

AMY HIGHNESS, COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES SUPPORT

Amy Highness, '03

Community Activities Support at Northwest Area Foundation, St. Paul, MN

Please provide an overview of the kinds of duties you perform at this job. I provide administrative support for a portfolio of grants dedicated to building capacity toward systemic, long-term poverty reduction in rural Latino communities in MN, IA, ND, SD, MT, ID, WA, and OR. Our team is committed to working with and in communities to build the consciousness, skills, and knowledge of rural Latinos/as and their fellow community members. My specific tasks include coordinating my team's travel and meeting schedules, working with my colleagues to identify new models and tools, reviewing proposals, planning retreats and events throughout the region we serve, and numerous other administrative tasks geared towards holding us accountable to our work. One interesting upcoming project: I will be traveling to Michoacán, Mexico to help carry out a learning seminar in which Anglo leaders from several rural communities will be exploring topics such as immigration, education, and policy with the goal of building their capacity to be an effective and informed ally to the Latino communities in their home towns.

What additional training (beyond your undergraduate degree) did you need for your current job? The work I do in my current position was informed by my prior work experiences in the non-profit sector, primarily in social services. In order to continue moving forward along this career path, I plan to pursue a graduate degree in public administration or public policy. *In your current position, do you use any of the information or skills you learned as an IECA major in particular?* I speak Spanish very regularly, but beyond speaking the language fluently, I believe the experience of learning a foreign language was crucial to being in this role. The analysis I gained around cultural competence through that process is critical to my work. Also, the knowledge I gained through many of my other IECA courses, gave me a base for understanding topics like economic development, human migration, and public policy. I always knew I wanted to work in the nonprofit sector, but it took me a while to realize that that is a much wider field than just social work! There is so much happening nowadays around community development...and it isn't all about service-providing and "helping" people. There is a place in the nonprofit world for economics people, policy people, and many others to build on the strengths of individuals and communities to do good work.

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