

Charity and social enterprise

This sector offers: diverse roles; a chance to drive change; and the opportunity to work on a cause that matters to you.

Charities do not seek to make profits, and are usually funded through donations and grants. Social enterprises are businesses which trade for a social/ environmental purpose, reinvesting profits to further this purpose.

There is a huge range of causes served, and workplaces range from small start-ups to big organisations with a more corporate culture. Charities and social enterprises have the same range of job roles as any organisation, such as marketing, HR, PR, IT, project management, fieldwork, finance, policy, and research. Charities often also have an extensive fundraising or 'development' department.

Getting in and entry points

The following options offer different ways into the charity and social enterprise sector:

- Internships – although paid opportunities are advertised, internships are often offered as unpaid volunteering. If it is not possible for you to volunteer, ask whether there's any way they could make the opportunity more accessible: fewer days or hours, or working remotely to allow you to accommodate other paid work.





- Job opportunities generally will require some previous experience, such as volunteering. Administrative, project or case-work supporting roles can be a way into the sector. Check organisations' own websites and specialist job sites such as Charity Jobs, Third Sector Jobs, Guardian Jobs, Idealist and Social Enterprise UK.
- Contact organisations speculatively to find short-term roles and entry-level work.
- Graduate schemes are relatively rare, but examples still include Graduniqu (BHF and Macmillan Cancer Support), Wellcome Trust and Cancer Research UK.
- Some people transfer into the charity sector having gained skills and expertise in a private company first. This is particularly true of roles like accountancy or legal work where the charity or social enterprise might not have the resources to train someone.

- Further study – many roles are accessible without a further degree but this may be important for some roles, such as those in policy.
If you are considering further study as part of your strategy, it is advisable to:
 - Understand which roles commonly require higher qualifications by reviewing job descriptions and advertisements.
 - Ask people working in your preferred area what qualifications they have and which courses they recommend for entry and progression (if any).
 - Investigate providers and specific courses, including the background of tutors and destinations of recent graduates.

Extra-curricular ideas

Relevant experience is usually essential. Here are some ideas to try while you are here at Oxford:

- Explore volunteering opportunities through Oxford Hub, which also offers grants and training for those wishing to try out a social enterprise idea, or find opportunities using www.do-it.org or OCVA.
- Join a cause-related student society: get involved in projects and committee or leadership positions, or establish a new society serving a cause you care about.
- Participate in [The Oxford Strategy Challenge](#): charities and social enterprises are among the clients seeking student advice.
- Look out for Oxford Micro-Internships which are often based in social enterprises and charities.
- Get involved with Oxford University Innovation social enterprises.
- Look for the Skoll World Forum activities and the fringe events such as Oxjam.

The 'learn, do, retire' model of work is no more and I think now it's about taking opportunities in their various forms, working hard but staying kind. If you're looking for experience in the third sector and start-up world, come and volunteer with us.

Beth Kume-Holland, Founder and Company Director, Patchwork Hub

Next steps

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/charities

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/entrepreneurship-social-enterprise

Alumni profile

Zou Xinyi

What: After completing my MSc at Oxford, I transitioned into the world of effective altruism (EA), a movement originated by Oxford philosophers. I started at Effective Ventures, rotating within their operations team, before moving to Giving What We Can as an executive assistant to the CEO.

Why: While I enjoyed my research project, I craved a more practical application of my skills post-graduation. The EA space offered challenging opportunities that aligned with my desire to make a positive impact. In my current role, I find satisfaction in implementing robust operations infrastructure that supports impactful work.

My journey began with various operational projects at Effective Ventures, including running hiring rounds, assisting with budgets, and developing system automation. Now, at Giving What We Can, I provide executive support and manage operations projects, constantly learning and growing in this dynamic environment.

Working in high-impact non-profits offers numerous advantages, including the opportunity to contribute to meaningful initiatives, collaborate with passionate colleagues, and rapidly develop diverse skills in a generalist role. The sector also often provides good compensation and potential visa sponsorship for international students. However, the work can be challenging and fast-paced, requiring adaptability and quick learning.

Advice: For those interested in a rewarding generalist career path, I highly recommend considering operations in high-impact non-profits. And really utilise the Oxford Careers Service – the team's support was invaluable during my job hunt. Don't be discouraged by rejections; persist and apply for opportunities that seem daunting. Leverage your academic skills, as research abilities and clear communication are highly valued in most fields.

**Position**

Executive Assistant, Giving What We Can.

Background

MSc Education (Digital and Social Change), Kellogg College, 2022.

Alumni profile

Jessica Kaye

What: In my role I help students to find volunteering opportunities that work for them. This includes programmes run by the Oxford Hub as well as a variety of charities across the city.

This is the first 'grown-up' job I've ever had, and to be able to work for an organisation making a difference in a city that has given so much to me has been incredibly rewarding. I am enjoying this learning experience and really believe in the work my organisation is doing. I've really enjoyed being able to keep strong ties with the University, having loved my time there, and helping other students to get more involved in their wider community has been amazing.

Why: It was always my plan to work in the charity and non-profit sector. I wanted to put the skills and knowledge I developed in my degree into making life better for everyone. Non-profit work is a great way to learn more about the communities that we live in and what we should be doing to change things. I was attracted to the idea of working at a local charity because it has given me the opportunity to see exactly how much impact volunteering can have. I am so happy that I have taken the first step towards what will hopefully be a long career of enacting positive change.

Advice: Get involved – there are so many societies at Oxford and joining them can enrich your time at university while giving your CV a boost.

Volunteering is an incredible way to get involved with the wider community. Oxford can seem like such a bubble and spending time with like-minded people who also care about their local area is a great way to get out of that bubble, meet new people and gain some skills.

Don't reject yourself – always go for what interests you, even if you're not sure if you will be successful in an application, and if you do get the rejection then move on to the next thing.

**Position**

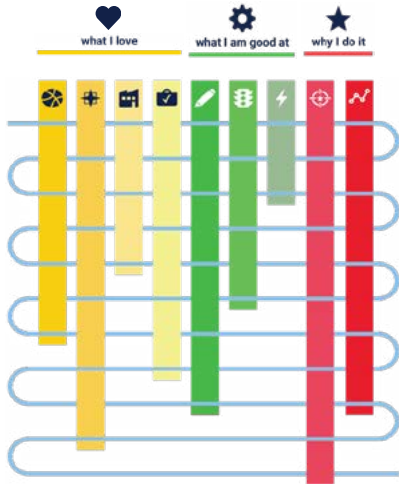
University and Community Partnerships Manager, The Oxford Hub.

Background

BA History and Politics, University College, 2023.



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