

Investing in talent is a big decision for any organisation; for small nonprofit organisations, the decision is even greater, given the constraints on income and the need to focus on your mission.

While the cost of ongoing salaries for experienced people can often be prohibitive, hiring a graduate on a 12-month contract can provide you with cost-effective access to skilled labour without the long-term financial commitment. The time you invest in managing and mentoring them on their path to self-sufficiency can also have significant rewards.

At For Purpose, we see the opportunity that early career professionals offer, allowing you to hire for potential and to build the experience you need from the inside. Graduate programmes bridge the gap between education and employment, providing support and training, and are the first choice for many starting their career. This is evidenced by the broad range of private sector companies who are investing heavily in recruiting and retaining new talent.

The benefits of employing graduates far outweigh the financial and time commitments. Here are 5 benefits hiring a graduate can have for your organisation:

### 1. **Attract Top Talent (and Retain Them)**

- Early career professionals are more likely to apply for paid roles than voluntary internships not only for financial reasons, but because of the clear commitment being made to their professional development.
- In our experience, graduates are likely to stay with your organisation after the fixed-term programme finishes, thus ensuring a continued return on investment.
- By demonstrating that you are willing to invest in graduate talent, you can be seen as a good place to work that values its employees, meaning you can attract and retain top talent at all levels, while boosting your reputation.
- Recruiting graduates for short-term contracts contributes to succession planning, allowing you to identify and nurture future leaders within the sector who are committed to your mission.

### 2. **Fresh Perspectives and Valuable Insights**

- Graduates have gained up to date specialist knowledge in line with industry best practice from their studies. This can be an invaluable support to keep up with your organisation's regulation and compliance requirements.
- Early career professionals are quick learners and can be easily taught and shaped to suit the needs of the organisation from the start. In university, students are taught to challenge processes and ideas and are encouraged to develop new ways of thinking. This can introduce creative solutions to long-standing challenges or issues.

- Their energy and enthusiasm mean they are open to new opportunities which can be particularly helpful when resources are limited, and service delivery is of utmost importance.
- Graduates bring fresh ideas, innovative thinking and new perspectives to your organisation and can help to identify new opportunities, improve programmes and services or help develop your marketing and fundraising efforts.
- Graduates can often be “culture add” not “culture fit” and help to diversify your organisational talent pool.

### **3. Transferable Skills**

- Graduates are adept at managing schedules and a varied workload with many students working part-time and involved in sports or university societies on top of their studies.
- Throughout their third level experience they have developed diverse skillsets such as research, presentation and communication skills, organisational skills, report writing, critical thinking, project management and data analysis.
- They also bring with them important skills such as a strong work ethic, the ability to work under pressure, collaboration, and self-motivation.

### **4. Digital First**

- The current wave of graduates is the first generation to grow up with instant and unlimited internet access, and as a result have a much stronger grasp on modern technology.
- They are often comfortable with emerging technologies and digital tools, a critical skills gap that has been identified within the charity and community sector seeking to modernise operation and increase their reach.
- Recent graduates have the necessary IT skills and social media savvy to effectively navigate your organisations digital CRM systems and platforms. They may also have new ideas on how new technologies can help increase productivity.

### **5. Values Centred**

- Graduates bring flexibility, adaptability, and a fresh enthusiasm to the workforce.
  - They have grown up in a society exposed to national and international events such as the great recession, and the refugee crisis, meaning they reflect the change and diversity of our society.
  - Their commitment to social impact is a key motivating factor to entering the nonprofit sector and many have previously volunteered in various capacities throughout their education. This shared mission alignment can enhance the organisation's effectiveness and cohesiveness.
  - The enthusiasm and energy of recent graduates can have a positive impact on the overall organisational culture. Their passion for making a difference can inspire other team members and inject new life into the workplace.
- Hiring a graduate can also open up the possibility of tapping into their networks of other values-centred individuals. This can be valuable for partnerships and fundraising efforts.