

## Grant Professional Foundation 2015 Conference Scholar

### Coleen Barry

*In celebration of [International Grant Professionals Day and Week](#) this year, we're publishing blogs from three Grant Professionals Foundation Scholars. We share these as evidence of how meaningful and important the GPA is to our field. Our first blog comes from Coleen Barry, one of 15 GPA National Conference Scholars in 2015. Will you be apply to be a [GPF Scholar](#) this year?*

I was very happy to learn that the Grant Professionals Foundation awarded me the Susan Kemp Memorial Scholarship to attend the 2015 Grant Professionals Association Conference in St. Louis, Missouri. As the conference has come and gone, I can report that it was well worth attending.

In my application, I noted that what I wanted to learn more about was funder research and evaluation. To that end, I attended the “10 Tips to Find the Right Funders before Writing a Word” and “Program Evaluation: So Much More than Success or Failure” sessions. Both were very informative and I learned new tips for funder research that I was not as familiar with, such as researching who funds “competitors” and therefore might be a match for my organization. A critical reminder I took away from the evaluation session was to add evaluation to the budget of a project or program *during* the planning phase and not to append it on at the last. Becky Crump and Judi Vanderhaar emphasized that it was important to treat evaluation as an investment; without evaluation, you will not know if your program is effective and you could end up wasting money on impact that will not last.

As a relatively new grant writer, I was also interested in the possibility of finding a mentor. I attended the Mentoring Discussion Den led by Diane Leonard and Micki Vandeloo, who told the story of how their mentor/mentee relationship started. Several attendees who had been approached by young professionals asking them to be mentors were intimidated by the connotation of “mentor.” To alleviate these feelings, Diane and Micki discussed the subtle difference between mentoring and coaching, an important distinction that can make or break a mentor/mentee relationship. Another attendee expressed her desire for a mentor as she lives in a region without a local GPA chapter and sometimes felt professionally isolated. By the end of the Discussion Den, opportunities were identified and ideas shared on how to improve potential mentoring possibilities for GPA members in the future. It was a productive discussion.

But, there was one session that—surprisingly—stole the show. It was “Putting the Logic Back in Logic Models.” I knew it would be useful, but did not expect the last session on a Friday afternoon about logic models, of all things, to be so dynamic. The presenters, Holly Staley and Elizabeth Roscano, were full of energy, turning what I anticipated being a less than thrilling topic into an interactive session with an engaged and active audience. Not only did we learn how to complete a logic model efficiently, we all humorously pondered the possibility of

increasing “the awesome” as a goal for upcoming projects and the measurability of “the awesome.” The fun session stayed with me long after I left.

I am grateful for the assistance of the Grant Professionals Foundation’s help in enabling me to attend the conference. What I learned at the conference has already come in handy in a recent grant application I wrote for my organization and will continue to be a benefit as I grow as a grant professional.

*Do you want to help people like Coleen? Please [give now](#) to support GPF Scholarships. You can help our colleagues secure funding for GPA membership, conference registration, and GPC exam. Together, we make the world a better place, one grant at a time!*