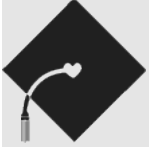


Resource Development Catalyst



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Describe your current position.

I work for the Global Development Lab in the Higher Education Solutions Network team through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). As Senior Program Manager, I manage a team that supports universities to really focus on leveraging their students, staff, and faculty's expertise in various areas of research in science and innovation to address development problems. For example, one of the campuses I work with is the University of California at Berkeley, and one of the projects they support is discovering how to use a cell phone to diagnose tuberculosis and malaria. It's essentially a mobile health tool that diagnoses in other parts of the world where they may not have easy access to full-scale medical facilities or professionals. And that's just one small example of how scientific expertise within universities can be used to address development problems.

What does an average work day and year look like for you?

My job is to provide support to enable these programs to do the good work that they do. I manage the programs, talk to the partners to make sure they have any connections they may need within our organization, help facilitate getting funds to them, answer any questions that they may have, and monitor their projects. A lot of my days involve writing solicitation packets, reviewing project applications, and once we select new projects, on-boarding new partners by explaining the process for working with the Federal Government.

What was the most important factor in landing the job you have now?

Honestly, I think it was a good personality match and being able to respond to what they needed. My advice to students is that you want to find someone you want to work with, because we spend a lot of our hours every day at work. You want to be working for someone who you think you can learn from, you trust, and you respect, as well as someone you think who trusts, respects, and values you for who you are. And it's just not the people that you work *for*, but the people you work *with*. I would much rather have a job that I felt mediocre about the daily tasks but a group of people that I loved and fully supported rather than having my dream job working with people who I never wanted to see or talk to ever. I don't think people talk about that and it's important.

What are the two best and two worst things about working in your current role or sector?

One of the best things about working in the public service sector is that they're passionate about the topic; they want to make a difference in the world. The second best thing, since we have such a high-level reach, is that you have the opportunity to interact with and learn from such a broad spectrum of people across the world.



Two of the most challenging things about being an adult professional are disagreements and how to manage those. It can also be challenging when you're asked to do something you may not 100% agree with, and you have to decide if you're going to do it anyway because it's your job, or if you're going to push back, and if so, to what extent. At what point do I accept it because I'm an employee and at what point do I push back because I don't think it's the right path or approach? It's not unique to my sector, it happens with any job that you can be in.

Do you feel like you have to financially sacrifice to be in your field? Are you happy with the pay?

I'm satisfied with the pay and the benefits, but that's not why I'm here. People are here because they believe in the work that we do. With that said, I make more money than I ever thought I would! When you're an undergraduate I'm not sure you could possibly have an understanding of how much money you will need to make to live and support yourself.

What do you wish you had known as a recent Bonner graduate?

I wish I had known that the next decision I made wasn't going to be the last decision I ever got to make. I think that people need to be better about telling young professionals to use this as what it is: a professional development opportunity to determine your next step.

How would you recommend students get involved with this field? What resources or opportunities could you share?

International development is a tough sector to break into, especially if you haven't done a lot of international work. For students who did a year overseas, that really helps break into the field, but if you didn't do something like that, you need to find a way to prove that you can be an asset in the field. International exchange programs such as PeaceCorps, getting your Master's in a field that might connect to international development like I did, or applying for a job with a contractor that places people into entry level positions are all great ways to do that.

In terms of getting involved with the federal government, there are also contract companies that offer administrative type positions within federal agencies. USA Jobs is the primary online vehicle for finding federal jobs directly, but there is also a variety of graduate school fellowship-type opportunities that offer a more direct opportunity for young professionals to apply to get into the federal government more quickly.

