

## LEARNING PLAN – CARDINAL QUARTER

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The Learning Plan is your personal outline for what you intend to learn and accomplish during your Cardinal Quarter experience. Your plan can be instrumental in gaining agreement between you and your supervisor on your expectations for the fellowship, and the criteria for assessing your experience along the way. It helps you articulate, prioritize, and gain support in order to be intentional about your experience.

Using the guidelines below, craft a Learning Plan for your summer experience and please keep your plan to 1 to 2 pages. You are welcome to use the enclosed Learning Plan Worksheet as a tool to develop your plan. Please email your Learning Plan to [Hilary/Valerie], your academic mentor, and your site supervisor.

### **I. Develop your learning objectives**

It may be helpful to think of learning objectives in three ways: (1) knowledge to be gained, (2) skills to be learned or strengthened, and (3) attitudes and/or values to be explored, tested, or deepened:

#### *Knowledge objectives—Facts, concepts, theories*

Acquisition of information about your interest or policy area, about the work of your organization, etc. Are you looking to apply knowledge gained from your academic background to practical issues? How does this new knowledge complement existing knowledge? What is the larger goal and purpose for gaining knowledge? This part of your plan articulates your goals for what you hope to learn.

#### *Skill objectives—Skills you hope to strengthen or acquire*

Advancing your ability to do something through training, practice, observation of others, etc. Skill objectives may relate to public service leadership development such as time management, policy and program development, motivating others, conflict resolution, facilitating meetings, public speaking, decision-making, and strategic planning and evaluation. You may also wish to gain technical fluency in Excel, GIS, etc. This is an opportunity to think about what you want to learn *how* to do or do better.

#### *Attitude and values objectives—Deepening or clarifying values and commitments you bring*

How can you explore personal values, commitments, assumptions, etc.? What values and commitments brought you into this fellowship and how might you shape them to reflect a coherent ethical outlook?

Make sure that your goals are “SMART”: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound.

### **II. Determine how you will accomplish your objectives**

For each of your objectives, identify and articulate activities you think will help you meet them. What resources (material and human) will you need, and what strategies can you employ to be successful? What personal resources and limitations do you have which will help or hinder your progress? These opportunities may include:

*On-the-job activities:*

How do you envision your day-to-day work will help you fulfill your learning objectives? What specific types of assignments would help you accomplish your learning goals?

*Off-the-job activities*

These include everything else you do when not working at your fellowship, including cultural activities, recreation, networking, self-directed reading, etc. What can you do separate from your work that will help ensure that you get to do and learn what you want?

### **III. Plan for assessing progress**

This is not a final step, but rather a continual process. For each of your objectives, identify possible measures to know whether you are meeting your objective:

- What evidence will you have of your learning? Will journal notes, documents, or performance reviews from your supervisor offer insight?
- Who will be involved in the assessment in addition to yourself?
- When/How would you like to get the feedback you want? We recommend that you seek regular feedback from your supervisor as well as other experienced persons in your organization. You can also engage in self-reflection to assess whether and how well you are meeting your learning objectives.

### **IV. Discuss your plan with your academic mentor and your site supervisor**

Before you leave for the summer, share your plan with your academic mentor and ask for feedback, particularly around learning objectives seeking to connect your academic background to your summer work experience.

After you arrive at your community partner organization, find a time to sit down with your supervisor during your first week. Share your initial plan and get feedback as to its feasibility and at the same time, clarify your supervisor's expectations of you and your expectations of your supervisor. This should be a mutual exchange, carried out with reciprocity—you are providing services in exchange for the opportunity to learn and develop. Work to be sure your needs and those of your placement are met.

### **Final word**

The goal of writing a Learning Plan is not to assume that you will meet all these objectives during your Cardinal Quarter, or that these objectives ultimately describe what you take from your experience. The goal is to be intentional about your experience, to bring focus early on, share your expectations clearly, and clarify with your supervisor as best you can what you will be able to do with and for each other. You should expect your plan to change over the course of the placement. Revisiting your Learning Plan often helps you recognize and respond thoughtfully to changes and opportunities as they occur.

Please feel free to contact the Cardinal Quarter program directors if you have any questions about the Learning Plan:

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