Project name: Deep Dive: measuring effectiveness in grantmaking, fundraising and community leadership

Organization: Adirondack Foundation
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About the organization:
Adirondack Foundation is the community foundation serving the Adirondack Region. Our vision for the Adirondacks is where communities are strong, just and inclusive, family wellbeing is supported through quality healthcare and education, environmental resources are protected, and economic and cultural opportunities abound. We work toward this vision by making grants to nonprofits, schools, and municipalities, awarding scholarships to students, providing community leadership, and stewarding more than 250 charitable funds. Donors wishing to increase the impact of their generosity entrust their charitable assets to the Foundation so their community can benefit from their generosity today and tomorrow.

Total charitable assets: $62 million. (Assets available for discretionary grantmaking, approximately $1.5M.) Total grants since 1997: $34 million

Statement: This project will help Adirondack Foundation measure, evaluate and communicate our effectiveness in grantmaking, fundraising and community leadership.

Project Overview:
At its most recent strategic planning retreat, Adirondack Foundation made a commitment to improve the way it measures, evaluates and communicates its effectiveness in grantmaking, fundraising and community leadership.

1. The Fellow will research and establish goals and measurements for nonprofit organization health and capacity. In order to initiate this work the Colgate fellow will help us to set goals and better define desired outcomes in the following ways:

   • Evaluate grant application and follow-up processes to continue to improve the information Adirondack Foundation collects on numeric and qualitative results of our grantmaking and to demonstrate our added value.
   • Document the process for collecting this information, revise internal documents and forms as needed and review the process for effectiveness with the Foundation’s grants committee; ensure we have a feedback loop for continuous improvement.
   • Prepare a series of Impact Reports based on existing grant programs.
2. Find compelling stories within Adirondack Foundation’s community leadership work, including Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance (BT3), Adirondack Nonprofit Network (ANN) and Common Ground Alliance (CGA), to convey the effectiveness and added value the Foundation brings to these initiatives. These stories will create a template for combining goal-setting, measurement, and impact into a narrative that captures qualitative and quantitative information that will help the Foundation assess its return on investments of staff time, leadership and grantmaking.

**Logistics:** Adirondack Foundation administers BT3, ANN and supports CGA, and will establish connections to partners in these initiatives.

This work would be based from our office at beautiful Heaven Hill Farm in Lake Placid. The fellow would be supervised by the Vice President for Communications and Strategic Programs, have access to staff, office supplies and equipment, and would occasionally travel around the region for meetings, but not need to stay away overnight.

A student engaged in this work will need to be highly organized, love systematizing data and also love working with people, be self-motivated and analytical. We will need the information to be presented clearly and effectively and can offer some level of support with that, but the student must be capable of independent and competent work.

Adirondack Foundation’s staff is small and closely knit. The student will be part of this group and will be expected to attend weekly staff meetings and contribute as an equal.

This research would appeal to someone curious about the nonprofit sector and how philanthropy can impact the lives of people and rural America. The student will engage with a wide range of organizations, all staffed by people dedicated to making life better in the Adirondacks.