

I am writing to express my interest in The Evergreen State College's Master of Public Administration (MPA) program. I believe the skills and experience I'll gain from the MPA program will benefit both my current career and provide me with more opportunities in the future. The MPA program's interdisciplinary model will strengthen my ability to think critically, identify best practices, and approach public and private policy decisions in fair and equitable ways.

After transferring from South Puget Sound Community College, I completed my undergraduate degree at The Evergreen State College where I studied subjects ranging from Russian History to Biochemistry. Its integrative curriculum fostered educational freedom not afforded at other institutions and provided me with strong skills in the process. Evergreen taught me the independent aspects of education as well as the collaborative. In 2015 I was awarded an undergraduate research fellowship through the college to conduct field work and research mercury accumulation in soil. During my fellowship and subsequent private research throughout my senior year, I had independence to work in the lab and with scientific instruments usually preserved for faculty or graduate students. I joined the Evergreen Ecological Observation Network (EEON), where students and staff met weekly to critique and analyze data and set guidelines and goals for research progress. By working collaboratively with other EEON members I further developed research projects with data collections and analysis spanning over several years. Collaboration and hands-on experience were an important part of my experience at Evergreen. Not only did it help me become an effective part of a team, but it prepared me for more expansive duties and projects in my current field.

For the last several years I have worked for a small telecommunications company based out of Mason County. Throughout my role, I've applied these independent and critical thinking skills in a professional environment. As a small company with less than 50 employees, and upwards of 8,000 customers, the staff play several roles. Our primary goal as a rural telecommunications company is expanding our footprint and bringing broadband into communities that lack current access. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, I witnessed the importance and necessity of providing broadband access. Working in some of the most rural areas of Mason County we witnessed the digital equity gap widening as telehealth and tele-school became essential, and those without access were increasingly left behind. As the pandemic began to highlight this public problem, Washington State made it a point to expand digital access through multiple broadband infrastructure grants and funding.

Once new funding became available, we looked at the areas we could leverage existing infrastructure to serve small communities that had previously been overlooked due to financial hurdles. We strategized how to most effectively use funding to reach these communities that have been left out of the digital age. We were the first company to receive grant funding from the Washington State Public Works Board (PWB) to expand rural broadband. Shortly after receiving the PWB grants, we partnered with a local Public Utility District Mason County PUD1 to fund their first ever fiber optic broadband project. Funded through the Department of Commerce's Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB), we again leveraged existing infrastructure to help bring broadband to previously unserved communities. This became a prime example of the importance of Public-Private partnerships that became more common in the rural broadband world. Previously focused on higher return areas, private companies shifted their focus to more rural and lower return areas through such partnerships. This ultimately exemplifies a more sustainable and economically viable process over a solely public or private sector project. By expanding our knowledge of the public sector and its operational process, my colleagues and

I gained a deeper understanding of grant funding and how public and private sectors can collaborate in order to better support local communities.

Throughout the process of writing and implementing grants, the education I received as an undergraduate at Evergreen has proven vital. Being a small company, collaboration is key to successful project outcomes. Throughout the process, I became more familiar with public procurement, environmental analysis, public bid openings, and more. To think critically and communicate effectively are key components to working with both internal colleagues and external partners. I hope to expand and build upon these skills and more through the MPA program.

I've always kept a social and objective lens in my approach to work and studies. When studying environmental science, I made a point to break through the data and address the social and equity issues that were impacted. Why study climate change without addressing the inevitable socioeconomic consequences? I approach my work in the same way. I'm passionate about the technical aspects of my job, but ultimately, I feel the best when working closely with communities who have been underserved and left behind in their needs for telecommunication and broadband. I gain the most satisfaction when I'm advocating for communities with a common need and hope to further my career in this line of work.

Within the small scope of my life and career, the MPA program will advance my skills and support my company as we enter a new world of public funding. From procurement procedures, larger grant proposals, to engaging the legislative body on behalf of small telecommunications companies. In my longer-term goals, I plan to use my experiences in the private sector and my education to become a public advocate for socioeconomic and equity issues, and expand beyond broadband equity and continue to provide community support and expand their resources.