

Lisa Knichols – 2019 Sillerman Fellow at The Center for Effective Philanthropy

During my time at the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) I was fortunate enough to work on a number of different projects based on my interests and skillset. I drafted a concept paper on donor advised funds (DAFs), collaborated on an interview protocol, and contributed to a grant proposal. Additionally, I got to participate in key events at CEP like their inaugural Innovation Week and also deliver a presentation on my own interest and experience with corporate social responsibility (CSR). All of the staff were welcoming and accommodating, allowing for an environment where I could not only contribute in areas that were of interest to me, but also ones that supported ongoing and growing initiatives at CEP.

I came to CEP with an interest in DAFs and was delighted that this aligned with their strategic initiative to expand work into research around individual donors. I was able to dive into researching DAFs, with a particular focus on their impact at community foundations on grantees. It was a great experience to get input and feedback on this work from CEP staff working in research, advisory services, and communications to get a number of perspectives on this project and how it could be used by CEP.

I was also able to support the research team with several projects that they were undertaking during the summer. The research team was working on qualitative research and I was able to edit interview questions, the interview sequencing, along with participating in both pilot and then full interviews. Additionally, I was able to draft a grant proposal for research on multi-year general operating support with the research team. The purpose of this project was to understand potential impediments funders face in providing the multi-year and general operating support that they state is so critical to their grantees' success. I was able to do a literature review in this area, develop the research timeline, and the budget for this work. I was thrilled to learn that after the proposal was processed, CEP was awarded a \$400,000 grant for this research project.

This year was the first year that CEP opted to hold an Innovation Week during the summer. During this week staff at CEP were encouraged to work on any project they thought could move the organization forward – with no other rules to structure their ideas. I was able to dive in and work with different people on projects including a giving campaign, the organization's strategy on high net-worth donors, and a new funder collaborative evaluation tool. It was an exciting week to work on new projects that were of interest to me and also to work with other departments and staff members at CEP.

Lastly, I was able to present to the CEP staff about my own experience and research on corporate social responsibility and then lead a discussion on corporate philanthropy. I valued the opportunity to present in front of a larger audience and to engage with the staff about a topic that I am so personally interested in. It was interesting to hear about many perspectives on corporate philanthropy from staff members working on effective philanthropy overall.

My summer fellowship at CEP was a phenomenal experience and shaped both my academic and professional interests moving forward. It was so valuable to work with different departments and expand my interests within the nonprofit and philanthropic field. My experience at CEP informed my capstone work on DAFs and I look forward to taking what I learned at CEP into my career now as well.