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Renewable Energy Alaska Project (REAP)
Personal Statement

It's hard to articulate exactly what this summer's internship at REAP meant to me because it's meant many different things.

This internship was the first time in my professional life where I felt connected to each of my coworkers. Of course, this was the smallest organization I've ever worked for, but beyond that, each of the staff members made an effort to reach out and connect with the interns. I liked the fact that we were all united by a common interest and a common goal. In other jobs, I've had valuable relationships with the people I worked with, but at REAP it was remarkable how everyone there was genuinely friends with everyone else.

I don't mean to imply that this summer was perfect; in fact, the challenges I faced over the course of the internship added to the overall significance of the experience for me. At times, the directory project felt impossible to complete, and some phone calls just never yielded the information the project needed. I couldn't get in contact with everyone I needed to get in contact with. In rural Alaska, once the salmon start running, many people won't be in the office for weeks at a time. Because the internship already had time constraints, waiting weeks for follow-up phone calls was often impractical. Also, as the other interns and I worked on gathering generation, costs, and contact information for each of our communities, we found that much of the data available online was either out of date or in error, for one reason or another. The Alaska Energy Authority helped us iron out many of these issues in data, but it could feel fairly frustrating that so much information was inaccessible. However, I think that the occasional inconveniences and obstacles helped me learn to be more patient and less focused on my own personal timeframes and deadlines.

Overall, this internship was important to me because I met motivated, passionate people at REAP—the kind of people who come to work every day out of a sense of purpose, not apathetic obligation. I worked with two other interns who were delightful peers that inspired me to put in my best effort. AS a group, we pushed ourselves to design a finished project at a more advanced level than any of us could have reached individually. This summer has certainly made me consider seeking a career at a nonprofit after my master's program.