

The Aninga Project

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Practicum Placement in Public Policy: NGOs and Government Services

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For my practicum placement, I worked with the Aninga Project, a registered Canadian charity based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The organization partners with grassroots initiatives in Uganda, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to support and empower young girls through access to education.

The primary mission of the Aninga Project is to educate and empower girls by removing barriers to education and supporting their overall well-being. Initially focused on covering school fees, these organisations have expanded their approach to provide comprehensive, wrap-around support. This includes funding for boarding, food, clean water, medical care, and mental health support.

Currently, the organisation supports approximately 60 girls in schools across East Africa. Beyond individual support, its work contributes to broader social change by addressing systemic issues such as child marriage, gender inequality in education, and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Importantly, the organisation prioritises collaboration with local partners, ensuring that its work reflects community needs rather than imposing external solutions.

A key aspect that reinforced my positive perception of the organisation was the dedication of its founder, Jenny. She runs the Aninga Project entirely on a volunteer basis while maintaining a full-time career with the provincial government. Her commitment highlights the passion and integrity that sustain the organisation's work and impact.

During my practicum, I contributed to multiple ongoing projects rather than a single culminating initiative. This allowed me to gain experience across several areas of non-profit work.

A significant portion of my role involved social media outreach and communications. I designed promotional materials using Canva for platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. These posts supported fundraising efforts, highlighted organisational initiatives, and raised awareness about relevant global issues, including United Nations-designated awareness days aligned with the organisation's mission.

I was also involved in community outreach and fundraising coordination. This included contacting local businesses and vendors to request donations or partnerships for fundraising events. One of the major initiatives I contributed to was the organisation's Valentine's Day dance, which was its first large in-person event since the COVID pandemic. This event was particularly important in rebuilding community engagement and generating momentum for future initiatives.

In addition, I assisted with early preparations for the Blue Nose Marathon, helping recruit participants willing to run and fundraise on behalf of the organisation. This experience demonstrated the importance of community-based fundraising strategies in sustaining non-profit operations.

Another key component was granting research and preliminary grant writing preparation. Using the Grant Connect database, I identified funding opportunities aligned with the organisation's mission. This involved assessing eligibility criteria, tracking deadlines, and analysing the compatibility of funders with the organisation's goals.

Especially in today's climate, where we are constantly inundated with distressing news both domestically and globally, it is easy to feel overwhelmed or powerless. Engaging in practicum work that had a tangible and positive impact on the lives of others provided a meaningful counterbalance to this sense of helplessness. Contributing to an initiative that

supports young girls' education across East Africa gave me a sense of purpose and connection to broader global efforts toward equity and empowerment.

What particularly resonated with me was the organisation's commitment to social responsibility and its awareness of the historical and political dynamics that often shape Western-led non-profit work in the Global South. Too often, such efforts reproduce paternalistic or colonial relationships even when framed as humanitarian. However, my experience with the Aninga Project challenged this pattern. The organisation demonstrates a conscious effort to collaborate with local partners and prioritise community-based knowledge, ensuring that its initiatives are both effective and respectful of local socio-cultural contexts. This emphasis on sustainability and local agency made the work feel both ethical and impactful.

This experience allowed me to connect theoretical concepts from previous coursework, specifically around power, ethics, and global development, to real-world practice. It reinforced the importance of critically examining how humanitarian work is conducted and the need to prioritise local agency and sustainability.

I would strongly recommend this placement to students interested in non-profit work, global development, or community-based initiatives. However, there are several important considerations.

The placement is entirely remote, with communication conducted through Microsoft Teams, phone calls, and email. Students who thrive better in in-person interaction or require a highly structured environment may find this challenging.

Additionally, the role requires a high degree of self-motivation and independence. Tasks are not always assigned in a rigid manner, so students must be proactive in identifying ways to contribute and managing their time effectively.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this placement is the variety of work available. Students can engage in diverse tasks from communications and event planning to grant research, which allows for the development of a broad and transferable skill set.

Overall, my practicum with the Aninga Project was a meaningful and impactful experience that deepened my understanding of ethical non-profit work and global development. It demonstrated that effective and responsible change is rooted in collaboration, respect for local knowledge, and sustained commitment.

This experience not only enhanced many practical skills but also reshaped how I understood impact, emphasising that meaningful change can emerge from small, dedicated initiatives grounded in shared humanity, integrity, and community partnership.