**Taking on the first paid staff member in a nonprofit**

The decision to hire your first paid staff member is a big one. It can be intimidating, and needs to be handled tactfully, but it can also be the key to growing a nonprofit. Common titles for an organisation with one paid staff member include CEO, Coordinator, Administrator, Centre Manager, Service Manager and Volunteer Manager. In this document we will be using the term CEO.

## Managing the change

## The transition from being volunteer-run to having the first paid role can be a shock for the organisation as a whole. Make sure to check in with your volunteers beforehand to hear some of their hopes and concerns for the role. It is important to manage expectations. One paid role cannot necessarily take the place of multiple volunteer roles.

## Deciding on benefits

There are lots of ways to decide which benefits to provide for a role. Some organisations link benefits to civil service or HSE pay grades. The [2022 National Pay and Benefits Survey for Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations](https://www.wheel.ie/about-us/publications/national-guide-pay-and-benefits-2022) also lays out the highest, lowest and average pay and benefits available for a variety of roles in the nonprofit sector. Pay and benefits are also broken down by size of organisation, income and area. Bear in mind that figures from this report may need to be adjusted for inflation. The budget you have available for paying staff may limit the number of hours you can take on a staff member for. It is often part of the first paid staff member’s role to seek additional funding opportunities to ensure their role is sustainable into the future.

## Writing the Role Spec

The role spec is one of the most important tools to ensure you get the right person for the job. Bear in mind the budget, benefits and hours you can afford, and try to make sure the role spec is proportionate. It can be tempting to try to transfer all the responsibilities that had previously been given to several volunteers onto one paid role, but it may not be possible for one person to take over everything. Decide on the priority areas and be clear in the role spec on whether there will be any other roles (whether paid or voluntary) supporting this role.

You can find a template role spec [here](https://www.carmichaelireland.ie/resources/sample-role-spec-if-you-are-hiring-new-staff/).

**Defining responsibilities**

It is important that everyone in the organisation is clear on their responsibilities. Alongside the role spec you have created for the paid role, there should be clear role specs for Board members and volunteers. It is important to have a [Schedule of Matters Reserved for the Board](https://www.carmichaelireland.ie/resources/template-schedule-of-matters-reserved-for-the-board/). This is a list of decisions which only the Board can make. It is good practise to have a [Schedule of Matters Delegated to the CEO](https://www.carmichaelireland.ie/resources/template-chief-executive-scheme-of-delegation/). This will clearly lay out which decisions the CEO is entitled to make without consulting the Board. These documents should exist alongside a full set of [operational policies and procedures.](https://www.carmichaelireland.ie/resources/how-to-agree-operational-policies-for-your-nonprofit/) By making sure these documents exist before you take on your first staff member, you can help to minimise the number of teething issues you run into as they settle in.

**Complying with the law**

When taking on a staff member, you will also need to ensure you are complying with all relevant laws such as the laws concerning the minimum wage, entitlements to annual leave and sick leave, health and safety, Garda Vetting and ensuring you are paying tax appropriately by registering with [Revenue](https://www.revenue.ie/en/online-services/support/ros-help/ros-for-employers/ros-payroll/index.aspx) as an employer and reporting your payroll. You will need to issue a contract to the person you eventually hire and ensure both the staff member and the Board have a signed copy of the contract on file. The is by no means an exhaustive list of the legal requirements when taking on a paid staff member and you may wish to consult with an expert.

**Advertising the role**

Roles in the nonprofit sector can be advertised in all the usual places like Indeed, LinkedIn and Jobs.ie and on your organisation’s website and social media. [ActiveLink](https://www.activelink.ie/) is also a very popular platform for advertising vacancies in the nonprofit sector and [The Wheel](https://www.wheel.ie/jobs) has a vacancies section.

## Managing the interview process

Decide who will be involved in the recruitment process. You might have a panel of three people dedicated to this process. It is a good idea to decide in advance when interviews will be (usually within 2 weeks of the closing date for applications) so that your interview panel keeps this time free. You can decide in advance how you will score candidates’ applications by identifying 3-5 priority areas and allocating marks based on the level of skill, experience or qualification. Carmichael has a separate resource with guidelines on [managing the interview process](https://www.carmichaelireland.ie/resources/managing-interviews-in-the-non-profit-sector/).

**Induction**

When you have selected your preferred candidate, formally offered them the role and they have accepted the role, you will need to begin the process of inducting them. This involves everything from signing and filing the contract, to setting up their payroll, to familiarising them with the organisation and how it works. Carmichael has produced a [check-list for new staff members](https://www.carmichaelireland.ie/resources/new-staff-member-induction-checklist/) which you may find useful. It is important to let the new staff member settle into their role and take on their full set of responsibilities gradually, rather than expecting them to take on all of their responsibilities at the very start.

**Performance Review**

It is also important to conduct a performance review for your staff, at intervals as set out in the job contract. When there is a clear link between what an organisation is striving to achieve and what each individual is expected to deliver it makes it easier for employees to feel connected to the organisation and motivated by their work. Carmichael has a [brief article on why performance reviews are useful](https://www.carmichaelireland.ie/resources/performance-appraisal-make-it-meaningful-and-motivational/).

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