Inclusive Environments:

Increasing Access to Sport and Recreation in Australia

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Melbourne is the coastal capital of the Australian state of Victoria. My field placement agency was located in West Footscray, an inner-western suburb of Melbourne.

Placement/Project Information

My global field placement was a community-based placement working on a social change project with five other Master of Social Work students from the University of Melbourne. The project is possible through partnerships between the University of Melbourne, the Hobsons Bay Community Fund, and local real estate agency Compton Green. In previous years, the student cohort focused on mapping the disability service landscape from social justice frameworks, the resource Sports for Everyone: A Guide to 360° Inclusion for Young People in Sport, capacity building and the facilitation of inter-organizational dialogue between sports and recreation clubs.

Skills Developed

Through this field placement, I have enhanced my ability to:

- Develop action-driven products through participatory design processes
- Manage projects
- Produce and execute a strategic plan
- Build multi-objective consensus
- Coordinate events
- Present summative findings and recommendations
- Plan for sustainability and leadership succession
- Build community capacity

Connections

Classroom
- DNV 683 - Evaluation in Social Work
  This course gave focused understanding of evaluation methodologies from various perspectives that promote social justice. Additionally, it reinforced the necessity for evaluation when it comes to the unique multidimensionality of programs and projects for transfer into a robust evaluation.

Career
- This opportunity allowed me to strengthen my ability to work with a range of stakeholders, effectively plan inter-organizational to construct social change, build sustainable relationships as a community connector and how to embody transformational leadership. These qualities of community development are transferable to my future career aspirations of supporting, mobilizing and empowering communities.

Lessons Learned

Sometimes you want to just jump into a project but are met with ambiguity and no plan of action. By building relationships, you gain direction and achieve purposes that are truly responsive to a community’s stated needs.

Participatory design helps to build relationships, but also enhances social capital and strengthens existing networks. Additionally, the cultivation of the collective knowledge and relationship building from this process can form a valuable asset to continue the work within the community.

Acknowledgements

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