

National Academy of Public Administration Internship Reflection

Summer 2021

As I write this reflection on the last day of my internship, I'm so thankful that I'm experiencing sadness about its end. I will miss the meaningful work, the opportunities for growth, and the supportive community; however, the team has made it clear that we will always be connected to the Academy and its people.

I spent the past eight weeks researching, writing, and gaining exposure to the world of public administration on the Strategic Initiatives Team. Here, I worked closely with a group of brilliant individuals who were always willing to offer support. The team also gave me the flexibility to work in ways that were most effective for me as I explored various topics. I focused much of my time on two Grand Challenges: "Connecting Individuals to Meaningful Work" and "Building Resilient Communities." Searching government databases and research reports, I tracked the current Administration's progress on the recommendations that the Academy provided in its Election 2020 Action Plans. I also attended several fascinating conferences and virtual events that discussed the various aspects of these sprawling challenges. As I synthesized this information, I crafted an introduction and narrative analysis to communicate this information to the public. I also had the opportunity to conduct an environmental scan of DEI implementation guides, which involved interviewing a variety of local government organizations and associations to gain a deeper understanding of existing DEI work. As I worked on these projects, I also researched renewable energy retraining programs, identifying potential sources of funding for their expansion. Leveraging my skills and curiosity, the Academy tasked me with substantive projects that truly encouraged me to learn.

In addition to the technical skills I've obtained from this work, I've also developed a much deeper understanding of what it means to foster a sense of community in an organization. From our Donut conversations to our breakout rooms, the team stressed the importance of replicating the dynamics of an in-person environment in our virtual world. During the many opportunities that we had to connect, members of the Academy would show genuine interest in your work, inquire

about your interests and hobbies, and offer advice. I felt this sense of community most when a person would remember the specifics of our call and follow-up days later with an article or an event that they thought I would enjoy. Through moments like this, I came to understand how deeply the Academy cares for its people. In contrast to the culture of many other organizations, management also made it clear that we were valued as individuals and that our work was important, demonstrating the support that is one of the many reasons why the Academy is such a special place to work.

There is so much to love about an internship at the Academy-- for anyone thinking about the next steps in your professional journey, I absolutely recommend that you spend your time here. In just two months, I learned so much about myself, research and analysis methods, and the field of public administration-- and these are lessons that I will carry with me far beyond my summer here.