

Decent work ideas

Overall, a culture of decent work provides opportunities to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. But decent work looks different in different settings - and it doesn't have to emerge all at once. Our decent work charter and checklist can help you assess your workplace and develop a plan. To help start the conversation, we have also compiled a list of decent work ideas and practices, some of which your organization may have already implemented:

Employment Opportunities

- Combat inequitable conditions of precarity by trying to create more full time positions.
- Create job sharing opportunities with other nonprofit organizations.
- Create secondment opportunities with other nonprofit organizations.
- Make it a priority, and develop an intentional plan, to attract good people to your organization - leading to good careers, staff retention, and better quality services and impact for your mission.
- Seek out and advocate for better labour market data for the nonprofit sector which, in turn, will help our sector plan for and improve labour conditions.
- Integrate youth into meaningful nonprofit work by engaging with schools and community programs
- Post salary ranges on job postings, which will help set expectations and keep the recruitment process transparent, realistic, and manageable for applicants.
- Have realistic requirements for entry-level positions. Avoid the 'weeding out' criteria of candidates that may exclude bright, young workers. For example, do you require "5+ years experience plus a Master's degree" if not truly needed for the job duties?
- Take an equitable approach when assessing job qualifications - such as lived experience, work experience, and education.
- Attract and retain workers with diverse backgrounds and skill sets.
- Set up conditions to attract, retain, and advance employees with disabilities in the workplace.
- Take time to assess the role of your volunteers and how their expectations and duties relate to employment. How do volunteers influence the employment situation within your nonprofit?
- Ensure that job descriptions are clear and consistent, and provide opportunities for employees to ask about duties and responsibilities.
- Encourage funders to consider their role in decent work and how they contribute to conditions for equitable and stable employment opportunities.

Fair income

- Have paid holiday, parental and sick leave.
- Promote steady work hours that allow for predictable income.
- Plan for salary increases over time that reflect the employee's growth.
- Strive to offer wages that meet or exceed the cost of living.
- Plan for annual salary increases to adjust for cost of living.
- Adopt living wage and other standards that promote income fairness between workplaces.
- Adopt Wagemark, an international wage standard.
- Stay abreast on minimum wage standards and policy efforts, such as the \$15 and Fairness campaign.
- Share salary scales with other partners in the sector so we can develop benchmarks together.
- Offer competitive wages and salaries in comparison to other sectors.
- Engage in honest, open conversations with funders about the need for stable and adequate funding for fair income and benefits.
- Develop pay equity plans - including better salary ratios between 'top level' positions and the lowest paid workers in your organization, and between different types of workers (permanent, contract, full-time, part-time).
- Help compensate for lack of full-time hours by developing prorated benefit plans and higher wage levels for part-time staff.
- Understand diversity and inclusion under fair income - such as, but not limited to: socioeconomic status, family composition, etc.

Health and retirement benefits

- Consider workplace pension plans that are accessible, offer maximum benefits to employees, and minimize risks for boards. See ONN's [recommendation](#) of OPTrust Select.
- Help employees and management understand paystubs - including how Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) contributions work.
- Offer competitive benefits that, in their design, have the nonprofit sector in mind for the widest range of employees: part-time, full-time, and contract workers.
- Consider Employment Assistance Programs (EAPs) for employee health and safety
- Set up access to supports and resources for workplace mental health.
- Consider a health and wellness program to assist with related costs like gym memberships, exercise/fitness classes, stop smoking programs, personal development, and self-help.
- Allow adequate free time and rest in work schedules.
- Offer a number of wellness days throughout the year. These are days that are not sick days, lieu days, or vacation days - they are days that allow employees to recharge and look after their own physical and mental health.
- Set up ergonomic supports for jobs that require desk and/or computer work.
- Have fragrance-free workplace policies for indoor air quality.

Stable employment

- Develop an action plan for staff retention in your nonprofit organization.
- Ask employees, “what would motivate you to stay for the next 5 years?”
- Assess and improve the ratio of contract to permanent positions.
- Stop the rise of insecure jobs by developing a plan to limit temporary, part-time jobs in your workforce.
- Mitigate the challenges associated with funding that must be renewed or renegotiated each year. Provide permanent employment positions that are reliant on stable revenue sources, rather than relying on renewable year-to-year funding contracts.
- In short term and other precarious contract positions, be transparent with the employee about why their contract is short-term. Open communication leads to loyalty, trust, and an understanding of the organization's context and current resources.
- Negotiate with funders for longer term employment contracts.
- Offer advance notice in scheduling.
- Have predictable hours of work and scheduling practices that allow work/life balance.
- Where possible, allow part-time staff to stipulate the days on which they are able to work.
- Allow staff flexibility in scheduling so long as it does not impact their work activities.
- Come to understand the differences between ‘flexible’ and ‘temporary’ work, and why or why not employees would value either/or based on their individual goals.
- Consider specific policies and mechanisms that support high turnover, seasonal or unpredictable work.
- Develop policies and practices for succession planning as it affects your work culture and the communities you serve.

Development and advancement

- Invest in your people. Always include professional development as a percentage of the payroll budget, and make it non-discretionary.
- If possible, provide full or partial tuition reimbursement for job-related education.
- Open up staff to professional life coaching, workshops, conferences, and other learning opportunities.
- Ensure that leaders have the skills required to manage and lead.
- Keep an eye out for emerging leaders in your nonprofit (at any level or position) and provide time and resources to support their leadership development.
- Organize informal training sessions within the organization (e.g. brown bag lunches), so colleagues can share their skills with each other.
- Provide regular updates and information to staff about professional best practices, as well as refresher training.
- Create knowledge sharing opportunities with other nonprofit organizations.
- Pool professional development opportunities and resources with other organizations (e.g. group attendance and discounts).
- Develop employee exchange programs with other organizations to build skills and relationships.
- Have open discussions with staff members about realistic expectations of each job role, while still making time for professional activities that energize them.
- Provide work opportunities that draw on individual passions.
- Provide performance appraisals and opportunities for employees and managers to co-develop performance goals.

- Make employee learning and development goals a part of day-to-day work.
- Engage in long-term career path discussions with employees.
- Set up conditions for mentorship among colleagues, staff, management, and others in your network.
- Create job ladders by linking internal hiring, training and promotion systems to external organizations.
- Promote pathways to stable employment for temporary, part-time employees by offering training and network opportunities.
- For contract employees, actively provide networking, reference support, career advice, and job search help (e.g. forward relevant job postings) closer to the contract end-date.
- Promote managers from within the organization.
- Support the learning of new employees and emerging professionals by helping them understand the larger context in which your nonprofit operates.

Equality and rights at work

- Come to understand the work culture you are creating, and ensure that trust is at the heart of it.
- Have an open door policy between employees and senior management.
- Establish Codes of Conduct for workplace procedures and behaviours.
- Promote communications, team-building, decision-making and staff appreciation practices that strengthen inclusive, creative, collaborative, and safe work cultures.
- Enable good communication between employees, management, and the board about decent work.
- Create space for creativity and new ideas in staff discussions.
- Seek out employee feedback when launching new initiatives.
- Engage all staff in shared budgeting decisions.
- Create joint worker-management committees (e.g. health and safety, advocacy, equity and inclusion, anti-violence, etc.).
- Co-create, with staff, guidelines for flexible/remote work and accountability.
- Develop clear and accessible grievance procedures, policies and practices in place to support staff in resolving conflicts.
- Develop anti-oppression and anti-harassment policies, but also be aware of how ongoing employment status (ie. precarity) may prevent employees from acting on them.
- Make time to listen to employees and set up equitable conditions for feedback (e.g. employee satisfaction surveys).
- Develop proactive policies for diversity and inclusion.
- When required, be committed to developing and implementing individual accessibility accommodation plans.
- Provide staff and volunteers with training on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Access Forward provides free modules.
- Ensure that all workers are trained on Occupational Health and Safety.
- Take extra steps to make sure part-time, contract employees get the same level of Occupational Health and Safety training, and are actively involved in creating safe and healthy workplaces.
- Familiarize yourself with the The National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.
- Ensure that all employees learn safety protocols for their job duties and can access supports when something goes wrong.

Culture and leadership

- Embrace a people-focused approach to leadership.
- Understand the trade-offs between resources to serve the mission and resources to support employees. Remember that they are critically linked.
- Make investments in decent work non-discretionary in the budget.
- Set up conditions for collaborative projects among colleagues.
- Find opportunities for team-building activities throughout the year.
- Communicate among staff, regularly and effectively, the organization's goals and strategic directions.
- Place daily work in the context of organizational mission and values.
- Have regular and productive staff meetings to build rapport among the team and develop a cohesiveness to the work.
- Update staff on issues affecting the organization. Highlight positive news and celebrate successes together.
- Empower employees to be knowledgeable about the organization's products and services.
- Embrace failing forward. When staff make mistakes, they must feel secure that they will not face reprisal.
- Pay for professional membership fees to associations that may help the employees' or organization's work.
- Identify pressures and challenges you face with regard to sustaining or expanding decent work practices.
- Do not perpetuate a culture of working over-hours (e.g. sending emails at midnight on a weeknight or on the weekend). Unless, in fact, this is in the nature of your mission.
- Engage in awareness and discussion about physical and remote workplace environments and how they help and/or hinder staff collaboration and individual productivity.
- Break away from (& be aware of) unrealistic, under-resourced expectations which can lead to overwork, stress, ill-health, and drop-or-push out of staff.
- Identify and resolve sources of individual and collective stress, burnout, and lack of motivation.
- Embrace and set up the conditions for a diverse and inclusive workplace.
- Aim for Indigenous representation and culturally appropriate working conditions - implement some of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.
- Learn how to adapt to differences across generations (i.e. characteristics of culture, where people are at in their career, and in their life) and engage all workers in developing a strong intergenerational workforce.
- Wherever possible, purchase external goods and services using a decent work lens (e.g. seek to contract with and buy goods from companies paying living wages and fair benefits.)
- Support, when possible, other work movements and advocacy initiatives that will bolster job conditions in the nonprofit sector (e.g. \$15 and Fairness, Workers Action Centre, employment standard reform, etc.).
- Publicly champion and promote decent work practices in your community and with key stakeholders
- Be proactive in negotiating with funders on practices that may restrict your nonprofit from offering decent work. Articulate the importance of decent work within the current funding realities.
- Continually evaluate decent work in your organization. Are you meeting the goals you set out? Why or why not?
- Track year-to-year progress on long-term, incremental decent work goals.
- Acknowledge the importance of board leadership in decent work. Have boards adapt and sign on to the Decent Work Charter.
- Find other nonprofits that are championing decent work, and continue to engage in a cross-sector dialogue to share promising practices.