



ELEVATE LABS CAREER WAYFINDER

Career Wayfinder Report

Proof of what you're good at. A plan for what's next.

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6 REVIEWERS

SAMPLE

INSIDE Summary · What You're Known For · Fit · What Now

Six people from three chapters of your work: managers, peers, someone you led, and people you served.

Sample report. Renee Okafor and everyone in this report are fictional.



Summary

Six people describe someone who leads people through change. Your search hasn't asked for that yet.

Where you're headed

You want to bring 14 years of running federal grant programs into nonprofits or health care, somewhere the work reaches people more directly. You also said you don't know what your work is called outside federal contracting. Most of this report is an answer to that.

What people see

The six people who answered for you (a former manager, two peers, someone who reported to you, the federal client you served, and the chair of a board you sit on) describe the same person from very different seats. The word they reached for most was *steady*, and their stories keep returning to the same move: something breaks or changes fast, and you get people through it. All six said they saw you do your best work leading a team. You didn't pick that for yourself. Their written answers carry more weight in this report than their picks, and the stories make the same point the picks do.

YOUR PROOF

- **You get people through change.** When your contract was being recompeted and morale dropped, you met with each person on your team, and the program didn't miss a deliverable in its last six months.
- **You fix what's broken without looking for someone to blame.** When an audit flagged reporting gaps, you owned it, built a quarterly check, and the next audit came back clean.
- **You make complicated things usable.** You turned a 60-page grantee manual into a 12-page guide and a checklist, and other teams at your company adopted the format.

Where you fit

The evidence points to three kinds of work: running the operation of a mission-driven organization, leading programs that serve people directly, and leading the change when an organization switches how it works. The titles to test first are director of operations, program director, and implementation manager. None of them are on the list you've been applying to.

Where to start

Start with the titles. You said you don't know which jobs to search for, and more than 60 applications have brought four replies. Before you send another one, test two titles from Part Two against real postings. It takes an afternoon, and it's the first experiment in this report.

PART ONE

What You're Known For

● WHAT YOU'RE KNOWN FOR
 ○ FIT
 ○ WHAT NOW

The Words People Use

YOUR THREE WORDS

Reliable
 Organized
 Fair

The Words You Chose

Reliable. Organized. Fair. They describe how you do the work: you show up, you keep it in order, and you treat people evenly. Your reviewers would agree with all three, and two of them, Organized and Fair, show up on their lists too. They're also words about how you work rather than what you make possible, and the second is what a hiring manager is listening for.

What People Come to You For

You said people come to you to get something through the system: compliance questions, deadlines, what the regulations actually require. The peers who answered said the same, and added something you didn't. When something blew up, or a grantee was angry, people went to you. Knowing the rules gets someone hired as a specialist. Being the person people go to when things go wrong gets someone hired to run things.

OTHERS' THREE WORDS

Unflappable
 Responsive
 Trusted
 Fair
 Clear
 Precise
 Generous
 Practical
 Calm
 Dependable
 Organized
 Kind
 Thorough
 Warm
 Steady
 Supportive

The Words They Chose

Steady came up three times, more than any other word. Around it sit two clusters. Words about how you hold up under pressure: Unflappable, Calm, Dependable, Responsive. And words about how you treat people: Trusted, Generous, Kind, Supportive, Warm. Nobody reached for a word about rules or compliance, even though that's what your résumé leads with.

Where the Lists Differ

Asked what would make you stronger in your next role, four of your six reviewers said some version of the same thing: let people see what you can do. You let others present your work, you give the credit away, and you go quiet when senior leaders are in the room. A fifth said you don't see it yourself. Arrogant is on your list of words you never want associated with you. That's a good line to hold. It may also be keeping you from saying plainly what six people were glad to say for you.

REFLECTION

When someone asks what you do, how long does it take you to get from the rules to the people? What would change if you started with the people?



● WHAT YOU'RE KNOWN FOR — ○ FIT — ○ WHAT NOW

Where You're Strongest

Each person, you included, picked the three statements most like you from the same list of thirteen. The statements come from the three waypoints in *Uncharted Leadership*: Awareness (how you read yourself and the people around you), Alliance (how you bring people together), and Action (how you move things forward).

YOU AND THEY AGREE

- Steps up to solve problems, even if you didn't create them (*Action*)
- Shares ideas and plans in a way that's easy for others to understand (*Awareness*)

THEY SEE IT, YOU DIDN'T PICK IT

- Inspires people to keep moving forward, even during change or disruption (*Action*)
- Close behind: addresses conflict head-on (*Alliance*), and makes sure people who are different get the same chance to be heard (*Alliance*)

YOU PICKED IT, THEY MOSTLY DIDN'T

- Takes responsibility when things go wrong and looks for ways to improve (*Action*)

You and most of your reviewers agree on two things. You step up to solve problems you didn't create, and you explain plans so people can actually use them. The grants system switch shows both. The agency gave four months' notice, more than 300 grantees had to move, and you built the training plan, ran weekly office hours, and paired struggling grantees with ones who'd figured it out. Every grantee reported on time, and the agency asked to use your plan for other programs. You named it as the work you're proudest of, and two reviewers chose the same story when asked for a time you made a real difference. It's the strongest single piece of evidence in this report.

The strength your reviewers see most, and you didn't pick, is getting people through change. Four of six chose it. Their examples show what it looks like: when the contract was being recompeted, you met with each person on your team and kept the work on track to the end. When the layoffs came, you spent your last weeks helping your team update their résumés and making calls for them before you worked on your own search. Two more statements sit just behind it. You address conflict head-on (you once got two feuding grantees onto one call and off it with a plan they both signed off on), and you make sure people who are different get a real say (you made sure the volunteers who are also clients had a real say in the pantry's new intake process). All three are about leading people, and none of them is what your résumé leads with.

You picked taking responsibility when things go wrong. One reviewer picked it too, with the clearest example of it in this report: the audit you owned and fixed. It's real. It shows up mostly when something has gone wrong, so fewer people see it. Keep it in your stories, and lead with the strengths people already see.

You lead with the rules. The people who worked with you lead with the people.

REFLECTION

Think about the weeks after the recompetite news. What did you do for your team that you've never put on paper?



WHAT YOU'RE KNOWN FOR — FIT — WHAT NOW

Where You Do Your Best Work

WHAT GIVES YOU ENERGY (YOUR ANSWERS ONLY)

Talking things through with people

Hands-on doing

Juggling many things at once

Making the idea happen

Helping one person at a time

Doing the work myself

Jumping in when something urgent comes up

Work I can leave at the door

Working at a desk

WHERE YOU DO YOUR BEST WORK: YOU PICKED

Steady, with clear and predictable work

Behind the scenes, making things work

Clear direction from someone I trust

YOUR REVIEWERS PICKED

Leading a team

all six

Fixing something that's broken

five of six

Fast-moving, where things change often

three of six

Your energy comes from the doing: picking up what's urgent, juggling a lot at once, talking things through with people, and getting things done with your own hands. You'd rather help one person at a time than redesign a whole system, and you want work you can leave at the door. Those are your answers alone; reviewers weren't asked what gives you energy.

Where you do your best work is a different question, and here your answers and your reviewers' split. You picked steady, predictable work, behind the scenes, with clear direction from someone you trust. All six reviewers said they saw you do your best work leading a team, five said fixing something that's broken, and three said somewhere fast-moving. Only one reviewer picked any of yours, and the pattern is strongest among the people who worked with you most recently.

Read together, the two lists stop looking like a contradiction. You like hands-on, urgent, people-facing work, and the people around you saw you do your best work leading a team through something broken or changing fast. That's a leader who stays close to the work. It may also be that after the year you've had, steadiness is what you want right now, and that's a fair thing to want. The question for your search is which kind of steady: a stable organization where you lead the fixing, or a stable role where you keep things in order. Your reviewers would bet on the first. Part Two turns this into what to look for in a job posting.

REFLECTION

Picture your best week at the contractor. Was it a calm one?



PART TWO

Fit

○ WHAT YOU'RE KNOWN FOR — ● FIT — ○ WHAT NOW

The Work That Fits

Your direction holds up. The question is level, not industry.

Running the operation

Director of operations or operations manager at a mid-size nonprofit or community health organization. One reviewer said this is the job they'd hire you for, and it matches what reviewers saw: you leading a team, fixing what's broken, and being the one people go to when something goes wrong.

Leading programs that serve people

Program director at a nonprofit, or running community programs for a health system. This is closest to what you said you want, work that reaches people more directly, and your board work shows you already do it as a volunteer. One reviewer described you as someone who knows how money and rules work and still cares about the person at the window.

Leading the change

Implementation manager, for an organization rolling out a new system or program. One reviewer named this directly, and the grants system switch is the proof.

Where to look

- **Established nonprofits** with several programs or sites, big enough to need someone running operations: human services agencies, community action agencies, and regional food banks.
- **Hospitals and health systems**, especially their community health and community benefit departments, which run programs outside the hospital walls.
- **Community health centers**, many of which run on federal grants and need people who know the rules that come with them.
- **Foundations and intermediaries** that pass public or private money to community groups and need someone to manage grants once they're awarded.
- **Companies that sell grants or health software** to nonprofits and hospitals, which hire implementation managers to roll it out.

Nothing in the evidence argues against nonprofits or health care. Where it pushes is level. Your reviewers describe someone who could run an operation, and most of the titles you've been applying to are about running a single program or analyzing one. Health care is the less proven of the two industries: one reviewer named it, and it would mean learning a new set of rules. You've learned a new set of rules before.

Your must-haves (stability, work that matters, and benefits) and your dealbreakers (on-site five days a week in DC, and constant travel) work as a filter on all of these. Established organizations tend to offer more of the stability and benefits you named than small or new ones do.



Titles and Keywords to Test

This is a list to test, not a verdict. It's built from what your reviewers said they'd hire you for, the strengths and conditions in Part One, and your résumé. None of these are titles you've been searching for. Pay is the typical figure for the whole occupation in the DC area; sources are on the last page.

One reason the search may be quiet. "Grants manager" means different things in different places. In federal work, it means managing grants after they're awarded. At many nonprofits, it means raising grant money. The federal occupation database files it closest to fundraising managers. If your applications have been landing in fundraising searches, the silence may say more about the title than about you.

Titles to pursue

RUN THE OPERATION

Director of Operations · Operations Manager	General and Operations Managers. Also posted as Operations Director, Center Manager. Growing occupation. DC-area median pay \$156,460 across all employers; nonprofits often pay less.
Grants and Compliance Manager	Compliance Managers. Also posted as Compliance Director, Compliance Operations Manager. Growing occupation. Local pay isn't reported for this occupation on its own.

LEAD PROGRAMS THAT SERVE PEOPLE

Program Director · Community Services Director	Social and Community Service Managers. Also posted as Social Services Director. Growing occupation. DC-area median pay \$101,240.
Community Health Program Manager	Medical and Health Services Managers. Also posted as Healthcare System Director, Mental Health Program Manager. Growing occupation. DC-area median pay \$140,670.

LEAD THE CHANGE

Implementation Manager · Implementation Project Manager	No occupation of its own; closest is Project Management Specialists, which lists Implementation Project Manager. Growing occupation. DC-area median pay \$127,030.
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Titles to approach with care

Grants Manager	Read each posting closely. Keep it if the job is managing awarded grants; skip it if the job is raising money.
Development Director	This is fundraising: donor-facing and out front. You picked behind the scenes, and one grant win, however good, is one example.
Program Analyst · Grants Specialist	These step away from leading people, which is where every reviewer saw you at your best.

Search keywords

grants management federal grants compliance Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200) subrecipient monitoring
program operations implementation system transition change management process improvement
team leadership stakeholder engagement conflict resolution audit readiness training and technical assistance
community partnerships



○ WHAT YOU'RE KNOWN FOR — **○ FIT** — ○ WHAT NOW

What to Look For in a Posting

Titles get you to the posting. The responsibilities section tells you whether the job fits. Use what you and your reviewers said in Part One to read it.

Look for at least two of these three:

- ☐ **A team to lead.** Every reviewer saw you at your best leading one.
- ☐ **Something to fix or change.** Five of six saw you at your best fixing what's broken, and your two biggest stories are both about change.
- ☐ **Hands on the work, with an end to the day.** That's where your energy comes from.

A job missing two of the three probably isn't your job, however good the title sounds.

PHRASES TO LOOK FOR

"Supervises," "manages a team of," "hires and develops staff"

A team to lead.

"Leads the transition," "implements," "redesigns," "improves processes"

Something to fix or change.

"Oversees day-to-day operations," "works directly with partners"

Hands on the work.

"Fast-paced," "manages competing priorities"

You get energy from juggling and urgent work, and reviewers saw you at your best when things moved fast.

"Primary point of contact for grantees, partners, or community organizations"

You'd rather help one person at a time, and you like talking things through.

PHRASES TO READ TWICE

"Cultivates donors," "meets fundraising goals"

That's a fundraising job, whatever the title says.

"Sets long-term vision" as most of the job

You picked hands-on and urgent work over long-range planning. Strategy as part of the job is fine; one reviewer thinks you should show more of it.

"Individual contributor," "no direct reports," or analysis as the main duty

A step away from leading people.

"Evenings and weekends as needed," "on call"

You want work you can leave at the door. Ask what it means in practice.

"Travel up to 50%," "on-site five days a week"

Your dealbreakers.

PART THREE · WHAT NOW

Three Experiments

Three experiments, strongest first. Try each one, notice what changes, and adjust.

1

Test two new titles before you send another application

For: Knowing which jobs fit you

You said you don't know which titles to search for, and more than 60 applications have brought four replies. Before you change your résumé or your cover letter, change what you're aiming at. Pick two titles from different groups in Part Two, director of operations and implementation manager, say, and run the ten-postings test on each, using the three-part screen in Part Two. For the title that holds up, rewrite your résumé summary so a reader meets the person your reviewers described.

TRY THIS

- Pull ten postings for each of two titles this week
- Mark the requirements you meet with a story behind them
- Rewrite your résumé summary for the title that holds up

2

Lead with the people, not the rules

For: Telling your story in interviews

Four of six reviewers said some version of "let people see what you can do." In your next three conversations about work, answer "tell me about yourself" with the recompute or the system switch before you mention compliance. Say it out loud to someone first. The rules are still your foundation, not your headline. Your brand kit has the stories written out.

TRY THIS

- Practice your opening answer out loud with one person this week
- Open your next three work conversations with a people story
- Notice how people respond, and how it feels to say it

3

Ask the people who already said it

For: Finding openings and people who can help

Six people just told you what you're good at. Most of them would make an introduction if you asked. Send each of them a short note: thank them, name the two kinds of work you're testing, and ask for one person they think you should talk to. Two of them signed their messages to you, and they're the natural people to ask for a LinkedIn recommendation too. Asking costs you one email each.

TRY THIS

- Send six thank-you notes with one specific ask
- Ask the two who signed their messages for a LinkedIn recommendation
- Notice which introductions open real doors



In Their Words

You started this asking what your work is called outside federal contracting. The people who've worked with you have an answer: you get people through change, and people come to you when something breaks. Three of them also wrote to you directly. Their words are below, exactly as they wrote them.

“

Renee, you were the person I never had to worry about. Any organization that gets you is lucky. Don't let this year convince you otherwise.

DANIEL REYES

“

You taught me more about this job than any training did. Thank you.

“

Renee, you were the best manager I've had. Whoever hires you, I hope they know it.

IMANI BROOKS

A long search is hard, and the quiet after an application is real. So is everything in this report. Keep these where you'll see them on the days the inbox is empty, and go test the titles.



Continuing the Work

Talk it through with your coach

Your coach summary is a one-page version of this report, written in your voice for that conversation. You decide whether to share it. Bring it to your next session, along with the two titles you're testing.

Where the framework comes from

The three waypoints, Awareness, Alliance, and Action, come from *Uncharted Leadership: Navigating Disruption Without a Map* by Katie Sheketoff.

What this report couldn't see

Your reviewers knew you mostly in federal grants work, so this report can't tell you how a nonprofit or health system hiring manager will read your background. The postings test and the conversations in the third experiment are how you find out.

Sources

This report includes information from O*NET OnLine by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (USDOL/ETA), used under the CC BY 4.0 license. Pay figures are 2025 medians for each whole occupation in the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria metro area, across all employers, from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. They are a starting point for research, not what any employer will offer. Market lines as of October 2026.