

Laidlaw Programme Leadership in Action (LIA) Reflection

A reflective report is required after each summer period (by 20th September). Once submitted we will ask you to post onto the Laidlaw Network (without your supervisor comments if you wish).

This should be supplied as a Word document. Interesting photographs directly related to your LIA project or scholarship are encouraged and should be inserted into the body of the word document, not supplied separately.

There are six questions for you to complete. You are expected to write a detailed and thorough report; each section should be around 200-300 words.

Please note: This is NOT a technical research report. Scientific reports with a covering note cannot be accepted.

This report will need comments from your supervisor/placement manager and is to be signed off by both you and your supervisor/placement manager before submission.

If you have any problems or queries please contact the Laidlaw Programme Administrator, ugresearch@leeds.ac.uk

Scholar

Name:	Megan Lupo
Faculty:	LUBS
Email address:	Bn20m3l@leeds.ac.uk
Title of LIA Project:	Working with Sharing Excess in Philadelphia

Please describe the project/placement you have conducted during this period.

I worked at Sharing Excess, a non-profit in Philadelphia focused on rescuing food that would otherwise be wasted and redistributing it across the city to people who need it. I joined the distribution team for six weeks over the summer and was able to help out with a variety of tasks, under the supervision of the Director of Distribution. I spent two days a week sorting produce at the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market, where Sharing Excess sources the majority of its donations. This meant that I was able to see how daily operations work on the ground and get an understanding of how produce can be saved from waste. On other days of the week, I attended distribution events and completed independent research work. At the organisation's pop-up events I helped to distribute food directly to the community in West Philadelphia. This involved organising donations at their warehouse, then setting up stalls in the location and handing out food. Sharing Excess's biggest event of the year, the annual 'Free Food Fest', fell within my placement so I was lucky enough to be involved in this as well. Much of my independent work was doing practical research in preparation for this event. I called businesses across the city who were potentially going to be involved in the event and got information from them such as quotes which I presented to my supervisor in spreadsheets and short documents. Towards the end of my placement, I covered the role of Volunteer Coordinator, with the help of the rest of the team, while my colleague was away for two weeks. This involved email communication with the non-profit's volunteer and using their volunteer management software. Throughout my placement, I attended weekly department and company meetings which provided an insight into how the entire operation runs.

How has the project you have been undertaking been impactful or important?

This work is particularly impactful because it directly benefits the local community. Philadelphia has one of the highest levels of hunger in the country (estimated at about 20% of households) and the USA wastes approximately 40% of its food. Therefore, the mission of this company is of vital importance to fulfil a basic human need as well as to mitigate environmental damage. They have rescued over 10 million pounds of food since 2018 which means that over 36 million pounds of CO2

have been kept from landfill. I was able to sort food and then give it out to people at events run by Sharing Excess. This meant I was playing a direct part in rescuing and redistributing food. The organisation also aims to remove the stigma and barriers that can be attached to receiving free food. They do not ask for any kind of identification or question who can receive the food and they make distribution events friendly and fun for everyone. I was able to play a part by chatting to people at the events, spreading awareness about the organisation and trying to make people feel comfortable. During the placement, I also witnessed the hiring process which is impactful because Sharing Excess often hires local people so is creating jobs and building connections with the community this way.

What impact has the LIA project had on you? Have you achieved the SMART goals as set out at the beginning of the project? (please give examples of how these SMART goals have been achieved)

I achieved my goal of attending and helping at at least three food distributions with Sharing Excess. I helped at pop-up events in a local park as well as at the free food festival. I also achieved the goal of completing independent research to suit the needs of the organisation at the time. I did research that helped with the organisation of 'Free Food Fest'.

This project was highly beneficial to me. I had a very enjoyable experience and learned a lot. It has made me realise the power of the 'snowball effect' for careers when reflecting on the opportunities that led me to this placement and the doors it may open for me in the future. It has caused me to have more ideas about the kind of job I would like to have in the future because I enjoyed working in a smaller start-up company. It also confirmed my interest in third sector/non-profit work and in working abroad. I was inspired by how much the staff at Sharing Excess have achieved, especially considering they are mostly young people. Being in the company's weekly meetings provided me with a fascinating insight into how it has and will grow which helped me understand how organisations like this are set up. I was lucky enough to be there for two major events: the Free Food Fest and also a visit from the governor of Pennsylvania. These were both very exciting to be a part of.

What leadership skills do you believe you have gained/demonstrated during the LIA period? (please refer to the leadership attributes below)

I believed I have demonstrated and gained a number of different skills related to leadership by completing this placement. I think I have certainly developed my ability to navigate new and foreign situations as my placement was unlike any I have done before and the location was also unfamiliar to me. This meant that I had to adapt the way I lived and worked. This experience of being in new environments will definitely help me adapt to future challenges, particularly as I would like to work abroad again. This skill links to cultural intelligence which I think I have improved upon. Although American culture is similar to ours, being there for a longer period made me pick up on and be able to adjust to more differences that I had known there were. I think I

demonstrated my ability to work collaboratively during this placement because I completed my tasks effectively in varying groups with other employees. I also used the skill of working across boundaries in some situations, such as working with colleagues who were not in the city, for example when I was filling in for someone's vacation leave. This meant that we met online rather than in person. However, I think that we managed to overcome this slight challenge by having regular video calls. During this placement, I also learned to build relationships and networks by forming connections with my co-workers. I think that network building was evidenced when my supervisor at Sharing Excess put me in touch with another non-profit I am interested in, who I have since met with. I also used my time abroad to meet with Ariella Lang, the Laidlaw coordinator and Director of Undergraduate Research at Columbia University as well as another Leeds Laidlaw scholars who was completing a program in New York City.

Please talk about activities you've been involved in to disseminate your project, including but not limited to attending conferences, producing research posters, and promotion of the project and programme

I have engaged others with my project by talking to my fellow scholars about it as well as to Laidlaw coordinators Rebecca and Ariella. My peers on the scholarship have been interested to hear about Sharing Excess, especially as I chose the placement independently. I hope that there may be future collaborations between the organisation and the Laidlaw Scholarship as a result of my project. I will also be writing an article about my experience for the Laidlaw Scholars Network which I hope will help to disseminate the project further.

I plan to continue to attend Laidlaw events when I return to Leeds in my fourth year which will give me the opportunity to share my project with other scholars, including those who are prospective or new. In that year I will also attend the annual Laidlaw conference and aim to share my experience with students from other universities as well.

What are your future career or educational plans? Have these changed during your time as a scholar? (If so please explain why).

My time on the scholarship has given me a lot of inspiration for my future career. It has allowed me to try out working in different areas that interested me. As a result, I have confirmed my interest in third sector work and working abroad. I am currently studying abroad in Sweden and would definitely consider working in Sweden after I graduate for example. Comparing my experiences in the first and second summer has made me realise that I am less interested in pure research work and would like a job that has more practical elements. Similarly, I don't think I am interested in further studies at this time because I would like to learn more practically. I want to try out a variety of jobs in different fields during my career so that I can eventually choose something perfect for me. I am interested in working for companies with ethical missions. I also have realised over the last couple of years that the structure of a role may be as important to me as the mission of a company so that I can be satisfied in

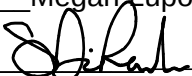
a job and therefore effective in contributing to the company's aims. I am aiming to continue to make the most of opportunities provided to me as a student as the scholarship has been so beneficial for me. For example, I am hoping to apply to the Mentora Youth Changemakers Fellowship next year, which is the programme that a couple of my fellow scholars were completing when I visited them in New York.

Supervisor

Please comment on your scholar's research period, what you consider to be your scholar's strengths and which leadership attributes (please refer to the leadership attributes below) you feel your scholar has demonstrated and is particularly skilled in. You could also identify areas which your scholar can develop further.

It was an absolute pleasure to have Megan as a part of our team this summer. On her first day, it was clear that she was motivated to learn about Sharing Excess and how she would be able to further our mission. Megan attended almost every in-person opportunity, ready to work hard and help the team out in any way. Her work ethic would be contagious to those surrounding her. As a special project, Megan took over managing our volunteer network while one of our colleagues was out of office, and she maintained operations seamlessly. We were privileged to have Megan as a part of our team, and will always remember the impact she had here at Sharing Excess.

Signature of Scholar _____ Megan Lupo _____ Date: 26/10/2022

Signature of Project Leader  _____ Date: 10 / 31 / 2022

Leadership Attributes

Able to lead without authority

Able to convey purpose and build coalitions

Cultural intelligence and capacity for empathy

Honestly assess own knowledge/leadership style/preferences

Knows own limitations and acts accordingly

Learns continually

Speaks and writes clearly and confidently

Able to listen with understanding

Uses digital connectivity

Makes effective decisions in complex environments

Seeks out and fosters innovation and creativity

Strong intellectual ability

Turns ideas into action

Builds relationships and networks

Works collaboratively and across boundaries

Uses emotional intelligence to achieve this

Capitalises on the power of diversity

Able to navigate new and foreign situations

Uses this to build relationships and networks

Has energy and impact

Makes things happen

Able to analyse data and interpret results

Able to work and think independently

Prioritises activities and manages own time