

Audrey Olmsted '27

Internship at Project Place Summer 2026

This past summer, I used my Byrne Scholars funds to intern at Project Place, a workforce development agency in Boston serving people experiencing homelessness and low-income individuals. My primary focus was analyzing the outcomes of their FY26 programming. I began by learning how each program actually runs and by cleaning the data each one produced. That data lived in nine separate systems that shared no common client ID, so I wrote cleaning scripts in R for every source and built a name-matching crosswalk that mapped 786 client names onto their records in Clarity, the agency's client database. With the sources joined, I analyzed demographics, completion rates, employment outcomes, and the paths clients took between programs, using Fisher's exact tests and logistic regression to separate real differences from noise. I found that recent incarceration was the only client characteristic that significantly predicted not completing a program, that attendance in the first two weeks of class closely tracked whether someone finished, and that very few participants from the reentry classes taught inside a correctional facility ever enrolled with the agency after release. I presented these findings and a set of recommendations to senior leadership at the end of the summer.

I also contributed to the agency's move off spreadsheets and onto an internal client tracker being built in-house. I wrote the reporting pipeline that populates the tracker with client and program records, and the migration script that converts historical clients into its database format, which required matching against the clients already entered by hand so the import would not create duplicates, and rebuilding attendance and employment histories as structured data. At my supervisor's request I wrote an implementation strategy covering beta testing with staff volunteers, success criteria, and which existing spreadsheets each phase of the rollout would retire. I presented all of my findings at a Senior Leadership meeting where I answered questions and explained my choices.

In addition to these projects, I interviewed staff across every program to map how a client moves through the agency from outreach to employment, and built a flowchart of that pathway that is now used to orient people to how the organization fits together. I built a one-page summary of my findings for all staff. Throughout my work I shadowed and/or met with most of Project Place's staff. I got to see how these classes are taught, where support for clients shines through the most, and how passionate these people are about giving back to the Boston community.

This experience was only possible with the generous support of the Byrne Scholars Program and donors. Thank you so much for the opportunity.