

Insights

NICHQ Employee Spotlight: Ana Franklin

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Ana Franklin,
Development Manager

Full name and title: Ana Franklin, Development Manager

Years with NICHQ: 2.5 years

I've always been really passionate about working with children and working to make sure that kids get the support that they need to thrive, no matter what circumstances they have or what background they come from. In high school, I used to volunteer at the local elementary school, and then in college I volunteered as a youth mentor, and for a couple of years I also, child sat, a 9-year-old girl, who I still keep in touch with now. It's great – I got to see the impact you can have on children's lives in both the short term and in the long term. Then in college, I double majored in psychology and sociology with a focus on the social, emotional, and psychological development of children, and that academic journey led me to grad school, where I got my masters in community development and planning with a focus on youth work. So, my academic interest and my personal passion for supporting children really impacted what led me to NICHQ.

I also had the opportunity to intern at the Grants Department in Girls, Inc., in Worcester, Massachusetts, and I enjoyed using my skills in organization and writing to help find funding for programs that support kids. I knew I wanted to work at a nonprofit organization that had the mission of supporting children in some way, and I came across NICHQ, and I really was inspired by NICHQ's wide reach and commitment to equity and very clear mission and vision for

supporting children and their health outcomes.

More personally, my mom is now a retired general practitioner. Growing up, I got to be in her office and see her interacting with patients, and I would help with administrative tasks. I never really had much of an interest in the biomedical side of health, so it's great that I'm working at a public health nonprofit now. Also reflecting on my life, I was adopted at 3 months old, and coming to the U.S., I had a few major illnesses. Luckily for me, my mom was a medical professional, so she had the knowledge and the resources to help me get better and heal. I received so much support early on in life, but so many families and infants don't have that kind of access to quality care or can navigate the complexities of the healthcare system, so I wanted to support an organization that strives to help children in ways that I got, but not everyone is able to have. Looking back on those experiences, even though I wasn't sure where I would end up, it makes sense that I'm here at NICHQ.

What does your role as Development Manager entail, and how do you bring your past experiences to your work now with NICHQ's Development team?

As the Development Manager, I monitor forecasted grant opportunities, and I help with researching new foundations and funding mechanisms that might be relevant to NICHQ and in other high-priority areas of interest, like maternal and child health opportunities that are explicitly equity-focused. I also support the grant processes like managing the proposal development process and monitoring proposal timelines. I also support process improvement, like keeping biographical sketches of staff updated and developing templates and checklists that can keep the whole process and the proposal team organized and on track. Then, during the proposal development process, I'll collect and organize the required attachments, and I also write some sections in the proposal about NICHQ's experience and qualifications. I've supported writing needs assessment sections as well, which is a really great opportunity to learn more about maternal and child health topics and the current climate of how things are in the U.S. Alongside our Director of Development, Amy Oppenheim, I assist in getting the proposal together and submitting it, so we oversee the grant proposal process from the start to the finish.

My experience in the Grants Department at Girls, Inc., gave me a lot of insight into the whole grant writing process – from looking for new foundations to keeping up with grant deadlines. While their funding model differs from NICHQ, I'm still able to bring in my experience with researching new funders and writing in a clear and accessible way that addresses what funders are looking for.

Are there any proposals that turned into a project at NICHQ that are special to you?

One of the more recent proposals where we reapplied to be the coordinating center for the [National Network of Perinatal Quality Collaboratives \(NNPQC\)](#) was a really exciting one.

When I joined NICHQ at the end of 2020, the NNPQC project was one that I heard about all the time. It was a very established project, and then last summer I got the opportunity to support one of their Virtual PQC Meetings, as a NICHQ representative in a breakout room. It was really awesome to be on the other side of the project, seeing how they work to facilitate these virtual meetings, and bring together experts to share and learn. When we recompeted to serve as the NNPQC coordinating center, it was really great to work with the project team and see how they

incorporated the lessons learned from the past iteration of the project into the proposed work. It was very exciting because NICHQ will continue to serve as the coordinating center for the NNPQC, and it is both a testament to how great our proposal was, and how wonderful the project team is who will continue doing that work.

What are you most proud of from your time with NICHQ?

More recently, nearing our holiday break and early into the new year, we were working on two proposals simultaneously, and that felt really stressful because we had to call on external staff to lead the proposal process and also provide content expertise. The timing of it was a little challenging because it was over the holiday break, and there were a lot of different moving pieces. Both proposals were in our area of expertise, so these were important proposals to be working on, and our Development team had to balance the management and proposal process of both. We had to reach out to others for support, and we had to lean on each other for support as well. These processes can be a bit stressful because it can be difficult to balance asking for help and not wanting to burden others since everyone has so much on their plate, doing such important work. Ultimately, we knew that this situation wasn't going to last forever, and we just had to set deadlines of when the work we were asking of others needed to be completed, and at the end of the day, understand that these projects were also important to NICHQ. It was really great that in the end we pushed together as a team, and we successfully submitted both proposals, and both felt really strong. I'm proud of myself for getting through that and really proud of the team for that collaboration.

After the proposals were submitted, we got to reflect on the process in an internal After-Action Review, where we talked about what happened, what went well, and what can be improved, so I feel more prepared for a situation like that in the future if it arises.