Alondra Avitia  
August 24, 2017  
Final Impact Report  
Surge for Water

This summer I had the pleasure of interning with Surge, a non-profit that focuses on investing on clean, safe, and sustainable water sanitation solutions around the world, and in raising awareness on the global water crisis. Only being 9 years old, Surge has already worked in 11 countries and has provided clean water to over 390,000 people. Their mission is to engage, educate, and empower communities around the world and they make sure to make it very evident in their work. In Chicago and in Dubai, they are spreading global awareness through their education program, Water: The Global Passport, where students will learn about the water crisis and through educational games and real life scenarios. In addition, Surge hosts an annual fall gala, often featuring field partners who help educate attendees on the importance of sustainable solutions and provide product demonstrations. This year, Surge will be having it’s first gala in Minneapolis - which is the project I was working on for most of the summer. For only being around since 2008, Surge has accomplished so much abroad and where their headquarters are - Chicago, Dubai, and now Minneapolis.

My work was focused more on the “behind the scene” work in Chicago and the newest addition - Minneapolis. Being able to see what happens behind the scenes was very eye-opening, especially because I have never thought about all the work that is put into being able to provide clean water - something that is so easy for me to obtain - to a community in need. The international work is important, but it would be nothing without the fundraising and the grant work, which is what I was working on this summer.
My internship position was under the fundraising team for our upcoming 8th annual gala in Chicago and for the first gala in Minneapolis. The gala included a gala dinner, sponsor lounges & a cocktail party with live music, a DJ, water inspired activities, a Silent Auction, art exhibits, and chef’s tables. My job was to secure sponsors for the gala, whether it be with a chef’s table or gift certificates for the silent auction. I started my internship having to research businesses in the Chicago area, especially in communities and neighborhoods where Surge hadn’t worked before. In addition, I had to make sure the businesses had good reviews. I did not want to reach out to a business that had poor customer service because it was important to keep Surge’s mission. After researching restaurants, businesses, and neighborhoods of Chicago, I’d email them and would follow up within a week or two.

Surge was founded in Minneapolis and came to Chicago in 2008 and has been there ever since, but this year Surge is returning to Minneapolis, making it a great accomplishment for Surge! I am very honored to have had the responsibility of starting and creating the gala’s sponsor list for Minneapolis. It was quite a challenge to start and create this list because I have no knowledge of Minneapolis and its neighborhoods. My resources in finding businesses was mostly “Yelp” and Google. Just like Chicago, I made sure to read the reviews, keeping Surge’s mission in the back of my mind.

The last project I worked on was in grant finding and researching. Grants are essential to non-profits, due to the fact that it is where they get their funding from. My job was to find grants in which we were eligible to apply for, and ones where we could possibly in the future. I had to take in mind every detail of the organization while looking at grants to ensure that it stood for and represented the same things Surge does.
Surge is an international non-profit due to its work abroad and it is evident that places are interconnected and often times have similar struggles and conflicts. Although many of the countries Surge provides clean water to are very different culturally and geographically, they all have the same need for clean water and sanitation solutions. The relationship Surge has with the communities they help is very community based. They really do listen and work closely with communities to help them with whatever they need, which is very important when doing nonprofit work, especially abroad.

I am very happy and thankful for this experience. With my majors being International Studies and Political Science, it was important to me to be able to find an internship that included both. Badger Reach’s principles and goals were evident throughout this experience, especially because I did all my work from home and on my computer. I had weekly goals I had to meet as well as long term goals. There were some times when I thought I could handle more work, but I learned the hard way that it wasn’t realistic. It was a learning process with myself, but I feel like I started getting the hang of everything after a month. Furthermore, every week I would look back on the work I had done, and I would see what I would need to improve on or work harder on. Although it was very discouraging sometimes when businesses didn’t respond or say no to sponsoring us, it was very rewarding when I would get a yes, and it made all the stress and work worth it.

For those thinking of doing Badger Reach, do it, especially if you are thinking of working with Surge. The main piece of advice I have for potential students working for this nonprofit is to be patient. It takes time to get sponsors and it takes a lot of persistence, but it is so worth it. I am
so fortunate to have been able to work with Surge and have such inspiring and amazing people around me.