Meet Open Gov Hub’s 4 Amazing Summer 2020 Community Catalysts!

To get help from a Catalyst with any short-term assignments or projects you may have, just contact Hub Operations Manager Bruce!

Ahmed Al Tamimi

Ask me about:
- Peacebuilding and International Development
- Refugee Resettlement
- Astrophotography
- Podcasts
- Soccer

What I am looking for:
- Understand cross-organizational cooperation in the field of civic engagement and open governance.
- Learn about the latest research trends in climate change and governance.
- Research, develop, and produce podcast stories.

Key Skills:
- Communications (multimedia production, social media, messaging)
- Research (especially on Middle East)
- Arabic language and translation

Growing up in the Middle East, human rights discourse has always been a sensitive topic for both governments and individuals. Although rarely discussed in public before the Arab Spring, yet it is often debated behind closed doors. Most countries in that region are often presented as champions in the international sphere of pro-democracy movements and human rights councils. In reality, this picture is often smeared with continued ethnic, religious, and economic violations. Such violations have severely influenced the way people perceive social justice.

My passion for human rights issues was sparked once I started working with refugees in the Washington D.C metro area. Over the past few years, I got to hear from refugees who endured violence, oppression, and violations of their basic human rights who survived to tell their stories. Wars, genocides, and persecutions show that humanity is at its worst.
With a dual degree in conflict resolution and sustainable international development at the Heller School of Social Policy, along with data analysis, research, and project management skill, I am committed to investigate, research, and advocate for human rights and government accountability, particularly in war zone regions. My goal is to use my professional and personal skills to amplify unheard voices.

In the future, I would like to make a documentary to explore the impact of climate change on marginalized communities.
Michelle Meza

Ask me about:
- Latin America
- Democracy, activism, civic engagement, journalism and civic media
- Human-centered design
- Government innovation

What I am looking for:
- Connecting government and civil society capacity-building organizations with relevant stakeholders
- Supporting activists around the world and spark open discussions about the challenges/opportunities for “new-normal” democracies in the U.S. and abroad.

Key Skills
- Research (especially on democracy or Latin America)
- Project management
- Design thinking
- Spanish language and translation

Michelle is a recent graduate from the Master of Public Administration at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). Due to her activism background advocating for quality education and against corruption, at SIPA Michelle enjoyed working as Research Assistant in topics she is passionate about such as civic engagement, collaboration between media and civil society, digital activism, and human-centered design.

Before moving to the U.S. to start her studies, Michelle worked for 3 years at the Ministry of Education of Peru in various roles like political advisor in decentralization affairs and head of a national response team working with local governments to deliver solutions to key management challenges. Last summer, she worked in Sierra Leone along the World Bank and the Ministry of Education of that country supporting the implementation of a new teacher training program.

Back in 2016, Michelle founded Peru’s first education policy watchdog in Perú, La Educación Se Respeta. She is a former TEDx speaker on the role every citizen should play to ensure the right of quality education for all.
Somer Stapleton

Ask me about:
- Movies, books and poetry
- Gender & Sexuality
- Local and international conflict resolution
- My continuous and (so far!) unsuccessful journey to learn to dance Salsa

What I’m looking for:
- Connections to local social movements and organizations in DC
- Collaborative spaces where people are getting creative about activism
- Projects that empower civil society actors to hold their governments accountable

Key Skills
- Group facilitation and mediation - including facilitating virtual meetings/events
- Communications (social media, email marketing)
- Research (especially qualitative, and interest in data visualization and storytelling)

Somer is joining Open Gov Hub with a background in community dialogue, facilitation and LGBTQ youth advocacy. She spent her college days exploring canyons and backpacking in Colorado while earning a BA in International Affairs, with a focus on Latin America. After several years living in Colombia and France she returned to the United States to study a Masters in International Peace and Conflict Resolution at American University where she is excited to be learning about mediation and inclusive peace processes as well as improving her Arabic!

She is interested in how conflict resolution can not only resolve violence, but how it can also be a unique opportunity to build more accountable and equitable systems.

Even outside the context of international conflict, she believes that bringing groups together to overcome collective obstacles and work across differences is crucial in the struggle towards a more just and sustainable world.

When she’s not studying she spends time exploring nature, petting all the dogs, getting involved with grassroots movements and trying to find live music!
Genevieve Hargrove

Ask me about:
- Engaging and building connection in communities
- My two experiences volunteering abroad and how it influenced my perspective on how even the best intentions can lead to unintended dependency ties
- Using Free-flow Movement and Dance as expression
- De-Stigmatizing Mental Health

What I’m looking for:
- Learning more about Social Impact, Open Government, and the varying overlaps to see how a deeper impact can be achieved while maintaining engagement with communities
- Observing organizations working internationally and how they support grassroots work

Key Skills:
- Community outreach
- Nonprofit operations management

A native from Nashville, TN, Genevieve comes to Open Gov Hub with experience working in non-profits and hands-on in communities. Most recently, she worked as a support to young women ages 18-25 years assisting them through navigating housing instability, mental health, and other life transitions. Additionally, she worked part-time in her neighborhood farmers market with supporting community members on federal food assistance to obtain fresh food. Prior to those roles, she worked as a Case Manager at a Day Center with those experiencing homelessness. Genevieve was led to Case Management after volunteering in Street Outreach while working in the Service Industry. Preceding her move to DC in 2017, she supported a Hispanic non-profit as a Community Health intern and later on as an Interim Executive Director.

Genevieve is committed to the work of empowering communities. Through engagement with people one-on-one as a case manager, she saw how many individual challenges were results of a wider system. This piqued Genevieve’s interest in Social Impact and Systems Thinking, stemming from a belief that there must be a better way to help individuals and communities.