NASPO Intern Highlights

FEATURING

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NASPO
National Association of State Procurement Officials
“My internship with OSD as the Strategic Sourcing Intern has been an absolute pleasure!”

Before spring of last year when the world was flipped upside down, I had applied for the position at the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ Operational Services Division through NASPO. After going through the interview process and pleasantly accepting the position for the upcoming summer, I was devastated when I was informed the opportunity would no longer be happening. Luckily, I was told I could come back the following summer for the same role and here I am today as an Operational Services Division employee!

Since day one, the entire staff has been nothing but welcoming and helpful. My responsibilities have included verifying supplier diversity goals for all our current statewide contracts, ensuring all vendors are participating. I have also conducted in-depth research of all current cooperative contracts (including those with NASPO) and researched new cooperatives we could take part in. Additionally, I assisted contract managers with the procurement process, including development, evaluations, and contract management.
I believe my contributions have greatly supported the state of Massachusetts. By fixing issues and completing tasks that time doesn’t always allow managers to do, I have alleviated their workload and contributed to their goals. They always have made it known the little tasks I complete for them here and there are making all the difference.

Although I have successfully completed my academic career, the internship has reinforced skills I learned in the classroom and transferred them over to real-life situations. Completing an internship takes a student to the next level. Not only does it look good on your resume, but the skills you learn are much more valuable than anything you could read in a textbook. For me, it has taught me things I like or want to continue in a full-time position. On the other hand, it can point out things you might not fully have an interest in or don’t want to continue as a career.

The most rewarding part of my experience was the connections I have made along the way. Through collaborating with the sourcing team, working with other interns, and attending the REACH conference, I have met some amazing individuals. Also by working in the public sector, it is rewarding to see the things you do on a day-to-day basis help the people of the state. Besides all the technical skills, I have learned that I truly enjoy state procurement and could definitely make a fulfilling career out of it.

As I had mentioned prior, my experience has been a pleasure. One thing I would suggest is that colleges and universities incorporate public procurement more into the curriculum. I hadn’t had any exposure to what it really was until I had heard about the internship. I think many students would find it interesting and more young people would end up pursuing the same route I have.
My main project this summer was to create an onboarding program for new hires coming to the purchasing team by creating a standardized eight-week program that would properly prepare them for their new role. I was responsible for gathering learning materials for statutes, regulations, procurement processes, and two eProcurement systems, and organizing them into an attainable, yet stimulating process. I also worked on several data analysis projects where I was able to organize MPA data to track renewal dates and corresponding administrative fees and flag contracts that did not meet structural standards for editing, in order to create a uniform experience for the end user.

I feel that my contributions have impacted Rhode Island procurement in a positive way because of the standardization that the onboarding program embodies. Going forward, new hires will be given learning materials that guide them through the different aspects and processes of procurement, have resources that coincide with the program’s learning topics, and gain a foundational understanding of not just their role, but the procurement process as a whole.
My internship has made me much more confident in my abilities because I was able to showcase the skills I’ve learned in and out of the classroom, and employ skills I had not yet implemented. I learned so much during my time at Division of Purchases, through application and observation, and have certainly come out of it with the tools I’ll need to be successful in my career going forward.

Completing an internship is so important for students because it gives them insight into how their skills can be applied in the workplace, and how they can improve upon and gain valuable skills before entering the job market. An internship provides students with an opportunity to submerge themselves into their projected career path and give them tangible perspective as to what they can expect going forward. This is crucial for students in terms of navigating which career path is suitable and how to be a strong competitor in the job market.

The most rewarding part of my experience was being able to refine my skills and network with professionals in my field.

During my time at the Division of Purchases, I worked on several projects involving MPA data, and used Excel to create a user-friendly data entry system that assists in data organization, correction of inconsistencies, and further entry into multiple data pools in order create a uniform dataset from multiple differing sources.

In addition to refining these skills, I also learned how to use and incorporate Macros into these processes, which assists in data formatting and organization tasks that need to be done frequently. Lastly, as part of curating the Onboarding program, I had the chance to get some perspective from the Purchasing staff. This helped me understand their personal onboarding experiences and what needed to be improved. It was a great opportunity for me to understand their roles and how I can help effectively prepare new hires, and also gave me a chance to get to know them individually. While making the Onboarding program was challenging, this particular part of the process gave me an opportunity to connect with the wonderful people around me, and furthered my understanding and admiration of all of their responsibilities and achievements.

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