

Summer Internship Report 2017

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Hometown: Nashville, Tennessee



**Tennessee Department of Economic
and Community Development
Nashville, Tennessee**

Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

I worked for the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development in the Business Enterprise Resource Office. This office works to provide economic inclusion for Tennessee's disadvantaged businesses. Disadvantaged businesses include businesses owned by women, minorities, veterans, persons with disabilities, and youth. BERO just finished its pilot round of a new grant program called LiftTN: Microenterprise. The urban edition is just beginning its pilot year and the rural edition is beginning the first year of competitive grant applications. The majority of my work was focused on analyzing the grant recipients and the return on investment for the entire grant program. I made improvement recommendations for grant contracts, budgets, and a way to evaluate the programs in a more standard matter.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

I developed a format to project the return on investment for the LiftTN: Microenterprise grant program. I analyzed the budgets of each grant recipient, their contracts, as well as their reimbursement requests. Through all of these moving pieces, I worked to create a more standard method of evaluation for the grant program as a whole. I grew immensely with my Excel skills and research skills. Professionally, I learned how to communicate more effectively and the importance of asking questions.

Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

Most of my time was spent working on a return on investment project where I was asked to make recommendations to better evaluate the grant program currently in place. I was excited to be asked to solve a problem because that is what most of my time is spent doing in class at Sewanee! As an

economics major and a business minor, I am pretty familiar with return investment and I actually reviewed some of my old notes from my Corporate Finance class at the start of the project. Unfortunately, this "problem" turned out to be much less black and white as it is in class, however, the knowledge of how to go about solving problems helped me greatly throughout the entire project.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

As I said, my main project focused on return on investment and working on ways to better the pilot program for grant evaluation that was in place. I began working alone and trying to figure out what missing parts I needed. From there I had to work with several different departments to get all of the missing pieces to fit together. It was difficult to explain to each person what I was working on and how they were supposed to help me. I learned that every person is different and that everyone responds to different types of communication. I found that being clear, accurate, and flexible were effective teamwork skills.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

My internship gave me great insight to what I like and dislike. I learned that the culture of the workplace is very important to me. I like working with a team for a common goal. Along with the culture, this internship taught me that I like evaluating businesses/programs and finding a way to make them work more efficiently. I am also relieved that I liked working with economics outside of the classroom!

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?

Throughout my internship, I worked with many different people. The bulk of my work was done alone, however, I had to engage different departments to get the project done. Working with people from different departments was very interesting. I enjoyed it, but it was more difficult than expected. Like I said, everyone is different and communicates differently. Clarity, authenticity, and being flexible are key to reaching a common goal. I also had the opportunity to attend multiple meetings for the Governor's Rural Task Force. People from all over Tennessee attended and shared their ideas. I learned that the first step to communicating effectively with people from different backgrounds is to listen to what they have to say!

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

Thank you so much for giving me funding to participate in the internship with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. I had a great experience and learned more than I could have hoped. This opportunity came full circle when I was asked to attend a meeting in Sewanee. I loved seeing the connections between the work my department was doing in Nashville and how it reached all parts of Tennessee, including Sewanee. Thank you!