

Lone Star Intern Hosts

Austin CDC

McAllen Affordable Homes

Pineywoods Home Team

Denton Affordable Housing

El Paso Collaborative

CDC of Brownsville

Alamo Area Mutual Housing

Midland CDC

NHS of Austin

Bayou Housing

Brazos Valley Affordable Housing

Merced Housing Texas

Neighborhood Recovery CDC

Housing and Community Services

PeopleFund

Frameworks CDC

Affordable Housing of South Texas

New Hope Housing

TACDC

Avenida Guadalupe

City Wide CDC

Tarrant County Housing Partnership

Project Bravo - El Paso

Builders of Hope

Enterprise

South Fair CDC

Services of Hope

Cornerstone CDC



Michael S. Lockett

BBVA Compass

Since 2000, the Texas Association of Community Development Corporations has administered the Lone Star Internship Program. In this highly regarded program, TACDC helps to pair graduate students with community development corporations or related organizations in the affordable housing field for a semester. In doing so, they gain experience in the field, and much more.

“The Lone Star Internship is a chance for graduate students to apply their knowledge in a real world context to help an organization achieve its community development goals,” said Richard Keith, assistant director with San Antonio’s Department of Planning and Community Development and a former Lone Star intern. The program, is an invaluable real-world opportunity both for the students and the organizations.

“It was a good opportunity to get exposed to different community development organizations, work with them on the ground level, and be exposed directly to the application of their work,” said Yolanda Davila, community relation executive with BBVA Compass Bank. Davila, also a veteran of the program, currently manages community relations and philanthropy for BBVA in Texas, through which the internship program itself is funded.

“The Lone Star Internship helps expand capability of community development organizations on the ground that the bank wants to support,” said Davila, referring to BBVA’s support of the program and other organizations. “We know that’s what makes a thriving community.”

The program, which places interns with community development organizations for a semester, allows the students to get experience in the industry, getting their hands dirty doing purely practical work for the organization, as well as allowing the CDC the students work with to work on projects that they may not usually have the manpower for, according to Davila.

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Lone Star Internship Program

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“It gives students an introduction to the way things actually work in the real world,” said Kari Branta, another participant in the program. The program, intended to remove students from classroom instruction and give them a chance to get involved in a practical sense with the field, also benefits organizations that may be operating on tight budgets with limited staff. The ability to pay interns often places a large burden on community development organizations. Thanks to generous funding from BBVA, TACDC is able to share the cost of hiring the interns, paying at least 50% of the interns pay per semester up to a set amount.

“It gives you a specific project, and you take ownership, you take responsibility for the final product. It’s a real project, not just busy work,” said Branta. Organizations which may not have the manpower or resources to put a regular employee on a special project full time may get the opportunity with the internship program.

“You study and analyze case studies and hypothetical situations, but it’s really a great help to students to be able to spend some time in a community development workplace, helping that organization to put housing on the ground or do the other very tangible things the organization is trying to accomplish,” said Keith, talking about some of the benefits of experience gained.

“I knew this was the world I wanted to be in,” said Davila. All the interns are graduate school students- firmly grounded in researching, collating and data analysis, as well as bringing the enthusiasm and fresh perspective that people new to the field often can. “I was made an expert, able to be on a panel, because of the work I did,” said Branta.

With supporters like BBVA making it all possible, the program continues to place qualified applicants with partner and member organizations today. TACDC placed four interns in the fall of 2016, two in the spring of this year, and will place two more in the summer. Between the financial supporters, TACDC helping to place interns with organizations where they can be productive, and the hard work of the interns themselves, the Lone Star Internship is one more way everyone involved works together to build a better future, day by day.