

Sillerman reflection paper

This summer, through the generous support of the Sillerman Center, I had the opportunity to intern for the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA) Foundation. As a Master's in Public Policy student with an interest in state health policy, the BCBSMA Foundation was a perfect fit for me because they focus on health policy and grantmaking in Massachusetts.

This summer I learned a tremendous amount about the grantmaking process, including how to launch a new grant program, the components of a good proposal, and the importance of evaluating a grant's impact. I also learned how a strong grant program and evaluation can influence important policy changes.

Over the summer, the BCBSMA Foundation introduced a new grant area in behavioral health integration. It was a tremendous experience for me to learn the process and all the work that goes into the start of a new grant program. One aspect of this is the importance of evaluating the grant's impact. To help with the evaluation I performed research pertaining to the components of effective behavioral health integration and evaluation. I was also able to gain insight into how funders think about applications and what comprises a strong grant proposal.

I also supported an ongoing grant program, Connecting Consumers with Care, which supports organizations that do outreach and enrollment in health care programs available to low-income and vulnerable populations. I did similar work before becoming a student at Heller and was able to apply my knowledge of the outreach and enrollment systems to help the grantees and interpret their reports.

Additionally, I was able to attend several grantee site visits. Attending these visits allowed me to see the work in action and truly understand how the BCBSMA Foundation's investments are positively impacting communities. Seeing the impact of the BCBSMA Foundation helped me feel more connected to work and mission and better understand the value of the investments. These experiences also helped me understand how critical in person visits are for a foundation's understanding of the organizations they fund.

Finally, I was able to see a grant program conclude, which was very valuable in understanding the importance of sustainability in philanthropy. I had not realized how deeply organizations depend on funding and how important it is for a foundation end programs responsibly. To help with the BCBSMA Foundation's effort with sustainability, I researched how health care organizations can measure return on investment so they can demonstrate their value to payers and other potential organization like accountable care organizations.

Prior to this summer, I had not thought of philanthropy as a vehicle for policy change, but now I clearly see how research and strategic grantmaking can yield results that influence policy discussions. I have become very interested in how

outcomes from the BCBSMA Foundation's new behavioral health program can inform and influence policy changes in this area.

Overall, my work this summer at the BCBSMA Foundation was challenging and rewarding as I learned more about the importance of philanthropy in the health care field. I am grateful to Sillerman Center for this experience and feel that it has enriched me both personally and professionally. I know that any work I do after Heller will be positively influenced by this experience.