



WOMEN OF COLOR

in Fundraising and Philanthropy

Top Search Firms for Women of Color

2023



Top Search Firms for Women of Color

For the second consecutive year, the Women of Color in Fundraising and Philanthropy (WOC) administered a survey to its members and executive search firms with a specialty in and strong emphasis on placements within the nonprofit or social sector. We have identified 15 firms that are exceptional in both their approach and results when working with women of color. WOC consulted Melissa Brown & Associates, LLC for the independent compilation of the ranked list of the Top Executive Search Firms that work for women of color. This year, we anticipate that our list will include ten larger national firms and five smaller regional or boutique firms that are leading exceptional work in this space.

Search firms and WOC members alike were asked similar questions to shed light on both sides of an engagement. Additionally, WOC members were asked to share feedback about their experience working with firms as representatives of nonprofit or social sector organizations working to fill a position.

Data was collected from search firms in the following areas: diversity in ownership and recruiters (i.e., number of women, women of color); number of searches completed; characteristics of placements made (i.e., percentage of women of color, clear steps taken [or not] to reach women of color); transparency within the position description and presentation (i.e., gender neutral, salary ranges, commitment to diversity); and post-placement engagement. Data was collected from WOC members in the following areas: experience with recruiters; if and to what extent the search firm facilitated a successful placement; and post-placement relations with the search firm.

We are pleased to share the 2023 Top Search Firms for Women of Color. We created two categories: larger national search firms and smaller regional/boutique search firms.

TOP 10 NATIONAL FIRMS



1

Envision Consulting, LLC provides search, strategy, and leadership tailored specifically to the nonprofit sector. The firm works largely in California and the New York City area. A typical client has an operating budget of \$10 million or more and works in the arts, K-12 and other education, environment, or human services (including youth development).



2

ThinkingAhead Executive Search recruits candidates for a variety of global clients of varying stages. Headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee, the firm conducts executive searches in multiple industries, including the nonprofit sector. Nonprofit organization clients include those with operating budgets of \$10 million or more and typically work in the arts, environment, human services (including youth development), or religion.



3

Campbell & Company is a national nonprofit consulting firm that provides executive search and strategic information services, in addition to development. Its clients are all nonprofit organizations, and search clients typically have total operating budgets of \$3 million or more. The firm, based in Chicago with offices nationwide, has conducted searches for organizations in the arts, environment, higher education, and human services (including youth development).



4

Isaacson Miller is a national firm that focuses on the recruitment of leaders for mission-driven organizations. In 2021, seventy-six percent of their placements identified as women or were people of color. A typical client has an operating budget of \$10 million or more.



5*

On-Ramps is a full-service executive search and consulting firm that exclusively serves the social sector. A typical client is an organization based in the education, government, advocacy, human rights, international development, arts, impact investing, environment, foundation, and philanthropy sectors. The firm is based in New York City and conducts searches nationwide, with the majority of its placements identifying as people of color.

*Tie for 5th place in Large Firms.

- Past Inclusion
- First-time Inclusion



5*

Diversified Search Group and its combination of specialized brands, including its partner, **Koya**, is a woman-founded and woman-led executive search conglomerate that provides an array of services. Seventy-eight percent of the firm's placements in 2021 identified as women and/or people of color. Diversified Search Group, headquartered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, has fourteen offices nationwide and serves clients in more than thirty countries.



6

Lindauer Global is an executive search firm that serves nonprofits across the United States and on four continents. It offers a range of search, leadership, and talent management services. Its clients are largely arts, K-12 education, health care, higher education, and philanthropy/fundraising organizations that typically have total operating budgets of \$10 million or more.



7

Edgility Consulting is a national search firm that provides a variety of services in talent and organization development, primarily for social impact organizations. Seventy-four percent of its placements have been people of color. Edgility Consulting is headquartered in Oakland, California, and has a remote team with members located in a number of cities across the USA.



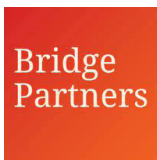
8

GoodCitizen supports social sector organizations by providing them executive search and leadership advisory services. A typical client is an organization in the foundation, nonprofits, and social enterprise, youth development, and climate sectors. GoodCitizen is headquartered in Seattle, Washington and has served more than 125 clients across 40 geographies.



9

Aspen Leadership Group (ALG) provides recruitment services and leadership consulting to nonprofits and institutions of higher education. The firm places special emphasis on advancement searches. Typical clients are housed in the arts, environment, health care, higher education, and human services sectors with budgets from under \$1 million to several hundred million and beyond.



10

Founded in 2003, **Bridge Partners** is a minority-owned executive search firm that is headquartered in New York, with offices located in Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. The firm's clients include major corporations, nonprofits, as well as public sector and social impact organizations across the United States and around the world. Seventy-one percent of its placements are leaders of color while sixty-eight percent are women.

*Tie for 5th place in Large Firms.

- Past Inclusion
- First-time Inclusion

TOP 5 BOUTIQUE FIRMS



1

Uproot Talent is a Latina-owned social impact search and talent advisory firm that provides a suite of related services, including organizational development. Founded in 2022, it has roots in the Los Angeles metropolitan area and presence across the USA. The firm has clients in the sectors of arts and culture, K-12 educational organizations, philanthropy, including community foundations and others, and youth development groups.



2

Imagine Consulting, LLC is a Black, LGBTQ+, and woman-owned consulting agency. It provides recruitment and search in addition to strategy and consulting services to education and nonprofit organizations. It was founded in 2019 with headquarters in Washington, D.C.



3

Glymph Consulting, LLC provides a variety of services, including recruiting and organizational analysis. With roots in Denver, the firm works with organizations in the environmental sector in addition to those in education, human services, and youth development. A typical client has a total operating budget under \$25 million.



4

Offor is a Black woman-owned talent advisory and executive search firm that has tripled in size since 2021. Headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana with a remote workplace offering, it works with organizations in the education, technology, venture capital, and professional services sectors. More than seventy percent of Offor's placements identify as Black, Latina, or Asian, and many of the candidates identify as mothers.



5

Pearl Street Collective is a woman-owned executive search and talent strategy firm. It works with national clients in the social justice and higher education domains with operating budgets that range from under \$1 million to over \$1 billion. The firm is headquartered in Boston and has offices in San Diego.

- Past Inclusion
- First-time Inclusion



The Pursuit of Salary Equity

Most firms applying for recognition expressed the premium that they place on salary equity. Firms employ a variety of strategies to do their due diligence in this area, including the following: evaluating salary through specialized compensation platforms; in-depth discussions with the hiring entity to best inform a competitive, fair salary; and analysis of public and private data. The following insights from our applicants detail common approaches.

- We educate our clients that pay transparency ultimately has a positive impact on a candidate's interest and speaks to the organization's commitment to culture and equity. We encourage our clients to post the full salary ranges and even if they don't, we share openly with all candidates.
- I partner with a compensation consultant to ensure [compensation] is right before we even post it. We share best practices, we educate on historic disparities and why they exist, and then we push to ensure folks understand why it's critical to hiring, retention, and long-term satisfaction.
- As we decide if a partnership with a potential client is aligned, we are very explicit in understanding the scope of the role and if the compensation is aligned with the priorities of the position...We make sure candidates are aware of the full compensation package— this includes base salary, bonus potential, sign-on bonus possibilities, the health benefits package, PTO policies, and retirement plan options.



Accountability to Client Satisfaction

While the majority of all applicants embed nearly two years of support into their post-placement efforts, the firms recognized in this year's Top List were more likely to use a formal process to assess client satisfaction, including recurring check-in calls and surveys. We are pleased to share examples from Top Search Firms about how they track the satisfaction of both their clients and the placed candidates.

- We check in with our candidates and clients regularly to hear how things are going and if there are any areas where we can provide assistance. If there are challenges on either side, we provide counsel and coaching. When appropriate, we have also made introductions to other professionals in the field with additional expertise and points of view. Once they've settled in, we also ask candidates if they feel that the search process appropriately prepared them for the position.
- Candidates sometimes experience less than ideal conditions because, despite all efforts, the culture of the hiring organization IS a challenge. In response to that, we have hiring in cohorts to create additional safety and are piloting new hire integration as an additional service for candidates and clients.



Recommendations

The project asked recruiters and members of Women of Color in Fundraising and Philanthropy for their suggestions to help people find their dream jobs. Summarized below are seven principal suggestions followed by some very specific recommendations.

The Seven Principal Suggestions

- Build and engage with networks of allies, partners, and promoters even when you are not looking for a new job. Include recruiters in that network.
- Consider a new position carefully, researching the opportunity and the search firm, if offered one. Ask your network for input, too.
- Know your worth, your contributions, your impact on where you've been, and what you can project for where you'd like to go.
- Be yourself. Don't try to be someone else's token or checked box.

- Stretch yourself if that feels right. Apply for positions even if you don't meet 100% of the qualifications.
- Persist in your search and resist organizations that hide their DEI work and processes, their salary and benefits, or other important elements.
- Engage expertise: career and/or resume coaches, search firms or recruiters, or other experts can all be important players on your team.

Pointed Recommendations

- Identify "promoters" who will speak to your strengths and interests. Ask them for written endorsement or recommendations that discuss your previous experience, work style, and other positive contributions. These can be part of your application materials.
- Make sure your LinkedIn profile is current and reflects your position, skills, and accomplishments. Use LinkedIn to share meaningful content. Comment on others' posts.
- Write down your tangible accomplishments, identifying if those efforts were done with a team and which were your own individual contributions. Showcase where you have improved and implemented constructive feedback.
- Include volunteer and community experience on your resume and ensure that employers value your lived experiences.
- Be your own advocate. Don't wait for your manager to recommend you for more senior positions...We often hear managers say, "She never raised her hand for it, so I assumed she wasn't interested," when in fact, the employee was waiting to be invited. If an opportunity opens up, and you feel it will support the growth path that you've identified for yourself, go for it.
- Ask to read an organization's talent and culture audit before accepting a position.
- Ask about non-compensation benefits: what's the work week like? What's the location flexibility? What's the PTO policy? Does the organization offer employer-subsidized health insurance? What's the 401K match? Don't be afraid to get this information!
- Negotiate career coaching and a professional development stipend as part of your benefits package.



Final Words from a WOC Member

You already have everything you need to be successful.

You are whole just the way you are. Center and uplift non-traditional forms of knowledge and education. Lived experience is critical and important: your cultural capital is key. There are things you know that you can't acquire through a course and a book. This is your superpower.