

Simple Tips to Face Workforce Challenges

Hiring and retaining staff is a common challenge. Here are some practical ideas that are easy to implement. If your organization can't compete on salary, you should compete in other ways. Many people today want more than just a paycheck. They want purpose, balance, and positive work experiences.

- **Mission-driven work:** Demonstrate how each role makes a real difference
- **Flexibility:** Remote work, flexible hours, or compressed workweeks
- **Impact:** Share real stories of how your work helps others

During the hiring process write job descriptions in a warm, human tone. You can also share employee stories on your website and social media platforms, and when you get to the interview phase of the process be sure to talk openly about your organization's culture.

Instead of saying "We offer a collaborative environment," say "Our team meets weekly to share ideas and support each other."

Retention as a Priority Strategy

Hiring is expensive and time-consuming, so retaining your current staff is a smart move. When employees feel valued and supported, they are more likely to stay.

Invest in your team:

- Offer training, workshops, or online courses
- Provide clear paths for growth or promotion
- Crosstrain staff so they can learn new skills

Encourage communication:

- Hold regular check-ins (not just annual reviews)
- Ask for feedback and act on it when possible



- Create a safe space for honest conversations

Ask each employee: "What would make your job better?" Then look for small ways to act on their answers.

Even with limited resources, small operational changes can ease pressure on your team.

Flexible work options would include:

- Hybrid schedules (some days at home, some in office)
- Job sharing between two people

Use technology wisely:

- Automate repetitive tasks (like scheduling or data entry)
- Reduce unnecessary meetings

Perform a quick audit of your team's workload. Ask: "What tasks can we simplify, automate, or stop doing?"

Workforce challenges are real, but with clear thinking, strong communication, and creative action, nonprofits can attract and keep great people.



Strength Through Strategic Partnerships

Funding is limited, staffing is tight, and the need for services continues to grow - especially in rural areas. In response, some organizations are developing strategic partnerships to meet these challenges and reach more people.

Many industry leaders understand that shared challenges - like housing, food access, and healthcare - require shared solutions. When missions and values align, collaboration can be a powerful tool.

Benefits of partnerships:

- › **Programs and Services:** Co-host events, share services, and reach more people in both small towns and larger communities.
- › **Shared Resources:** Share staff, office space, technology, and administrative services to reduce costs.
- › **Fundraising:** Teams can apply for Vermont-based grants together and strengthen their funding opportunities.
- › **Advocacy:** A united voice can better support policy changes that benefit communities across the state.

Partnerships require careful planning:

- › **Stay Focused:** Keep your mission clear and avoid drifting away from core goals
- › **Define Roles:** Make sure each partner knows their responsibilities
- › **Align Values:** Choose partners with similar beliefs and work styles
- › **Start Small:** Begin with simple collaborations and grow over time
- › **Put agreements in writing** when appropriate
- › **Stay connected** with regular check-ins
- › **Review progress** and adjust as needed

Some have embraced “**shared service alliances,**” where organizations retain separate identities but team up on operations such as finance, HR, payroll, technology, and compliance. Rather than each hiring its own full administrative team, organizations share staff expertise and operating systems to reduce overhead and improve sustainability.

Strategic partnerships can empower nonprofits to preserve mission autonomy while achieving efficiencies that free up resources for direct services.



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