

Sillerman Fellowship 2022 Reflection Paper
Next Level Social Impact

The Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy's Fellowship peaked my interest in my first year at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management as I have had little experience in the field of philanthropy, yet it was a professional ecosystem that I was enthusiastic in understanding. Philanthropy has the capacity to address many of the inequities and deficiencies that are prevalent in disenfranchised communities; this would require that the philanthropic ecosystem is strategically intentional by prioritizing community-driven decision making. Thus, the Sillerman Fellowship presented me with a unique opportunity to delve into philanthropy and familiarize myself with the internal processes related to the field.

As a Sillerman Fellow, I had the incredible opportunity to be an intern at Next Level Social Impact. My experience working with Next Level was profoundly impactful to my understanding of the Boston's nonprofit ecosystem. Next Level Social Impact's mission is to address the persistent inequities and barriers to opportunity in Greater Boston by providing easily accessible and customized strategic support to high impact nonprofits advancing social justice. I found Next Level's mission to be a truly innovative form of venture philanthropy due to their prioritization of second-stage nonprofits as their beneficiaries. Second stage nonprofits are those who are past the startup phase and have the potential to grow; if left unsupported, the impact of these nonprofits may increase, but at a substantially slower rate than if they were to receive the multiyear financial support alongside high quality capacity building. Since 2019, Next Level Social Impact has been able to provide this kind of support at pivotal points for

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second stage nonprofits. Their portfolio includes Women's Money Matters, The Basics, Enroot, and Tech Goes Home, all of which are doing inspiring and meaningful work in the communities they serve.

During my time as an intern with Next Level Social Impact, my role was to do an internal evaluation of the organization's impact and internal processes. This project involved a comprehensive interview process through which I was not only able to delve deep with each individual team member at Next Level about their internal systems, but also with the executive directors and leaders in their portfolio organizations. Internally, I gained an understanding of the dynamism and innovation necessary to lead a high functioning nonprofit like Next Level. The internal operations, relationship building, and community partners all being essential to the organization's success. Through my conversations with portfolio leaders, I gained insights of the nonprofit landscape: what it takes to grow a nonprofit to scale as well as the types of support that nonprofits need in order to thrive. A salient point that was brought up by each leader was the importance of Next Level's model of using multiyear funding. Multiyear funding enables organizations to prioritize long term operational planning as opposed to focusing on immediate fundraising requirements.

Ultimately, I had a summer well spent as a Sillerman Fellow working with Next Level Social Impact. My experience has proved to be considerably valuable as I have gained a newfound understanding of philanthropy as well as nonprofit strategy and operations. I am happy to say that this experience has inspired me to consider starting a nonprofit of my own later in my career.