

## **VOLUNTEERS SPEAK ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE IN WORKING WITH IDEAS**

If you want to know what it is like to work as a volunteer with IDEAS and TecAp, the former volunteers relate that in their own words.



**Name: Jennifer Sarpong**

**University:** Emory University – Major – Interdisciplinary Studies- Socio-economics, Minor- Community Building & Social Change

**Products created:**

- Created 7 development case studies from real-world microfranchises and social enterprise projects using PowerPoint, which were used for training in Nicaragua.
- Researched foundation guidelines and information, and created lists of potential funding sources for the TecAp social enterprise in Nicaragua

**Where worked:** Part-time, Virtually

**Worked for:** Volunteer Resume experience, eventually was hired part-time

**Language:** I did all my work in English but several of the case studies were translated to Spanish for use in developmental trainings

**What it meant to me and my professional development:** I got to understand more about what it takes to bring about sustainable development and change in communities while making a difference by providing materials that helped others learn about social change. I would one day like to start my own social enterprise in Africa, so the depth of understanding I received while compiling the case studies is invaluable. I also volunteered doing part-time research on behalf of IDEAS to identify potential resources for its TecAp social enterprise that helps rural families, women, and youth in Nicaragua create sustainable futures for themselves through various income-generating projects.

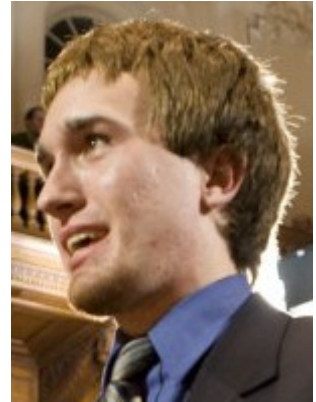
As a result of the work and research I did, I was eventually was hired as part-time as a contractor for IDEAS to find potential funding sources and write grants. This experience has been crucial to my personal development. As I am now applying to grad school, I was able to list this experience in my statement of purpose. Also because of my good work, a member of the IDEAS Board of Directors who teaches at the school I applied to in New York directly recommended me to my top grad school.

**Why You Should Volunteer With Ideas:** IDEAS represents an amazing opportunity to volunteer with an international NGO right at home through virtual technology. Because it is not a huge NGO, but still has

an international reach, you will get valuable first-hand exposure to the non-profit world and professionals engaged in the work of change. IDEAS is a small organization making a big impact by transforming thousands of lives internationally through training, microfinance, and development. You don't necessarily need to be fluent in Spanish, have a degree in business, or travel to an office every day to make a difference here. The IDEAS staff is genuine, dedicated, and most of all flexible. Whatever your talents are, chances are they can be used to help IDEAS tangibly transform the world.

**Name: Will Slack**

**University:** Williams College in Massachusetts. Major in Political Economy, Concentration in Leadership Studies. Senior year.



**Products created:**

- Catalog of small solar powered items with their technical specifications. Was translated to Spanish to be used with TecAp.
- Researched list of solar-powered item manufacturers. Contacted some to for shipping and cost information.
- Created documents in PowerPoint and PDF to be used for a graduate course on microfranchising taught at the American University in Nicaragua by Dr. Garber and Gabriel Gaitan.
- Edited and prepared other IDEAS communications materials.

**Worked:** Part-time at IDEAS office, supplemented by virtual work from home.

**Received:** Stipend; and was eligible for funding from my college.

**Language:** I did all my work in English but my high school Spanish came in handy as we were preparing documents for a graduate course in Spanish. However, language skills were not required.

**What my time at IDEAS taught me:** IDEAS is a place where I was able to take what I had learned in college about developmental economics and apply it to my work. However, importantly, I didn't need any specific coursework to benefit from working at IDEAS. The flexibility in my work (often, my job was to create a product, not to follow any specific formula or practice) required a lot of creativity. I had to learn to balance my competing desires to create the best product possible, but also to get through my entire to-do list.

**Other Comments:** Working at IDEAS was a fantastic way to spend part of my summer. The freedom and creativity required for my work allowed me to develop strong skills of communication, and to further my design abilities. I strongly suggest that you talk to Dr. Garber about this opportunity, regardless of your specific interest in international development, because it's such good workplace training. If you are

interested in development work, IDEAS will be a place where you can put your theories and classroom experience to good use.

**Name: Tristan Mitchell**

**University:** Howard University BA in Economics C/O 2007.

**Projects worked on:**

- Assisted with the development of TecAp and created detailed program proposals for grant writers and financial donors
- Researched, developed, and pitched microfranchise-based urban workforce development program for the homeless, recovering drug addicts and ex-felons.



**Where worked:** In person at the Georgia IDEAS office and virtually

**Worked for:** Pro-bono experience

**Language:** English

**What my experience meant to me and my professional development:** Working at IDEAS helped me understand what it was like to work at a true international economic development nonprofit. Because of the multitude of different projects that the organization takes on at any given time, I was exposed to numerous experiences that each helped create social value for a different subset of individuals. I greatly enjoyed working directly with Carter to help develop TecAp. Knowing that all of my work would eventually change the lives of families who might not have any other opportunities to improve their economic situation was personally satisfying to me and reinforced my interest in working with social enterprises.

**Other comments:** While at IDEAS I had freedom to branch out into areas of interest that appealed to me while working within the parameters of my specific projects. I learned so much about international economic development, innovative microfinance and microfranchise organizational structures, and non-profits during my time with IDEAS. As I continue down my career path, I know I will be able to draw upon the skills I developed and experiences I had at IDEAS to help me solve various problems I might encounter in my various professional endeavors.

**Name: Maille Faughnan**

University: Tulane University, PhD in Payson Center for International Development; worked after completing Masters of Science in International Development

Products created:

- Evaluation research and program development for the TecAp program in Nicaragua (TecAp = Technology that is Appropriate), including interview, survey and focus group guides for community partners, leaders of coffee coops, women’s organizations, fair trade certifiers, and clients of TecAp’s microfranchise project
- Special interest articles for magazines, blogs and websites concerning IDEAS programs that promote solar energy and gender equality in fair trade coffee cooperatives
- Documented experience through photographs and videos
- Contributed to grant proposal to train youth as solar technicians and microfranchisees



Worked: Spent 6 weeks in Esteli, Nicaragua with TecAp staff and volunteers doing field work, and part-time virtually at home

Language: collected information in Spanish, wrote documents in English, and communicated in both

What it meant to me and my professional development: This was my first experience working for an international non-profit, so it was a chance to apply concepts learned in the classroom to the real world. But I also learned skills that only practical experience can give, such as teamwork, flexibility and creativity in project management, and research methods. The materials that I created not only showcase my writing and professional interests, but inform others about IDEAS’ work and important development trends.

Working with IDEAS was invaluable because the staff supported me and ensured that the experience was mutually beneficial. The information I collected and the relationships I forged in Nicaragua and with IDEAS will make doing further research and projects in the area much easier.

Other comments: There are many different kinds of people and needs in development work, both at home and abroad. Anyone with access to the internet and a little patience can develop personal and professional relationships and contribute to projects anywhere in the world. IDEAS has a place for many kinds of volunteers and will help you figure out what you’re good at and where you can contribute the most – which is what good development programming is all about.

**Name: Ruhee Bhalwani**

University: Emory University

BA in Economics, minor in Global Health, graduated 2011

Products Created: Multiple PowerPoint's on various microfranchise and social business models worldwide. Used as case studies for a graduate course taught by Dr. Carter Garber in Nicaragua, summer/fall 2010.

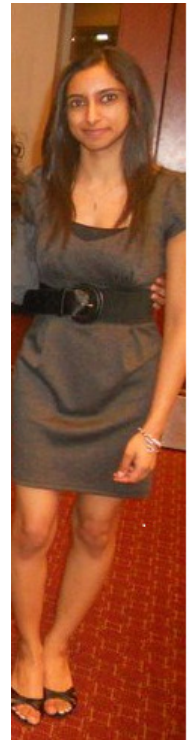
Where Worked: Part-time at IDEAS office as well as virtual work from home.

Worked For: Development internship experience.

Language: Though all materials were prepared in English, it was helpful to know Spanish when translation was needed.

What it meant to me and my professional development: IDEAS allowed me the opportunity to join a team of professionals working passionately to identify economic development needs and address them, using sustainable models and tools, to create a decent standard of living for our brothers and sisters worldwide. Having studied economic development, here I was able to gain a more detailed understanding of region specific issues as well as current ongoing and needed development work.

Other comments (that may be useful to volunteers): Be proactive in your approach to learning and contributing to this great organization. If interning pro-bono, you will likely have flexibility to work from home and/or the Atlanta office; I was able to work full time while dedicating my weekends interning for IDEAS.



**Name: Fabrizio Giustiniani**



University: Emory University

Major: Economics

Concentrations: Economic Development and Financial Economics

Products Created:

- Translated various documents and presentations from English to Spanish.
- Specifically helped to translate and edit the “Vision Spring” presentation.
- Researched for solar technology companies, and suppliers of car batteries, UPS’s and solar equipment in El Salvador and Nicaragua.
- Researched government institutions in El Salvador and Nicaragua in order to determine where could W2W install their factory and start operating.

Worked: Part-time, virtual work from home.

Language: I did about half of my work in English and half in Spanish, and helped with the translation of various documents and presentations. Language skills are not mandatory but could definitely be helpful.

What it meant to me and my professional development: Volunteering for IDEAS was a great experience for me. First of all, having done most of my research and work for projects in the countries of El Salvador and Nicaragua gave me a better understanding of the role that social enterprise and nonprofit organizations are playing in the development of these neighboring countries of mine. It also made me more aware of the region’s specific issues and current needs in terms of sustainable development.

Having the desire to some day in the near future start a social enterprise in Costa Rica (my home country), I could say that my work with IDEAS definitely helped me improve certain practical skills like: researching methods, teamwork, flexibility and communication. More importantly it helped me develop the right mindset in order to understand, and proactively pursue some of my personal projects related to social enterprise.

Other comments: It was great to actually apply some of the skills and knowledge I picked up in college to real world situations, and it was even better to know that my work and dedication would result in changing the lives of thousands of people in the developing world. It was a very rewarding experience.

I really enjoyed working with the IDEAS staff; they proved to be very hardworking, flexible and dedicated people.