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## Nonprofits are Optimistic about Hiring. Are You Ready to Make the Switch?



Fidelco Foundation Guide Dog

Looking for a nonprofit job? The outlook is somewhat promising. The other day I received an upbeat e-mail from David Garvey, director of [Encore!Hartford](#), a job-retraining program that specializes in helping unemployed midcareer and traditional retirement-aged corporate professionals find nonprofit jobs.

Garvey had a reason to crow. Four recent graduates of the program had scored full-time positions with three Connecticut nonprofits: [Fidelco Guide Dog](#)

[Foundation](#), [Our Piece of the Pie](#), and the [YWCA Hartford Region](#).

He wrote: *RozeLyn Beck joins the YWCA [Hartford Region](#), as Director of Development and Marketing. Barbara Light Casey joins Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation as their Chief Marketing Officer Alice M. Turner joins Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) as Director of Talent Development and Steve Tabara also joins Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) as a Youth Development Specialist.*

Amid the pervasive job market blues, this is the kind of report that gets my attention. Doing good has a real appeal to career changers over 50. Garvey's announcement backs up what a [new Idealist.org survey](#) heard from 3,000 U.S. nonprofit organizations who responded to their poll this past summer. The nonprofit jobs web site concluded: "while the economy is still fragile, and while the whole sector is being very careful with its spending...there is reason for optimism about hiring."

In other words, organizations are planning on hiring more people. Of those who replied, forty-two percent plan to hire new positions and nearly half will fill positions that become vacant. Program or service staff are top of the list. But if you're a go-getter fundraiser and can whip up creative and diverse funding streams, they want you. Administrative, communications, accounting and finance personnel, and technology experts are on the to-be hired scrolls too. The [Idealist.org](#) site, too, has had a significant jump in job postings in 2011.

Nonprofits were slammed back in late 2008, and much of 2009. It was the worst time that many of these organizations remember. Since then it has been daunting to drum up donors, sponsors and funding—a whopping 81% had to cut services, staff, or both. Organizations that receive significant government funding were impacted brutally as federal, state, and local budgets were chopped. Few were spared the new workplace reality of doing more with less staff, and everyone was juggling the duties of two or three jobs.

This year private dollars began to trickle back in, according to the survey. Looking ahead, most organizations feel the worst might be over. This evidence supports what I wrote about a few months ago in [this Nonprofits are Hiring post](#). Hiring freezes at many nonprofits have been lifted, and new jobs are opening up, according to the [Nonprofit Employment Trends Survey](#), a national study of nonprofit employment practices.

What will help you get hired?

**1. Research.** The Idealist.org survey question: “In recruiting, in addition to skills and experience, what is important to you?” The number one response—89 percent said —“an understanding of their mission.” This is basic, but bears repeating.

- Approach the interview as if you’re a highly-paid consultant summoned to fix a problem.
- Take a genuine interest in the nonprofit you’re interviewing with by learning about the organization’s history and goals, and talking to people who work there.
- Use [Google](#) alerts to stay you up-to-date on the latest developments with the nonprofit and its field.
- State clearly what you think needs to be done and why, based on your experience, you’re the one to do it. For more tips, read my post [here](#).

**2. Volunteer.** More than half of the organizations who replied to Idealist.org’s poll said that volunteer or intern experience is important, although not necessarily with their organization. All four of the Encore! Hartford hirees have been active as volunteers in the Connecticut nonprofit sector for decades.

So walk your talk. Stop by a local soup kitchen or other charity and ask if they can use a helping hand. If you have time for a deeper commitment, check out [BoardnetUSA.org](#), a website for anyone looking for a nonprofit board position. Visit the resources on my nonprofit jobs hunter section of [Second Verse](#).

**3. Redeploy.** You might not need new skills. The Encore!Hartford hirees *redeployed* their existing skills. In their prior careers Steve, Alice and RozeLyn were senior executives in strategic planning, training and program management with major Connecticut insurance companies. Barbara was a business director for major [Boston](#) advertising firms.

Your talents can be tapped in fields that seem poles apart. You’re selling how your past experience can solve business problems in the future, regardless of the employer. Step back and review what expertise is already in your tool kit. You might consider talking to an unbiased, outside observer such as a career coach or mentor to help you hone in your selling points, and strategically outline ways to articulate and market that knowledge.

**4. Train.** Like Encore!Hartford, there are a number of organizations and community college programs in cities around the country designed to help

experienced professionals segue into nonprofit jobs via training programs, fellowships and part-time assignments.

The Civic Ventures Encore Fellows [program](#), for instance, started three years ago with a pilot of ten fellows in California's Silicon Valley, backed by The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and [Hewlett-Packard](#).

Today, the Encore Fellowships Network is expanding across the nation, connecting skilled professionals at the end of their midlife careers with "social-purpose organizations." The fellowship period is typically six to 12 months, half to full time and you earn a stipend, learn about nonprofit work and develop a network of contacts and resources. Fellowship opportunities are available in programs in California, [New York](#), Oregon, Arizona, New Mexico, Massachusetts, and [Washington DC](#).

Big supporters behind the growing effort: The Packard Foundation, [Intel](#) Corporation, California [Health](#) Care Foundation, and H-P. East coast nonprofit hosts include: ASHOKA, Washington DC; Center for Employment Opportunities, NY; Community Environmental Center, NY; Credit Where Credit is Due, Inc., NY, York City Housing Authority, NY; Women in Need, Inc., NY.

Good stuff, but I know you're thinking....did you say, stipend? I did. The New York Encore fellows, for example, typically work half time for 12 months and are paid a stipend of \$35,000. Not chump change.



I'm the author of [What's Next? Follow Your Passion and Find Your Dream Job](#), available here [www.kerryhannon.com](http://www.kerryhannon.com). To learn about great jobs for retirees, check out my [column](#) on AARP. Follow me on Twitter, [@KerryHannon](#)

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