



ONTARIO NONPROFIT NETWORK

# DECENT WORK TOOL KIT

**Join the Journey:  
Building a Strong  
and Resilient  
Nonprofit Sector**

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**This toolkit is interactive!**  
Click on the pink buttons  
to see the resources.

# WELCOME TO THE DECENT WORK TOOL KIT

A strong and resilient nonprofit sector. Thriving communities. A dynamic province. The work of the nonprofit sector is varied and highly responsive to communities. It makes an **impact**.

This impact is created by the one million employees and millions of volunteers at 58,000 nonprofit organizations in Ontario who care about their work and the people they engage.

There is a cultural shift taking place, creating a world where workplaces are fair, stable, and productive. This is happening because organizations are joining the **decent work movement**.

The Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN) has been building a decent work movement since 2015, recognizing the **value** it brings to the nonprofit sector and the communities it serves. This tool kit brings together practical resources to inspire nonprofit organizations to take meaningful action on their **decent work journeys**.

The mission-driven and values-based approach of nonprofit organizations leads them to offer programs, services, and innovations that benefit communities greatly. The **global** decent work movement builds on that framework by reflecting this same approach of care and concern for the well-being of staff members.

Decent work practices improve the quality of life for employees while also supporting more effective and impactful outcomes for organizations.<sup>1</sup> It means building a culture of equality and inclusion at work as well as ensuring everyone's voices are heard.

Everyone benefits from decent work practices. Nonprofit organizations further contribute to creating thriving communities by increasing employee engagement and staff stability. Staff members experience a culture that matches the values-driven work of their organizations. Overall, the nonprofit sector is strengthened by these elements and becomes more resilient as a result.

**Join the journey.  
Join the decent work movement.**

<sup>1</sup> The decent work campaign is a global initiative that was established by the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Decent work provides voice.  
Decent work promotes dignity and respect.

**SUE MILLING,**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ACTRA TORONTO

# NOW IS THE TIME TO JOIN THE DECENT WORK MOVEMENT!

With benefits to nonprofit employees, organizations and the sector overall, the positive impacts of the decent work movement are clear. By being leaders in this area, the sector will attract and retain highly skilled, professional staff with the ability to deliver public benefit for years to come.

You can be part of the global change taking place in nonprofit workplace culture. We have the resources to support you!

There are **many entry points** for implementing and championing decent work so organizations do not have to address everything at once. Whether you are at the beginning stage of incorporating decent work practices or further along the path planned for your organization, you will find many options for taking the next step in your journey.

It is a good idea to make a plan for a phased approach of implementation which allows you to assess and update, according to your needs, along the way.



## CONFIRMING A COMMITMENT TO DECENT WORK

One way you can begin your journey is to develop and sign a **decent work charter and action plan**. By clearly stating this commitment, your board of directors will be expressing their intention to ensure the workplace reflects decent work approaches and principles.

PDF version:  
**Charter Template and Action Plan**

MS Word document (editable):  
**Charter Template and Action Plan**

Our leadership team was open to decent work opportunities because it was so closely aligned with our values. And then to see the actual tools, the charter and checklist that were available to us to assess what we could do and to improve on. That was quite exciting for me.

**MICHAEL HARRIS, KEYS JOB CENTRE**

## LET US KNOW

If you download the charter, please let us know by sending an email to [decentwork@theonnc.ca](mailto:decentwork@theonnc.ca) so we can add your name to the growing list of organizations who are making a commitment to decent work.



# GETTING STARTED

You've read the decent work charter and list of ideas, and now you're ready to determine the steps you'll take to implement decent work initiatives and practices - but where to begin?

In order to determine the next steps, a helpful process is to assess your current status, make a plan, and then set goals for how and when the elements in your plan will be accomplished.



## SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Decent work practices are not simply limited to compensation and benefits. Organizational practices and cultures make up a significant part of a decent work environment as well. This sample **Decent Work Checklist** provides a starting point

for determining the elements your organization already has in place as well as areas that would benefit from further consideration. It will also help you identify additional decent work practices that could be undertaken by your organization.

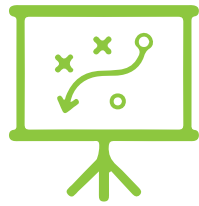
PDF version:  
**Decent Work Checklist**

MS Word document (editable):  
**Decent Work Checklist**

The decent work checklist would be a great place for nonprofits to start. Go through the list and make sure you congratulate yourselves on the best practices already in place, but also work on what needs to be improved. And find creative ways of overcoming challenges.

Think outside the box.

**MERCY LAWLUVI**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
IMMIGRANT WOMEN SERVICES OTTAWA



## MAKE A PLAN

Now that you have assessed your organization's current status you can use the information to focus on the future. The seven issue areas outlined by the **Decent Work Charter** offer a potential framework for your plan.

Decent work looks different in each workplace setting – and it doesn't have to emerge all at once. This plan will be unique to your organization's needs and should reflect your current reality. For example, in some workplaces there are specific employee group needs to consider such as:

**WOMEN IN THE NONPROFIT WORKFORCE:** in Ontario, 75 to 80 per cent of the workforce is made up of women; however, that percentage is not reflected in leadership positions. If this is an area your organization wants to focus on, the following resources are available to support your planning:

- » **Decent work for women microsite**
- » **Decent Work means Decent Work for Women:**  
*You can't build a decent work movement in the nonprofit sector without women*

### YOUTH/EMERGING LEADERS AND DECENT WORK REFERENCE INFORMATION:

- » **Supporting Emerging Leaders Through Decent Work**
- » **Making Space For Emerging Leaders Is Key To Building A Better Nonprofit Sector: 2019 Conference Session Recap**

As a woman, as a leader in this field, it's like, 'Hey, it's time to speak up. It's time to say, hey, pay attention. We're doing amazing work. And we need to be acknowledged. We need to be paid for that work, a fair wage.' I was able to go up to the board level, the very macro level, and to draft the charter, to work with a checklist where staff identified gaps yearly. I was able to put an action plan together to address some of those gaps.

**BARBARA MCFATER**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PTP ADULT LEARNING  
AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

To help you get started, these **121 Decent Work Ideas** highlight different ways organizations have incorporated decent work approaches into their plans. Grouped according to the seven issue areas outlined by the Decent Work Charter, ideas include:

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Work towards increasing equitable employment conditions by creating full-time positions, leading to more stability for staff members.
- Post salary ranges on job postings, which will help set expectations and keep the recruitment process transparent, realistic, and manageable for applicants.
- Take an equitable approach when assessing job qualifications – such as lived experience, work experience and education.

## FAIR INCOME

- Promote steady work hours that allow for predictable income.
- Plan for salary increases over time that reflect the employee's growth and increases in the cost of living.
- Engage in honest, open conversations with funders about the need for stable and adequate funding for fair income and benefits.



## HEALTH AND RETIREMENT BENEFITS

- Consider multi-workplace pension plans that are accessible, offer maximum benefits to employees, and minimize risks for boards.
- Help employees and management understand pay stubs – including how Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) contributions work.
- Set up access to supports and resources for workplace mental health.

ONN is proud to recommend OPTrust Select, a sector-wide pension plan, and a first for the nonprofit sector. A decent retirement plan extends the sector's commitment to building a culture of decent work, offering a stable and secure path to retirement. [Learn more](#)

The ONN Employee Benefits Program is part of our commitment to supporting decent work in the nonprofit sector. We strongly believe that employee benefits are vital to a strong and healthy nonprofit labour force. [Learn more](#)



### A PDF version

of the 121 Decent Work Ideas document is also available.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANCEMENT

- Organize informal training sessions within the organization (such as brown bag lunches) so colleagues can share their skills with each other.
- Develop employee exchange programs with other organizations to build skills and relationships.
- Engage in long-term career path discussions with employees.

## EQUALITY AND RIGHTS AT WORK

- Stay up-to-date with the statutory laws that employers, including nonprofits with paid staff, must uphold. These include the Employment Standards Act (for example minimum wage, vacation time, meal breaks), the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (which includes roles and responsibilities with respect to workplace violence and workplace harassment).
- Create joint worker-management committees (for example, health and safety, advocacy, equity and inclusion, anti-violence).
- Develop anti-oppression and anti-harassment policies, but also be aware of how ongoing employment status (such as precarity) may prevent employees from acting on them.



## CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

- Place daily work in the context of organizational mission and values.
- Identify and resolve sources of individual and collective stress, burnout, and lack of motivation.
- Track year-to-year progress on long-term, incremental decent work goals.



## STABLE EMPLOYMENT

- Develop an action plan for staff retention in your organization.
- Assess and improve the ratio of contract to permanent positions.
- Use scheduling practices that allow for work/life balance.

It doesn't have to be a financial thing. There's lots of things you can do in terms of the culture of your work that can make a big difference.

**KATHY KENNEDY**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
PRINCE EDWARD LEARNING CENTRE

# ADD GOALS TO YOUR PLAN

Once you have created a plan, determine which items should be addressed on a short-term timeline, which are mid-range goals, and which ones fall into a long-term goal category.

Although it can be tempting to tackle everything as quickly as possible, there is value in starting with manageable steps, assessing whether they achieve the desired impact, and then fine tuning them before moving on to larger aspects of your plan. This also ensures that the plan's components don't become intimidating and therefore are never started; instead the plan will offer a clear path forward.

This approach allows your organization to do regular check-ins with employees, ensuring that high level goals are being achieved (such as increased staff engagement) in addition to any tactical-focused goals (such as setting up ergonomic supports for jobs that require desk and/or computer work).



## REVISIT THE SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

At key moments in your plan, it is worthwhile to revisit the **Decent Work Checklist** so you can determine progress and measure achievements. Based on what you discover, and recognizing that situational realities change over time, this provides an opportunity to update your plan and related goals to reflect current needs.

You need to listen to what staff are saying, be reciprocal,  
not one-sided, act on ideas, and be open to change.  
Take ideas from staff at all levels

**DALJIT GARRY**  
FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
WESLEY

# SUPPORT RESOURCES

By becoming part of the decent work movement, you are joining a group of forward-thinking nonprofit leaders who are committed to creating fair, stable and productive workplaces.

**CASE STUDIES AND SECTOR STORIES:** You can learn from many of these leaders' experiences through this collection of [case studies](#) and blog posts, including:

- how decent work research offered the [Scarborough Women's Centre](#) insights into the challenges that women with disabilities face in navigating employment, as well as practices that promote the inclusion of women with disabilities in the workforce
- the comprehensive approach to decent work undertaken by [DeafBlind Ontario Services](#), connecting the organization's strategic vision, operating plans, and day-to-day activities
- building decent work and confronting anti-Black racism at [FoodShare](#)

Small changes can make a big difference. Management and the union agreed to combine two part-time positions into one full-time position. By increasing our full-time positions, which includes group benefits, we get closer to our goal for staff to work for one employer. Hopefully that is us!

**LAURA HANLEY**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
COMMUNITY LIVING GUELPH WELLINGTON

**ATTEND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND NETWORKING EVENTS:** Developing a culture of decent work in the nonprofit sector is a continuing process. Attending events such as the [Nonprofit Driven](#) conference provides opportunities to build your skill set, enhance your understanding of sector issues and learn from industry leaders and colleagues.

**CONTACT THE TEAM AT ONN:** The team at ONN is available to provide support by directing you to resources that will help as your organization moves along its decent work journey.

Visit the [decent work webpage](#) to find the latest information and resources.

# COMMUNICATING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

One of the most beneficial aspects of becoming part of the decent work movement is that it sends a clear message to your staff team: they are valued and the organization is working to enhance their workplace.

Develop a proactive communications plan in order to regularly share information about opportunities

for staff and board member involvement, as well as how and when progress on the plan's goals will be assessed and shared.

Relevant stakeholders will differ in each nonprofit organization but may include: staff team, board of directors, funders, and the community you serve.



Take the next step in strengthening your organization's impact and your community's resilience. Develop and implement a plan for building decent work.



## TALKING WITH FUNDERS ABOUT DECENT WORK

Decent work initiatives in the workplace vary in terms of simplicity and complexity, timing requirements and cost implications. Nonprofit organizations are often asked to do more with fewer resources so it is important that your funders are part of this conversation.

You can play an important role in relaying the positive impact of decent work practices to funders. In your organization this may include your board of directors, government (municipal, regional, provincial, national), foundations, donors, or others.

The following resources provide information to support these conversations:

- » **Funding Decent Work in the Nonprofit Sector:** a four-page introduction for funders on the concept of decent work.
- » **Change Work: Valuing decent work in the not-for-profit sector:** this paper focuses on the value proposition for decent work in the nonprofit sector.

Read more on our [funding decent work page.](#)

# SHARE YOUR LEADERSHIP VOICE

A decent work environment improves employees' work lives, employment relationships, the work environment, organizational performance, and sector effectiveness. It also makes it easier for a nonprofit to meet its mission. That is why nonprofits exist in the first place: to meet our missions for the communities we serve.

By joining the movement you are contributing to the positive, credible impacts of decent work. This not

only benefits employees but the nonprofit sector and society in general.

You can play a role in highlighting the decent work message, describing the kind of world we are actively creating together.

Share your leadership voice!

There are many ways to spread the message:



**Use your existing communication channels** to share your decent work journey and emphasize why it's a priority for your organization: newsletters, social media channels, blog posts, board reports, lunch and learn sessions, workshops, to name only a few.

**Establish your reputation** as a decent work-focused employer by:

- Adopting a Decent Work Charter and **sharing the news**
- Sharing your story as part of ONN's **case study series**
- Working with ONN to highlight one of your key learnings or results in a blog post
- Telling ONN what decent work looks like to you by filling out this **postcard**
- Offering a **testimonial** on an aspect of decent work that has made a difference

**Emphasize the importance of decent work** for the nonprofit sector:

- Advocate to government/elected officials as a champion of working conditions and social policies that not only ensure dignified and supportive work environments for your own employees, but for all Ontario workers
- Advocate to funders (governmental and other) about the positive effects of decent work for nonprofit employees, the sector in general, and society at large

You have joined a global movement of nonprofit leaders who are committed to achieving their organizational mission with the establishment of a decent work environment. These leaders know the benefits of this approach reach far beyond their own walls, ultimately creating significant social, cultural, environmental and economic impact.

By adding your voice and sharing your experiences with this community, you will inspire others to take action.

# YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Being a leader in the nonprofit sector comes with a lot of responsibility. You are working to make the world better for your clients and your community, guided by your mission. The staff team you work with plays a huge role in making it all happen and you want to provide them with a workplace that accurately reflects your mission.

**By joining the decent work global movement you can make that happen.** These practices not only support the fulfillment of your mission, they also strengthen the resiliency of the nonprofit sector.

The Decent Work project team at ONN is always available to support you on this journey. For more information or resources, please contact:

**Ontario Nonprofit Network**