



Investigating Options for Community Work

Part One: Understanding and Explaining What You Really Want

One of the most significant mistakes many job seekers make is limiting their thinking to what’s available without first considering what they really want, need, and feel passionate about. The clearer you are about what is important to you, the easier it will be to explain those ideals to others and to recognize those priorities when they arrive in the form of a job. Looking for a job involves variables you can’t control. Looking inside is something ONLY you can do.

What are my values?	What kind of change do I want to be a part of?	What do I want to learn?	What environment do I want to work in?	What do I need?
<p>Your values should play a major role in your decisions about work and life, but in times of stress we can forget the things that are most important to us. Developing a list of values, or guiding principles can help you stay on course when things get rough.</p>	<p>Thinking about a “career” can be overwhelming. Planning a path for yourself can also seem to be in conflict with listening and responding to the needs of communities, or fighting for change instead of a career.</p>	<p>As you begin your professional life, you have a great deal to offer and even more to learn—both about community work and about what you have to offer. Don’t get paralyzed with planning a whole career, instead ask, “What do I want to learn next?”</p>	<p>Often people forget that it isn’t just the work that matters. Where you work and how you work is just as important. As you seek a good job, consider what kinds of work environment might be best for you, and might help you learn the most.</p>	<p>Community work can be demanding. Understanding what you need to be fulfilled can help you keep working in times of challenge. Employers need someone to do the job, what do you need in return to do the job well?</p>
<p>What values are important to you?</p>	<p>Dream for a minute. What headlines would you like to see in the newspaper some day?</p>	<p>What skills do you know you’d like to gain?</p>	<p>Consider:</p>	<p>What do you need from your life or lifestyle to be happy?</p>
<p>What are the “non negotiables” or the things you cannot do without?</p>	<p>What kind of role might you play in bringing about this change?</p>	<p>What questions would you like to explore?</p>	<p>Size</p>	<p>What time do you need to pursue interests outside of work?</p>
<p>What commitments might guide your decisions?</p>	<p>Are these roles likely to be in the form of a job or take place outside of a job?</p>	<p>What knowledge would you like to have?</p>	<p>Structure</p>	<p>How much money do you need?</p>
<p>What have you fought for?</p>			<p>Cultures</p>	<p>Other needs?</p>
<p>What values have become clearer since you entered college?</p>			<p>Diversity</p>	
			<p>Tools</p>	
			<p>Travel</p>	
			<p>Location</p>	
			<p>Flexibility</p>	
			<p>Policies</p>	
			<p>Supervision</p>	
			<p>Aesthetics</p>	



Investigating Options for Community Work Part Two: Exploring What's Out There

There are many different ways to think about community work, social change, community development, social services, or helping people. There are just as many ways to think about seeking out such work. The chart below provides some loose categories that may help you in your thinking. Each would lead to different questions in an information interview, different contacts in someone's rolodex, or different sites in a web search. Consider which categories are most important to you. If some of these categories or terms are new to you, you might spend some time talking with people about what they mean and how these differences affect their work.

Your Activity	Sector	Issues	Constituencies	Approach	Scale	Location
Is a job the only form that your work might come in? Most people say they are looking for a job—but would a yearlong fellowship also excite you? Different systems have different ways to attract candidates.	All sectors of our economy effect communities. Each can be a source for justice or limitation. Don't confine your thinking (or your earning) to one sector. Often the most creative approaches lie in partnerships between sectors.	This is probably the most common way that people talk about the work they want. Challenge yourself to explore the varied definitions of these terms and the range of organizations working in these areas.	Who do you want to work with, or on behalf of? Constituency (or target audience) is another way groups focus their efforts. How would your work in a field change depending on who you were seeking to help?	Organizations use a variety of tools, and often those approaches depend on their philosophy. What tools do you think are most effective in making change? What approaches would you like to learn more about?	Some organizations work directly with people, other work on behalf of people who they don't see daily. At the beginning of your career it can be important to learn about communities directly.	Community work is often local work. Social and political concerns play out differently in each community. Each community has its own unique set of forces (population, politics, weather, history) that have shaped how it works and doesn't work.
Find a job	Private	Education	Women	Policy	Local	New York
Join a program	Public	Health	African-American Men	Social Service	National	The Developing World
Apply for a fellowship	Non-profit	Community Development	Children	Research	International	Providence
Create your own job	The In-Betweens or Hybrids	Civil Rights	Refugees	Organizing	Regional	The West coast
Go to graduate school		Micro-Economics	Veterans	Advocacy		A community with a large Latino population
		Labor	The Disabled	Funding		Somewhere with Mountains
		Arts	Workers	Program Management		
			Neighborhoods	Faith-based		

