

Tips and Resources for Young and Transitioning Development Professionals in a Changing Global and Career Environment



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Navigating an International Development Job Search

Understanding the Current Landscape

The international development sector is undergoing significant disruption and transformation. And yet global challenges such as climate change, conflict, pandemics, and widening inequalities will only continue to increase the demand for skilled professionals over the coming years. The job market, especially in Washington, D.C., remains highly competitive and challenging, but there are options out there for those who broaden their approach and their horizons.

Let's clarify some key considerations:

- This evolving environment is not a reflection of your abilities, choices, experience, or previous organization—it is a systemic shift.
- Traditional career choices such as USAID, implementing partners, etc, as well as career paths are changing, requiring adaptability, innovation, and new approaches.
- We need a more entrepreneurial mindset to our job prospects and possible career opportunities in areas such as social entrepreneurship, leveraging technology, or exploring emerging sectors.

Job Search Strategies Basics

- **It starts with mindset.** Each day, set aside time to reflect on the moments in your career that brought you the greatest satisfaction. Identify your core values, non-negotiables, and key strengths. Revisit your résumé through that lens—pinpoint the roles, projects, and people that contributed most to your professional fulfillment. Use those insights to create a targeted list of organizations and individuals operating in those spaces, and begin reaching out to contacts within or adjacent to your network who align with that vision.
- **Seek out a Career Coach:** A professional career coach can provide guidance tailored to your strengths and goals. Check out the [Coaching Collaborative](#).
- **Join a Career Circle:** Platforms like www.Phyl.org or [Career Pivot](#) offer structured job search support.
- **Use a Targeted Approach:** Conduct broad industry analysis, then narrow your focus through networking and informational interviews. AI can help with both broadening and refining your search.
- **Leverage Networks & Alumni Connections:** Your professional and educational networks can be invaluable in opening doors.
- **Continue Your Development Experience through International Service:** If you are open to relocating, consider programs like [Peace Corps](#) or [Peace Corps Response \(one-year model for experienced professionals\)](#), which offer full healthcare, government service credit, and global networks. Similar shorter international service models include www.richmondvale.org

Emerging Job Opportunities in Different Sectors

Trends in International Development Hiring

- **Foreign Assistance Funding:** Although budgets are shifting under the State Department, funding is not disappearing—there may be opportunities in the coming year as the new development architecture is restructured under the State Department and other agencies.
- **Go Where the Need Is:** Development professionals are still in demand, particularly in crisis response, humanitarian aid, and digital transformation. See the list of top development job sites below.
- **Fellowships vs. Consultancy or Graduate School:** Consider fellowships as a way to gain experience and expand networks before committing to consulting or further education. See the list of 40 fellowship opportunities below.
- **Social Entrepreneurship:** Create your own opportunities—volunteer, establish an NGO, or launch a local community initiative. See the list of social entrepreneur funds and programs below.
- **Impact Investing or Philanthropy:** If you are more experienced in your career, there is a lot more demand being put on the philanthropic and impact investing sectors and thus new job opportunities. See the list below.

Simplifying Networking & Making a Lasting Impression

Maximizing Networking Success

1. **Create your list: Identify your dream organizations, positions, and who is working there.**
2. **Use a relationship-based job search as the best use of your time. Use both your strong and your “weak” ties.** Strength of Weak Ties Past or weak ties help you generate new networks that can be of help. ID folks in your relationship base. Make a list of who is in the strong and weak networks, and then reach out to them on LinkedIn, etc. Focus on “connectors”.
3. **Utilize LinkedIn (Premium Recommended):** Find first- and second-degree connections within target organizations. Your alumni and affinity networks are your superpower. Reach out to people in your networks to help you get past the gatekeeper and get introduced directly to key people.
4. **Secure Informational Interviews:**
 - Request a **20-minute** conversation (not 30 minutes – they won’t give you that).
 - Research the organization and person in advance to come in prepared with questions and basic awareness of the person and organization.
 - Prepare insightful questions demonstrating your knowledge. (What do you see as trends in the industry? What do you like and what is most challenging about this job/org? What type of people are succeeding in this org? What info sources are you using to stay current? How did you approach getting into this org/position?)
 - Clearly articulate your interest, experience, and career goals.
 - Ask for **one specific referral of someone else they recommend you talk to (don’t ask for a “few” or “anyone” – you won’t get any)** to continue expanding your network.
 - Follow up: Send a thank-you note and include your resume. (ensure your bullets align with their KSAs)
5. **Track Your Progress:** Maintain a spreadsheet of contacts, leads, and follow-up actions.
6. Also: Harvard Business Review Guide to Networking

Recommended Job Search Resources

One excellent job search book by Phyl Terry “*“Never Search Alone”* offers an excellent set of tools/tips/processes, including a [checklist](#) for those who have recently lost or left a job.

Phyl's Key Strategy Methodology:

1. B1. Build Your Job Search Council (JSC): Instead of searching alone, create a small group of 3–5 fellow job-seekers with whom to work through the “never search alone” method together.. It is not important that you know these people ahead of time – in fact, it’s often helpful to work with new people. (You can create a group yourself or register as an independent job-seeker via [phyl.org](#).) The JSC helps with decision-making, motivation, and networking.

2. Conduct a Personal & Professional Inventory: Reflect on career goals, strengths, and values. Identify key accomplishments and skills. Define what you’re truly looking for in your next role.

3. Craft Your Job Search Strategy: Develop a target list of companies, industries, or roles that fit your expertise and values. Use a methodical approach rather than responding randomly to job postings. Define specific metrics to measure progress.

4. Engage in Authentic Networking: Shift from a transactional approach to genuine relationship-building. Reconnect with your existing network in a meaningful way. Seek informational interviews rather than just asking for job leads.

5. Master the Interview Process: Prepare for different types of interviews (behavioral, case studies, executive panels, etc.). Use storytelling techniques to highlight your value and impact. Leverage your JSC and even AI for mock interviews and constructive feedback.

6. Handle Rejections & Stay Resilient: Normalize setbacks as part of the process. Use the support of your JSC to maintain motivation and refine your approach. View each rejection as a learning opportunity.

7. Evaluate Offers & Negotiate Effectively: Assess job offers based on alignment with personal and professional priorities. Use negotiation strategies to secure the best possible compensation and role. Get input from your JSC before making a final decision.

Follow Great Resource Mavens in the International Development Sector

International Jobs and Resources:

- **Nick Martin:** <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nicholascmartin/> and TechChange Impact Coach <https://impactcoach.com/>
- **Wayan Vota:** <https://www.linkedin.com/in/wayan/> and his effort Career Pivot <https://mypivot.substack.com/about>
- **Scott Beale:** <https://www.linkedin.com/in/scottbeale/> - Impact Investing
- **Eliana Summer Galai:** <https://www.linkedin.com/in/eliana-summer-galai/>
- **Nexus Global** - <https://nexusglobal.org/>
- **The Bloom** - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ourbloom/>

Top Job Boards for International Development Careers

- **ImpactSource** <https://www.impactsource.ai/jobs> Great new platform of TechChange to connect development professionals to jobs they are qualified for or interested in.
- **Devex** (www.devex.com/jobs) One of the most comprehensive international development job boards.. Lists jobs from NGOs, government agencies, and donor-funded projects (e.g., USAID, World Bank, UN). Offers career advice, networking, and industry insights.
- **CivicMatch** <https://www.workforamerica.org/civicmatch> Connecting Federal workers with local/state government jobs.
- **UN Jobs** (www.unjobnet.org) Centralized job board for United Nations agencies, international organizations, and NGOs. Covers humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, climate change, and more.
- **ReliefWeb** (reliefweb.int/jobs). Focuses on humanitarian and emergency response jobs. Managed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Lists short-term consultancies and long-term roles.
- **Idealist** (www.idealists.org). Nonprofit-focused job board with many international development positions. Includes opportunities from grassroots organizations to global NGOs.

Top Job Boards for International Development Careers

- **Impactpool** (www.impactpool.org) Focuses on careers in the UN, NGOs, and international financial institutions. Offers application tips and career coaching.
- **The Global Development Network (GDN)** (www.gdn.int) Focuses on research and policy-related international development roles. Ideal for those seeking positions in academic or policy-oriented institutions.
- **OECD Careers** (www.oecd.org/careers) Ideal for professionals interested in policy, economics, and governance. Lists opportunities at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
- **USAJobs** (For U.S. Government Development Jobs) (www.usajobs.gov) Official U.S. government job board. Includes positions with the State Department, and other federal agencies involved in international development.
- **OneWorld** (www.oneworld.org/jobs) Covers sustainability, environmental justice, and human rights jobs in international development.
- **PCDN** (Professional Development Career Network) (www.pcdnetwork.org) Focuses on jobs related to peacebuilding, social impact, and conflict resolution

Top Job Boards for International Development Careers- Philanthropy

- **Philanthropy News Digest:** www.philanthropynewsdigest.org/jobs Curated listings focused on foundations, grantmaking, and philanthropic organizations.
- **Chronicle of Philanthropy Jobs** www.jobs.philanthropy.com: High-quality listings from universities, nonprofits, foundations, and think tanks.
- **Impact Opportunity** - impactopportunity.org - Newer platform with a focus on mission-driven leadership and consulting roles in philanthropy, nonprofit, and education sectors.
- **The Foundation List** foundationlist.org - Exclusive to the foundation and nonprofit sectors—includes jobs in grantmaking, finance, operations, and program roles.

Enhancing Your Skill Set While Job Searching

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Basics:

- a. **Great Learning's Free AI Courses:** Offers courses covering essential AI topics, including machine learning, neural networks, and natural language processing.
mygreatlearning.com
- b. **Coursera's AI Courses:** Provides a variety of AI classes from top institutions, such as IBM and Harvard, suitable for beginners.
fortune.com

2. Project Management:

- a. **Project Management Institute (PMI) – Kickoff:** A free, 45-minute digital course guiding you through the basics of project management, from initiation to closing.
Project Management Institute
- b. **Coursera's Project Management Courses:** Features courses like "Foundations of Project Management" by Google and "Project Management Principles and Practices" by the University of California, Irvine.
coursera.org
- c. **edX Project Management Courses:** Offers free courses covering essential project management skills, including planning, budgeting, and risk management.
edx.org

Enhancing Your Skill Set While Job Searching

3. Budget Management: While specialized free courses in budget management for international development are limited, the following resources can be beneficial:

- a. **Coursera's Financial Management Courses:** Offers courses like "Financial Management" by the University of Illinois, which covers budgeting principles applicable to various sectors.
- b. **edX Financial Management Courses:** Provides courses on financial planning and budgeting that can be tailored to the needs of international development professionals.

4. Transferable Skills - The Inner Development Goals - www.innerdevelopmentgoals.org

5. Learn or improve language skills:

- a. www.Duolingo.com
- b. www.iTalki.com

Exploring New International Development Career Pathways

1. **Regional & Country-Specific Roles:** Explore opportunities either outside the US or consultancies being posted by other partners where they are funding projects that need consultants in addition to their local staff.
 - a. **Government Aid Agencies (DFID/FCDO, GIZ, Global Affairs Canada, AUSAID, JICA, etc.)** – National development agencies with global projects.
 - b. **Local NGOs & Civil Society Organizations** – Country-specific development and advocacy work.
 - c. **Universities & Academic Institutions (local & international universities, research institutes)** – Teaching and capacity-building in development.
2. **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) & Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Roles:** Many multinational corporations have **CSR and ESG divisions** focused on sustainability, human rights, and community investment.
 - a. **Examples:** Microsoft, Google.org, Unilever, Patagonia, Mastercard Foundation, Salesforce Philanthropy.
 - b. **Roles:** ESG strategy, sustainability leadership, social impact investing, corporate philanthropy.
3. **Social Enterprises & B Corporations:** Blending business and social impact, **social enterprises** apply market-based solutions to global challenges.
 - a. **Examples:** One Acre Fund, BRAC, Ashoka, Acumen, Grameen Foundation.
 - b. **Roles:** Operations, impact investment, program design, and innovation.

4. Impact Investing & Development Finance - Professionals with a finance or economic development background can shift into impact investing and blended finance.

- **Examples:** IFC (World Bank Group), Omidyar Network, Rockefeller Foundation, Acumen, Global Innovation Fund.
- **Roles:** Investment analysis, social finance, grant management, fund management.

5. Technology for Development (ICT4D) & Digital Transformation - Tech companies and startups increasingly focus on **global** development solutions like financial inclusion, health tech, and digital education.

- **Examples:** Google Development Initiatives, Meta Data for Good, GSMA, M-Pesa, Zipline (drones for health).
- **Roles:** Digital strategy, AI & big data for development, ICT4D implementation, social innovation.

6. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) & Sustainable Supply Chains - Development professionals with experience in multi-stakeholder collaboration can transition into managing partnerships in global businesses.

- **Examples:** Nestlé (sustainable sourcing), Mars (agriculture development), Walmart Foundation.
- **Roles:** Global supply chain sustainability, partnerships, stakeholder engagement.

7. Think Tanks & Research Institutes (Policy & Strategy Roles) - Organizations at the intersection of research and business inform private sector strategies on development issues.

- **Examples:** Brookings Institution, Center for Global Development, Chatham House, ODI.
- **Roles:** Policy research, business strategy, global development consulting.

8. International Nonprofits with Private Sector Engagement - Some nonprofits operate like businesses, partnering with corporations for social impact.

- **Examples:** Clinton Health Access Initiative, World Economic Forum, B Lab.
- **Roles:** Corporate partnerships, strategic advisory, sustainability leadership.

Fellowship Opportunities for Emerging Leaders

*****NOTE: All these programs are in possible transition. They existed in 2024, but may not exist in the same form in 2025 or 2026.**

U.S. Government & International Organizations:

- [Council on Foreign Relations Fellowships \(applications open Sept 2025\)](#)
- [UN Young Professionals Programme \(UN YPP\) \(applications June-July\)](#)
- [Boren Fellowship](#)
- [OECD Young Associates Programme \(YAP\)](#)
- [World Bank Young Professionals Program \(WBG YPP\)](#)
- [IMF Economist & Research Assistant Programs](#)
- [Presidential Management Fellowship \(PMF\) \(paused for this year\)](#)

Foreign Policy & National Security Fellowships:

- [Rangel International Affairs Graduate Fellowship](#)
- [Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship](#)
- [Carnegie Endowment Junior Fellows Program](#)

International Development & Human Rights Fellowships:

- [Global Health Corps Fellowship](#)
- [Atlas Corps Fellowship](#) (temporary pause on applications)
- [Humanity in Action Fellowship](#)
- [Echoing Green Fellowship](#)

Fellowship Opportunities for Emerging Leaders

Regional & Research-Based Fellowships:

- [Asia Foundation Development Fellows](#) (Pending)
- [Mandela Washington Fellowship \(YALI\)](#) (2025 applications closed)
- [Fulbright Public Policy Fellowship](#)

Private Sector & Leadership Fellowships:

- [Schwarzman Scholars Program](#) (April-Sept application window)
- [Obama Foundation Fellowship](#)
- [McKinsey Young Leaders Program](#)
- [Deloitte Consulting Global Impact Fellowship](#) (? status for 2026)

Fellowships & Training Programs for Social Entrepreneurs

- [Echoing Green Fellowship](#) – \$80K+, mentorship & leadership training.
- [Acumen Fellows Program](#) – One-year leadership journey for impact professionals.
- [Schwab Foundation](#) – Connects social entrepreneurs globally via the World Economic Forum.
- [Ashoka Fellows Program](#) – Premier fellowship for systems-changing innovators.
- [Young Social Entrepreneurs \(YSE\)](#) – Incubator with mentorship and funding.
- [Halcyon Incubator](#) – Washington, DC-based program with stipend support.
- [MIT Solve](#) – Global innovation challenges with funding and visibility.
- [GSBI Accelerator](#) – Focused on scaling social ventures in developing economies.
- [CGI University \(CGI U\)](#) – Supports student social innovators.
- [StartingBloc Fellowship](#) – 5-day institute and lifelong impact leadership network.

Grants & Funding for Social Startups

- **Roddenberry Catalyst Fund** – Up to \$15K in early-stage support.
- **Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation** – \$300K+ over 3 years.
- **Chandler Foundation** – Funding bold solutions worldwide.
- **OpenIDEO Challenge Grants** – Innovation funding through open challenges.
- **Skoll Foundation Awards** – \$1.5M to scale proven social enterprises.
- **Global Innovation Fund** – Investments across stages (grants, equity, debt).
- **Mulago Foundation** – Funds and mentors high-impact models.

Social Enterprise Incubators & Accelerators

- **SEED SPOT** – Incubator for early-stage social ventures.
- **Uncharted (formerly Unreasonable Institute)** – Deep mentorship and capital access.
- **Fast Forward Accelerator** – For tech nonprofits and social good startups.
- **Google.org Impact Challenge** – Funding + visibility for tech-driven ideas.
- **MIT D-Lab Scale-Ups** – Innovation scale-up support for poverty alleviation.
- **Village Capital** – Peer-selected investment programs.
- **Global Good Fund Fellowship** – Executive coaching for high-potential leaders.

Networks & Communities for Social Entrepreneurs

- **Aspen First Movers Fellowship** – For corporate changemakers.
- **Impact Hub Global** – Global coworking and incubator network.
- **The DO School** – Creative learning and impact network.
- **Social Enterprise Alliance (SEA)** – U.S.-based network for mission-driven businesses.

Find Your Support Group: Get Connected to Communities of Practice

- **Society for International Development (SID)** – A hub for networking and learning across the international development sector.
- **Rotary Club of Washington Global** – Join a global network of professionals dedicated to service, leadership, and development.

Free Career & Life Coaching Resources

- **The Coaching Collaborative** - Kyle Dietrich - Offers a network of 1,500 certified coaches supporting professionals in the development field.
- **Rotary Club of Washington Global:** Offers free career coaching in the development field from 15 development professionals. [Learn more.](#)

Tell Your Development Story More Effectively

1. Storytelling Frameworks & Guides

- **Made to Stick** by Chip & Dan Heath – Learn the SUCCEsS principles for memorable storytelling.
- **Storytelling for Social Change** by Andy Goodman – Techniques tailored to nonprofits and development.
- **The Moth Storytelling Guide** – Tips for emotionally powerful personal storytelling.

2. Development-Focused Storytelling Resources

- **USAID Storytelling Toolkit** – Structuring and delivering impact stories.
- **Rockefeller Foundation: How to Tell Impact Stories** – Evidence-based storytelling.
- **UNICEF Storytelling Guide** – Centering youth and community impact.

Tell Your Development Story More Effectively

3. Video & Audio Tools for Storytelling

- [Canva Video](#) – Create simple, compelling visual stories.
- [Anchor by Spotify](#) – Record and distribute short audio stories.
- [StoryCorps App](#) – Record and archive personal development stories.

4. Nonprofit & Development Communication Blogs

- [Nonprofit Storytelling Conference](#) – Expert-led guidance for emotional storytelling.
- [NextBillion.net](#) – Real-world development case studies.
- [The Narrative Initiative](#) – Strategies for perspective-shifting narratives.

How Helpful Was This Packet?

- Do you have additional recommendations?
- Do you have feedback from how you used the recommendations?
- Are you looking for additional targeted career coaching?
- Reach out to me at mike@ignitecollectiveleadership.com

