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Online Communities: Promoting Peer Learning and Employment in the Nonprofit Sector

In an effort to promote peer learning and employment within the nonprofit sector, Valerie F. Leonard has expanded her website to include two new pages-- the Nonprofit Knowledge Exchange and the Job Exchange.

The Nonprofit Knowledge Exchange

The Nonprofit Knowledge Exchange is an interactive forum that provides a safe space for nonprofit leaders to ask questions and seek advice from other nonprofit practitioners; share articles that others may find of interest; or, voice concerns and make recommendations regarding some of the challenges and policies that currently impact the nonprofit sector. The moderator will post questions to get discussions started, and forum members will have the opportunity to introduce topics of particular concern to them. There are currently three active forums on this bulletin board:

Forum 1: Capacity Building Blocks

This forum was designed for participants of Capacity Building Blocks, a 10-week workshop series for nonprofit leaders who are serious about maximizing community impact. Workshop participants may respond to follow up discussion questions, encourage one another to complete capacity building projects, share information and other capacity building resources. To learn more about the Capacity Building Blocks series, visit www.valeriefleonard.com to download a brochure.

Forum 2: Stimulus Funding

This forum is provided so that you may share your insights regarding the impact of Stimulus Funding on local nonprofits. You might want to share your experiences applying for funds; administering the grants; share pointers as to how to navigate the funding and administration processes, etc. This forum could be particularly useful in exploring ways Stimulus Funding may be more accessible to local organizations that are more likely to be on the front lines of social service delivery.

Forum 3:

Staying Afloat in Troubled Waters

The current economic situation, coupled with the political climate at the State and Federal levels have wreaked havoc on nonprofit organizations' budgets. A number of organizations have considered merging; trimmed staff, cut back on hours, discontinued vital services, or even closed their doors. What is your organization doing to weather the storm? Would you care to share your stories of survival?

The Job Exchange

The Job Exchange is an interactive bulletin board developed to provide an informal clearinghouse for employers and jobseekers. If you have a position to fill, or are in the market for a job in the nonprofit sector, you have come to the right place. The current forums are listed below.

Forum 1:

Employers

If you are an employer with a position to fill, you may post it here, free of charge. You may summarize the description and upload a document, or include a link to a website that provides further information about the position.

Forum 2:

Job Seekers

If you are in the market for a job, you may use this forum to share a little background about yourself and upload a resume, or link to your resume. You may want to exclude your phone number and address on the online version for security purposes. This information should be shared with employers who indicate an interest in speaking with you further.

Visitors can sign up to register for the online communities by visiting www.valeriefleonard.com, and clicking onto the “Knowledge Exchange” or the “Job Exchange” button in the left margin. They will be guided to a page on the website that provides further information, and then forwarded to the bulletin board for registration. The registration process should take 5-10 minutes in all. The forums will change from time to time to make sure the content is relevant to the users.

Valerie F. Leonard is a Chicago-based community development consultant, with a mission to strengthen the capacity of organizations to make a positive impact on the communities they serve through technical assistance, specialized workshops, resource and organizational development and project management. Ms. Leonard is currently accepting suggestions for future discussion forum topics. If you have any ideas, you may reach her at 773-521-3137, or e-mail her at consulting@valeriefleonard.com.