

How to Leverage Your Experience and Grow in the Nonprofit World

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This Summer, I continued my internship with the New Orleans Abortion Fund, producing social media content for our various social media pages. I have held the position of Social Media & Communications Intern with NOAF for two terms, and continue to learn more about the organization's structure, how boards and employees interact, and how NOAF can reconcile the competing interests of

practical support services and advocacy work. In addition to this knowledge, I also continued to grow my own philosophical and transferrable toolset—skills that I will be able to take with me beyond the Fund.

Pushing myself this Summer, I invested in Adobe Illustrator to take my media production skills beyond Canva (the industry-standard graphic production software for small nonprofits to a much more detailed and advanced platform). As I developed proficiency with Adobe, I sought other ways to advance my transferable skills, such as live interviewing. On June 21, I hosted my first live episode of my Youth Activist Spotlight, a series I designed and planned, highlighting young folks all across Louisiana who have done reproductive rights, health, and justice movement work in our state.

Philosophically, I also grew by spending my free time reading much more feminist literature and researching the Reproductive Justice movement. Expanding my knowledge in the subject matter was personally fulfilling and helped with my work at NOAF, cutting my usual research time.

Why would I put in this supplemental (and unpaid) work? Because it allows me to leverage my experiences effectively and grow in the nonprofit world. I actively engaged with the opportunities offered to me by NOAF, expanding my role and asking for more responsibility when I had the capacity. As an intern with the organization for eight months, I used the experience I had with NOAF in tandem with my previous experience working for other Reproductive Justice, Rights, and Health organizations to apply for and be welcomed onto the Advisory Board of Lift Louisiana for Women.

I am honored to bring my political and community organizing voice to the Lift Louisiana Advisory Board, especially as a young, Black person. Lift is a fiercely progressive organization working on the cutting edge of the Reproductive Justice movement in Louisiana and the South, fighting for the rights of women and other gender marginalized people in innovative and exciting ways, primarily through high-impact litigation. New experience wouldn't be possible, however, without my life experience working with NOAF, the Feminist Majority Foundation, House or TULIP: Trans United Leading Intersectional Progress, the Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus, the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, and other similar organizations in the past.

Continue to cultivate your skills as you work in the nonprofit field. Continue to nurture your relationships with former colleagues and organizations—you never know when your next job may ask for a reference! This additional work is essential as you seek new opportunities and work to grow your career. The nonprofit world, particularly in Reproductive rights, health, and justice, is relatively small. I'll often hop on a Zoom call and see familiar faces or mention a past experience, and someone on the call will be familiar with one of the project's leads.

In such a small field, many people may be jockeying for a single position; going above and beyond to develop your skills and build relationships gives you an edge that other applicants may lack. In the reality of our current economic system, as you gain more skills, your labor is perceived as more valuable; however, this isn't the only reason to grow your assets. Becoming more experienced in various disciplines allows you to take on more responsibilities and leadership roles, if you'd like, on the next project or issue, or perhaps grow beyond your current organization and send you on to the next one! Invest in yourself and see your growth.