Introduction

Hello! My name is Iván Cintrón and I am finishing my Master’s in Security and Resilience Studies at Northeastern University. This Master’s program was one I joined through the PlusOne offered to students in undergraduate programs related to the social sciences and security, such as my combined PoliSci/IA degree. I am now finishing this degree through my capstone and co-op and am excited to officially finish come August. As it stands, I work for FEMA through the Global Resilience Institute, and I will go a bit deeper into that below.

The Role

Officially, my co-op is with the Global Resilience Institute (GRI), but we are contracted by FEMA to work on the COVID Long-Term Recovery Task Force serving FEMA Region 1 (New England). While my title from the GRI is Operational Support Analyst, my working title is that of “state liaison”.

Connections to Studies

My work ties directly into my studies in a way that I wouldn’t have foreseen but truly love. My day to day actively works to develop resilience in states, foster projects that help significantly affected sectors, and help cultivate a stronger sense of collaboration between government organizations at different levels. As someone studying Security and Resilience Studies, there is little more that I could ask for with regards to a co-op to launch my career forward.

Operational Support Analyst – The Global Resilience Institute at Northeastern

a contractor role working as a state liaison for FEMA

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The Tasks and the Projects

Does the phrase “state liaison” sound rather vague? Good, that’s because it is! However, it is very descriptive of the role. FEMA’s function with regards to long-term recovery is to connect state, tribal, and local personnel with federal assistance. This allows state and tribal agencies to identify their needs and develop projects that would help fix those needs, without the federal government stepping in to be prescriptive. Once those needs are identified, the FEMA Task Force steps in and puts the state, tribal, and local agencies in contact with any of the 108 federal partners that offer direct assistance, be it through monetary aid or technical assistance (i.e.: resource guides on best practices and grant-writing assistance seminars). My specific job as a state liaison is to sit down the federal, state, and local partners and moderate discussion in an effort to develop projects that lead to positive change and resilience-building in the long term.

Day to day tasks are varied and focus on communication. Note-taking and schedule managing are a basic component, but with federal standards to match. I am in constant communication with my state partners in New Hampshire and Vermont, the two states that I lead groups in. These groups, or Solution-Based Teams (SBTs), focus around a specific sector (or sub-sectors) of the economy that the state identified as key for long-term recovery. In New Hampshire, I run the Resilience SBT, which has 4 subgroups. In Vermont I run the Outdoor Recreation SBT and work with a completely different assortment of state partners. Generally, these SBTs meet weekly or biweekly, and it is my job to set agendas, moderate discussion, participate actively while guiding discussion towards action items, and to take notes. At the end of the day, me and the other Task Force members track all developing projects, collaborate where possible, and research new funding opportunities that may aid our sectors, all the while aiding to prepare documentation that the FEMA COVID Task Force in DC can use to guide new policy.