

## Final thoughts

### Conclusion Overview

This brief Conclusion contains:

- A quick reminder of the value of your experience and a recap of this *Companion* (pages 114-115)
- A final check-in with the characters who've accompanied you throughout the book (pages 115-116)
- Some advice about connecting your passions to your career trajectory, while keeping it all in perspective (page 117)
- A personal perspective from the author (page 117)

The experience you've gained during your service year will be invaluable to you for the rest of your life—providing a unique perspective and understanding of the world. Your volunteer experience may even help you determine and find the type of work that's meaningful in the future.

Practices like being an active and generous participant within your own network, documenting your accomplishments, and finding creative ways to learn and refine new skills can all help you sustain your career development for a lifetime.

- The same practices that have established you as a leader in the corps will help you develop into a leader at school or in any organization.
- Likewise, what you've learned about the job search during your transition from corps to career will likely inform all of your future job searches.

[Part One](#) of this *Companion* outlined things to do during your term of service—or during any organizational tenure—to prepare you for your next steps: discerning your professional calling, building relevant skills for short- and long-term goals, building community partnerships and other key relationships, and gathering evidence of your accomplishments.



[Part Two](#) focused on the job search skills you need during the transition, as they specifically relate to leveraging your service corps experience (while *The Idealist Guides to Nonprofit Careers* focus more comprehensively on all the job search skills you or anyone needs to succeed). Part Two emphasized strategies for overcoming some of the unique challenges of transitioning from corps to career, translating your service experience during the job search and application process, and some options you have outside the nonprofit sector (the nonprofit sector is contrasted with other sectors in Chapter One of *The Idealist Guides to Nonprofit Careers*).

[Part Three](#) focused on starting a new job and overcoming the tricky aspects of post-corps life, like getting a new wardrobe and adjusting to a significantly higher income. Part Three also highlighted the importance of ongoing career growth beyond your service term.

And along the way you've gotten to know a few of archetypal corps members created to illustrate the key messages of this *Companion*. Below you can read where they are now.



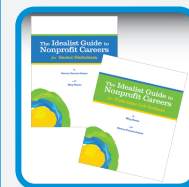
#### ACE'S STORY: EPILOGUE

Ace, the 19-year-old who served in a green energy corps, spends his first post-corps years helping to develop a new business that deconstructs buildings and resells component parts in New Orleans. As the company grows, Ace accepts fewer hours from Solar NOLA, the solar-installation organization where he apprenticed during his transition. He uses his service corps scholarship to go back to school part-time to earn an associates degree in business management.



#### BEA'S STORY: EPILOGUE

Bea, the 22-year-old who connected farms with public school cafeterias during her term, realizes that her first post-corps job at Farm Adventure isn't her dream job after all. She learns through research and informational interviews that to do what she wants to do, she needs further education. After attending an Idealist.org Graduate Degree Fair for the Public Good in North Carolina, she applies to several schools and is fully funded by one of them, where she matriculates in the fall after completing a year at Farm Adventure.



#### TIE-IN WITH THE IDEALIST GUIDES

##### Chapter One of *The Idealist*

*Guides to Nonprofit Careers* (free PDF) can help you explore the differences between the nonprofit, for-profit, and government sectors.

##### First-time Job Seekers version

[www.idealism.org/en/career/guide/firsttime/ch1.html](http://www.idealism.org/en/career/guide/firsttime/ch1.html)

##### Sector Switchers version

[www.idealism.org/en/career/guide/sectorswitcher/ch1.html](http://www.idealism.org/en/career/guide/sectorswitcher/ch1.html)

#### GRAD SCHOOL RESOURCES FROM IDEALIST

If you are trying to see how a graduate education can help you connect to your next career steps, Idealist.org offers two free resources of interest.

##### The **Public Service Graduate Education Resource Center**

contains a wealth of knowledge about graduate study (as well as alternatives to it).

[www.idealism.org/gradschool](http://www.idealism.org/gradschool)

##### **Idealist Graduate Degree Fairs**

for the Public Good take place in cities across the United States and Canada. These free events bring together a range of graduate education programs that aim to help their students make a difference.

[www.idealism.org/gradfairs](http://www.idealism.org/gradfairs)





### **CESAR'S STORY: EPILOGUE**

Cesar, the 33-year-old who has done two terms of service with a community center for immigrants in a faith-based service corps, moves on to a program associate role at a small, grass-roots nonprofit that provides human services to new immigrants. The organization has only three full-time staff members, so Cesar gets his wish to wear many, many hats. Ironically, he realizes that he really misses teaching, his car, Florida—feelings he did not anticipate—so he moves back to Tampa, buys an affordable used car, and goes to work in a development role for the faith-based community radio station where he used to volunteer. To fulfill his teaching yen, he volunteers nights teaching English classes for immigrants through his church.



### **DEENA'S STORY: EPILOGUE**

Deena, the 47-year-old who served in Ecuador connecting new small businesses with expertise and micro-loans, has moved to Phoenix. She now teaches Native American entrepreneurs about business development and helps them access micro-loans through a new social networking website that makes it possible for anyone to lend money to small Native businesses. She also spends a few years working toward her degree through a global executive MBA program. Through her service corps's affinity group for Lesbian and Gay returned volunteers, she meets Shane, who works for a micro-financing institution in Ghana. The two stay in touch and eventually, when Deena completes her degree, Shane invites her to Accra to work in micro-finance there.



### **ED'S STORY: EPILOGUE**

Ed, the 70-year-old college English instructor who served in China and now lives in Portland, OR, spends his first post-corps years taking care of his grandkids and working part-time teaching adult job seekers computer literacy skills. He starts a blog about using social media in the classroom. As his readership increases, a nonprofit approaches Ed about sponsoring his blog. The organization creates resources for teachers throughout the world and offers him enough income that he cuts back his teaching hours so that he has more time to blog and to be with his family. Over time he receives invitations to speak at technology and education conferences and enjoys the chance to keep traveling.

## Look inwards, then look out!

Look to your internal compass for guidance. Reading job descriptions (as you may have done for the Career Tracks Exercise—discussed in [Part One](#) of this *Companion*, as well as in *The Idealist Guides to Nonprofit Careers*) can help you determine some directions to move toward in your career. While valuable, don't forget to imagine new possible paths to walk down, regardless of whether those paths yet exist. Articulating your own boundless vision of your future is a first step to making it happen, and can help you recognize the opportunities the universe presents you.

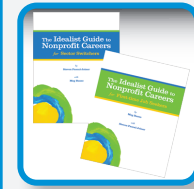
In fact, a major takeaway message of *The Idealist Guides to Nonprofit Careers* is that to be happy in your career, you must first know yourself and your own diverse needs, then know your sector and the people in it, and finally, to find the synergy between what you want and what the opportunities are.

## Beyond your career

The focus of this *Companion* has been on your career development. For many people, though, career isn't the driving force in their lives—and it may not be in yours. Having fun outdoors, relishing time with family, and engaging in philanthropy and hobbies outside the 9-to-5 work day may be the activities that propel you. While this *Companion* is meant to infuse you with ideas for moving on with your career, its intention is not to assume that career holds crucial importance for you, or even that it should. To the extent that you are thinking about your next steps, the suggestions detailed here are to assist your planning.

## A personal perspective from the author

My advice to think seriously about signing on for a second or third term of service comes from the heart. I committed to three terms (Peace Corps, 1998-2000; AmeriCorps National, 2000-2001; and AmeriCorps VISTA, 2004-2005) for reasons ranging from the issues I'd get to work on, to the population I'd get to work with, to the roles I'd get to play in my host organization. I loved all three terms and gained far more than I'd be able to give back in a lifetime of service. Completing three terms also meant transitioning from corps to career three different times, and I made new choices during each transition that have informed my perspective throughout this *Companion*. The best career advice I've ever received has been from my parents, who have always said that I can be *anything* I want to be. Through their words and actions, both have emphasized that since I will spend so much of my life at work, that I should always do what I love. So far that advice hasn't let me down.



### TIE-IN WITH THE IDEALIST GUIDES

Read about knowing your-

self, the sector you want to work in, and the synergy between the two in the **Conclusion** of *The Idealist Guides to Nonprofit Careers* (free PDF).

#### First-time Job Seekers version

[www.idealists.org/en/career/guide/firsttime/conclusion.html](http://www.idealists.org/en/career/guide/firsttime/conclusion.html)

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### PUTTING YOUR GOOD INTENTIONS INTO ACTION

Look for **The Idealist.org Handbook to Building a Better World** at your local library. The book outlines a huge variety of ways you can make a positive impact in your community and the world, regardless of your career choices.

[www.idealists.org/handbook](http://www.idealists.org/handbook)

### FOR ONGOING CAREER SUPPORT

For ongoing career support, check out **Idealist's Career Center** ([www.idealists.org/career](http://www.idealists.org/career)), your own undergraduate career development center (whether you're in school now, or an alum), the career resources of your corps (find links at [www.idealists.org/service](http://www.idealists.org/service)), and **The New Service** blog from Idealist.org, ([www.idealists.org/thenewservice](http://www.idealists.org/thenewservice)).



## SUMMARY

As you encounter new opportunities and challenges, remember that **your service experience is a valuable source of knowledge and skills** (pages 114-115) that will remain with you for the rest of your life. Use the ideas in this book to continually evaluate your career trajectory and **stay true to your life's ambitions** (page 117). Thanks for reading—we wish you all the best in realizing your goals and potential in the future!

## You are here

- This is the **Conclusion**. The entire book is available free of charge at [www.idealists.org/servicecompanion](http://www.idealists.org/servicecompanion).

### About Action Without Borders, Idealist.org, and this book

**Action Without Borders** is a nonprofit organization founded in 1995 with offices in the United States and Argentina. [Idealist.org](http://Idealist.org), a project of Action Without Borders, is an interactive site where people and organizations can exchange resources and ideas, find opportunities and supporters, and turn their good intentions into action.

*Service Corps to Social Impact Career—A Companion to The Idealist Guides to Nonprofit Careers* by Amy Potthast is a product of Action Without Borders' Careers and Service Team based in Portland, OR. This team works to support individuals and organizations with graduate education options; HR and volunteer management resources; and job, internship, and domestic and global volunteer opportunities. Published in 2009 by Action Without Borders.



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