that your resume is current, including your most recent summer experience. See [our Resume Guide and templates](#), and then have your resume reviewed by one of our advisers. We can also help you to start making a plan for your job search process.

When thinking about post-graduate opportunities, remember that this is your "next step" after Harvard, and not necessarily your "career." Your next step can be defined as a 1-2 year experience that will allow you to gain exposure to your field of interest, develop new skills, and meet interesting people—all of which will help to set you up for the next opportunity along your professional path.

Finding Jobs and Internships

- A great place to start looking for job and internship opportunities is in the OCS database [Crimson Careers](#). We work with 2,400 employers who post over 9,000 opportunities annually.
- [Idealist.org](#) has thousands of job and internship opportunities from nonprofits and mission-driven organizations.
- The **Career Pathways** pages on our website include a variety of resources to help you with your search. Our pathways pages represent a wide variety of industry cluster areas, with each page providing helpful links and resources, including a curated list of relevant job and internship opportunities currently posted in Crimson Careers.
- For a more efficient search, think about setting up a saved search or signing up for email alerts to have relevant job and internship postings emailed to you. Be sure to also check out individual organizations' websites and follow them on LinkedIn or other social media platforms to learn about opportunities as they become available.

"Public service is a small world, and you'll be surprised by how many people you know who in turn know someone at the organization you are applying to work at. So at the start of senior year, create a list of the people you think would recommend you for a job and reach out to them to catch up, remind them that you'll be graduating soon, and chat about what sort of jobs you're interested in."

– Recent Harvard Alum

There are many Harvard in addition to our office that can be helpful for your job and internship search:

- [Phillips Brooks House Association](#)
- [Center for Public Service and Engaged Scholarship](#)
- [Global Health Institute \(HGI\)](#)
- [Institute of Politics](#)
- [Harvard College Public Service Weekly](#) (a newsletter that lists upcoming public service-related programs, workshops, and opportunities)

Build Your Professional Network

Many nonprofit and social sector jobs are filled through referrals. The job search is a "contact sport"—you need to meet with alumni and professionals in your area of interest to help you land an opportunity.

These conversations or informational meetings can help you to learn more about the field, a specific organization or role, hiring timelines, and advice on how to stand out and market yourself as an applicant. Your contacts may even be able to pass along your resume or suggest other alumni or professionals for you to connect with. Helpful networking resources include:

- Our [Making Connections Guide](#) provides more information on informational interviewing, and includes sample questions to ask during the conversation as well as a sample email template.
- Our [Firsthand Advisers platform](#), the [Harvard Alumni Directory](#), and [LinkedIn](#) are helpful resources for locating alumni. We host workshops throughout the year on how to network, so be sure to attend one of these informative and fun workshops.
- Also, talk to House tutors, faculty/TFs, family, friends, and other campus resources for suggestions of alumni or other professionals working in your area of interest.

Attend Relevant Programs and Events

Be sure to check out our panels, programs, and workshops related to nonprofits and other areas of interest in the fall and the spring. Many of our panelists are Harvard alumni and are excited to share with you more about their career paths, the types of internship and entry-level opportunities in the field, and how to get your start.

Please check our [calendar](#) for updated information. Below is a list of some events that might be of interest:

Fall Semester:

- **[Class of 2024 Public Service Recruiting Day](#)**: Apply to meet with leading public service organizations for one-on-one interviews/informational meetings to speak about post-graduate employment and fellowships.
- **Salata Institute Climate and Sustainability Expo**: Connect with organizations focused on climate, sustainability, and the environment to learn more about jobs, internships, research experiences, and/or potential projects in these areas. This event is a new collaborative effort across Harvard schools.

Spring Semester:

- **Public Interested Conference**: Connect with alumni working in a variety of areas within nonprofits, education, and the public sector.
- **Georgetown Government, Education, and Nonprofit Career Fair**: Meet with employers that work in, or serve, organizations from local, state and federal governments; public, private and charter schools; a variety of non-profit organizations; as well as for-profit organizations that work with these sectors. Learn more about these careers, jobs and internships, and network with participating employers. This event is hosted by Georgetown University.
- **Social Impact Expo**: Network with nonprofit and mission-driven organizations that span a range of fields including government, policy research, and education. This event is hosted by the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE).

These events are a great way to make connections, and learn more about different organizations and their internship and/or full-time opportunities.

January Experiences and Site Visits

Wondering what it's really like to work in a nonprofit or public sector organization? During Harvard's January Wintersession period, we offer a series of site visits that allow students to explore organizations, talk to alumni, and go behind the scenes for an up-close look at different work settings. Please check our calendar for updated information.

"My biggest piece of advice is to start building connections early! You will learn so much about different professional trajectories and organizations while building relationships with possible mentors and people who can advocate for you."

- Harvard Alum '17

Create Strong Application Materials

You may have heard about the importance of tailoring your resume and cover letter to the organization and position that you are applying to. This is also true for nonprofit organizations. Make sure that your cover letter clearly communicates why you are interested in the organization's mission and highlights how your background, experience, and skills would make you a good fit for the position. Your application materials reflect your written communication skills, so make sure that your materials are free of any typos or grammatical errors. Check out our [Resume Guide](#) and [Resume Templates](#) as you craft your application materials, and then have them reviewed by one of our advisers.



Interview Preparation

Preparing for interviews requires knowledge about the organization and position, and the ability to articulate the skills and experiences you can contribute. There are many ways that we can help you get ready for interviewing. Check out our **Interviewing guide** in addition to the other resources on the [Interviewing page](#) of our website or come to a workshop for information and strategies on how to best prepare and present yourself in an interview.

Mignone Center for Career Success Website 24/7 help

Need help at 2am? Check out the vast information on our [website](#). Be sure to review the online resources and become familiar with tools such as:

- [Career](#) guides for landing jobs and internships in nonprofits, government, and many more sectors. Access the Vault Library through the [Firsthand Advisers platform](#). Once logged in, simply use the left-hand navigation to select “The Library.”
- [Interstride](#): Help for working abroad or for international students to work in the U.S.
- [Interviewing.com](#) Practice answering interview questions from your computer anytime

Your story, background, experience and talents are valued here. Talk to us about how we can help you test your interests and skills and connect you to all kinds of opportunities. Our friendly advisers can help you plan for summer and your four years at Harvard and beyond.