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As a summer associate in the Office of the President at The Boston Foundation, my primary focus was to conduct a thorough landscape analysis of the early childhood space in Boston, in order to inform TBF's strategic planning goals. Within the foundation there was a specific interest in early childhood adversities, and therefore I concentrated my research on the effects of adversities, their prevalence, and proven methods to reduce their impact. My objective was to provide as full a picture as possible of the early childhood programs, funders, focus areas, systems, and connections between systems, in addition to providing a summary of the research and literature about early childhood adversities and protective factors. My final product was a 50-page report summarizing the gaps, needs, and opportunities for investment in the early childhood space in Boston.

For the first 5-6 weeks I concentrated my efforts on learning about The Boston Foundation, researching early childhood adversities, and gathering information about key early childhood programs in Boston. My direct supervisor, the Special Advisor to the President and CEO, was primarily focused on the strategic plan and provided me with a great deal of context about TBF in general and the strategic planning process in particular. I worked closely with her throughout the summer to ensure that my work fit with TBF's strategic planning goals, and I also received supervision and guidance from the Director of the Health & Wellness Program, who was spearheading the push towards greater investment in early childhood. With support from both staff members, I spent several weeks getting to know the foundation and its work, including meeting with a number of TBF staff to begin to understand the internal conversation about early childhood and staff members' impressions about how TBF could make an impact in this space.

In the second half of my internship I conducted key informant interviews with experts in the early childhood field in Boston, continued researching to fill gaps in my information, and compiled my report, including my analysis of options for TBF's involvement in the space. The key informant interviews were the most interesting part of my research, and I was able to speak with more than a dozen experts from the areas of early education, home visiting, obesity research, foster care and adoption, school readiness, public health, and others. In the interviews I asked each expert about the gaps they saw in the early childhood space and the opportunities for addressing these issues, and I found that each expert approached the solutions from a different perspective, but all of them agreed on the biggest problems.

The most challenging and by far the most rewarding part of this project was synthesizing all of the information I had gathered and putting together a set of options and recommendations for the foundation to consider. In addition to my research about Boston and TBF, I also looked into how other cities and counties had approached investment in early childhood, as well as theoretical models for improving early childhood wellbeing. From there I developed six core recommendations for TBF to consider incorporating into the strategic plan for the next five years, which included options for financial investment as well as other leadership roles that TBF is uniquely positioned to take given its history and stature in the community.

Overall, my internship experience was very positive, and a great deal of credit is due to my supervisor and other TBF staff members for being extremely welcoming, supportive, and helpful. I really valued the opportunity to take on a project that was not only in my area of interest but also may contribute to changing the early childhood landscape in Boston for the better. As a result of this experience I am strongly considering philanthropy as a possible area for work in the future.