Innovation in the Social Sector:
Measuring Organizational Capacity for Nonprofits to Innovate
by
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Abstract

This paper builds on a growing body of research focused on innovation in the social sector. Recognized as a process of adaptation and improvement, innovation becomes less of a buzzword and more of an organizational necessity, vital for social ventures in serving their missions, clients, and society. For this study, primary data from expert interviews complimented a literature review to define and describe innovation. Key findings on innovative organizations include the importance of a “listening” culture, intimate knowledge and inclusion of clientele in generating solutions, risk-taking with tolerance for failure and desire to iterate, understanding of different stages of innovation and scaling, maximization of partnerships, and flexible funding. These ingredients for innovation form the basis of a new model, proposed here, with indicators to measure nonprofit organizations’ capacity to innovate. Recommendations include expanding research, refining indicators, pilot testing measurements, emphasizing innovation in new and existing organizations, and continually revisiting the elements of innovation.

**Keywords:** Innovation, innovative organization, organizational culture, social sector
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Section 1: Introduction

Innovation is a key driver of progress in societies around the world. When conceptualized as an ongoing process rather than a single invention or technology, innovation may be harnessed by a broad range of individuals to contribute to societal progress. While interest in innovation is longstanding and cross-sectoral, understanding exactly how individuals build and sustain organizations that innovate most effectively has yet to be fully realized. This research addresses the question of what social sector organizations, particularly nonprofits, can do to cultivate innovation. Specifically, this study asks which indicators are most vital to determining whether an organization is able to create and carry out innovative solutions in service of its mission and the greater good.

This report will begin with a literature review followed by an overview of research methods and approaches. Data analysis and implications of the findings are then discussed alongside new models for innovative social sector organizations. Finally, recommendations are made for organizational leaders and anyone in the sector concerned with innovating. The fundamental purpose of this research is to aid leaders at all levels (not just executive directors or board members) to think about how progress is made. By consulting expert opinions, via the literature and primary data collection, it is clear that reconceptualizing innovation is an important step toward arriving at best practices.

Defining Innovation

Many definitions of innovation exist. To pick one is not an easy task, though establishing a common language around the central topic of this paper is useful. The following description,
given by Alexander Betts of Oxford University is one that elucidates not only what innovation is, but also where common misconceptions of it still exist. It emphasizes the process part of innovation, as well as the elements of adaptation and improvement for society’s benefit:

Innovation is not the same thing as invention; it need not involve the creation of something novel but often takes the form of adapting something to a different context. It may be incremental (step by step) or disruptive (breaking the mould). It may relate to change in a product, a process or a paradigm. And it may involve technology or it may not. The innovation cycle can be thought of as a four-stage process, although the stages do not need to be linear: 1. Defining a problem or identifying an opportunity; 2. Finding potential solutions; 3. Testing, adapting and implementing a solution; and 4. Appropriate scaling up of the solution.

The term ‘innovation’ is often poorly understood in humanitarian circles or is viewed skeptically as a buzzword brought in from the private sector. It is often used broadly as an umbrella term to cover the roles of technology, partnership and business. However, more precisely, it can be understood generally as a process for adaptation and improvement.

(Betts, Forced Migration Review, 2014, p. 4)

Based on this definition, organizational leaders who can expel myths surrounding innovation – such as the lone inventor archetype or the need for technological disruption – are on their way to understanding innovating as a process. To embrace innovation is a major step an organization can take toward greater social impact. This paper begins with that premise. The intent is not to convince practitioners that they should innovate but rather that they can increase the capacity to do so, if they emphasize certain essential elements within their organizations.

Organizational Realities

It would be remiss to ignore the fact that some organizations are simply unable to prioritize innovation. Mission-driven organizations, and 501(c)(3) nonprofits especially, grapple with nearly constant turmoil and constraints involving political climate, funding, reporting, personnel, and many other areas.
Perhaps some organizations are “dinosaurs” (resistant to change) by choice or legacy thinking and float on in a comfortable bubble, but many more become slow to innovate because they are legitimately fighting for survival. This research keeps these issues in mind and hopes to provide even the most constrained organizations with some suggestions for improvement.

Section 2: Literature Review

There is no shortage of literature on innovation. Often falling into scholars’ purviews when discussing national economies (Global Innovation Index, Global Competitiveness Report, and others) or companies’ bottom lines (Davila, Epstein, & Shelton, 2012, for example), innovation has increasingly seen a social component attached to it, with dialogue revolving around social innovation and social impact (Phills, Deiglmeier, & Miller, 2008; Murray, Caulier-Grice, Mulgan, 2010; Gregoire, 2016).

While these areas of innovation research help set some context, what has been most revelatory is published work on innovation at the organizational level, or what it takes to create and sustain an innovating organization. As Seelos and Mair (2012) highlighted in their in-depth review of this topic, many authors over the last two decades “express a deep frustration with the state of the literature” and ultimately “the way we study innovation stifles progress” (p. 5). Indeed, the number organizational identifiers and determinants of innovation described by an array of authors can be downright overwhelming, especially considering that many do not actually translate into practical or actionable guidance to practitioners.

Given the vastness of the pool of literature on innovation, and even just on innovating organizations, it is helpful to hone in on a couple of well-researched and well-executed studies involving holistic long-term orientations. In 1998, public policy practitioner and academic Paul
Light published *Sustaining Innovation: Creating Nonprofit and Government Organizations that Innovate Naturally*, while nearly 20 years later in 2017, Christian Seelos and Johanna Mair released *Innovation and Scaling for Impact: How Effective Social Enterprises Do It*. Seelos and Mair’s book builds on their 2012 study “What Determines the Capacity for Continuous Innovation in Social Sector Organizations?” and also echoes some of the early work done by Light and other colleagues in the field. A summary of the publications and important takeaways can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1: Two Sources of Literature on Innovation in Social Sector Organizations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Literature Cited</th>
<th>Research Methods</th>
<th>Key Takeaways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light, P. (1998)</td>
<td><em>Sustaining Innovation: Creating Nonprofit and Government Organizations that Innovate Naturally</em></td>
<td>1961 (first study on innovation in relation to organizational structure) – through 1997</td>
<td>Survey of 26 organizations and interviews with leaders of nonprofits and government agencies in Minnesota, all with a track record of innovating</td>
<td>Innovation is a product of effective organizational practice; culture and routine help create preferred states of organizational being; leader is less hero and more ecologist creating environment for innovation to thrive; ideas come from everywhere, empowering them is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seelos &amp; Mair (2017)</td>
<td><em>Innovation and Scaling for Impact: How Effective Social Enterprises Do It</em></td>
<td>Looking at the authors’ 2012 study as well, they cover Light and many of the authors he cited, adding a strong focus on the 2000s</td>
<td>In-depth case studies of 4 organizations, interviews with leaders running organizations internationally</td>
<td>Innovation is an incremental process, not something to be forced just for innovating’s sake; organizations must overcome innovation pathologies and focus on impact (green zones, not red); scaling is key to impact; focus on organizing around impact creation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Light’s hypothesized “preferred states of being” or Seelos and Mair’s “impact creation logic” with “green zones” of scaling and iterating come as close as any literature to providing a
framework for innovation in organizations. Organizational culture and a keen attention to processes, routines, relationships, and partnerships are emphasized most for making real impact and progress. Organizational structure is somewhat deemphasized as a variable, given that divergent management styles, hierarchies, and flat structures have proven effective in different cases.

Studies by Damanpour (1991), Wolfe (1994), Walker (2007), and Jastyke (2011) also contribute greatly to our current understanding of innovation as an organizational imperative. Still, the only consensus is that there is *not* a consensus concerning any one path to organizational innovation. At the end of the day, particularities of individual organizations often prevail. With this in mind, the primary research for this study seeks to cull wisdom from practitioners who have lived innovation in their organizations and have seen it thrive as well as fail in others. As researchers before have confirmed, there is not a single formula for how to innovate. In fact, each organization’s road to innovation, if it is able to forge one, is a major part of the innovating process.

**Section 3: Methods and Approaches**

This study takes a mixed-method approach to data collection. The primary data comes from expert interviews conducted with six practitioners of innovative interventions and processes in social sector organizations, mostly 501(c)(3) nonprofits. The interviewees were selected on the basis of their expertise and organizational experience, as well as their diversity of backgrounds, trainings, tenures, locations, fields of interest, and levels within their organizations.

Identifying information has been removed from each of the interviewees. They have been depicted in the findings using role, field, and location, as follows:
The six interviewees were contacted via email or phone, and each interview was conducted over the phone. The format of the interviews was semi-structured. A handful of core questions helped guide the conversations, while allowing room for follow-up questions and a general dialogue about innovation within each interviewee’s organization and the sector more broadly.

Core questions asked in the expert interviews include:

- Where do the best ideas tend to come from? In an organization, how can the right ideas get where they need to go?
- Considering all factors, internal and external, which seem most important for an organization trying to make progress in the social sector?
- Given your background and experience, how do you define innovation?
- What kinds of leadership, culture, and/or structure allow for innovation to arise and be sustained?
- Are there instances in which innovation cannot, or should not, be emphasized within an organization?
- What barriers do you see to organizational innovation? How might they be overcome?

Secondary research for this report involved reviewing literature and case study examples. As the author’s interest in this topic began with innovative refugee service organizations, lessons learned from investigating those successes (and sometimes failures) are present in the models presented in this paper. Two of the expert interviews conducted were in fact directly connected to the author’s previous work on forced migration and new approaches to the refugee crisis.

Finally, conversations with professionals across subsectors (academia, technology, the arts, etc.) and across geographies (from Houston, TX, to Beirut, Lebanon, and beyond) helped fill out the conception of innovating organizations presented here. An interim presentation of
findings from this study was presented at the International Association of Jesuit Business Schools (IAJBS) World Forum in July 2017. Participants of the IAJBS conference asked questions and gave feedback on the data collection to date.

**Section 4: Data Analysis**

Interviews with six experts on innovation across different organizations reveals thematic trends and informs conclusions on what contributes most to organizations that innovate effectively. Using emergent coding (as described in Kara, 2012), a framework of six categories helps organize and analyze the qualitative data collected from the interviews.

Six interviewees reveal six themes, though as the results show, the relationship is far from 1:1. In fact, each interviewee mentions at least four themes. Two interviewees focus on four themes, two discuss five themes, and two cover all six. An overview of the interviewees and thematic areas is shown here in Figure 1 and analyzed in further detail using Tables 2-4 below.

**Figure 1: Overview of Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funder</td>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder</td>
<td>Risk-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Stages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A keyword analysis helps confirm the themes. Covering dozens of pages of transcribed interviews, NVivo (software specializing in qualitative data analysis) produces high keyword counts for the terms innovation, organization, culture, listening, inclusion, partnerships, risk, iterating, and funding. The emergent codes are shown to be strong throughout the data.
What quickly becomes apparent in the coded data is that interviewees often span multiple themes at once. Indeed, just one answer could encapsulate three or four areas. Take this quote, for example:

Different experiences and backgrounds bring new ideas and perspectives into the mix. The trial and error aspect, the learning process – as you grow as a professional, but also as the organization grows over time – there’s knowledge there that informs innovation and how you can do things differently and better, more effectively and more productively.

The semi-structured format of the interviews is particularly helpful in these instances, as it allows for follow-up questions on particular thoughts. Follow-ups give more detail on this particular interviewee’s mention of different perspectives, trial and error, the organization growing over time, and defining innovation.

Another representative quote from the data, covering more than one theme to be sure, again demonstrates the value of emergent coding and the need for follow-up questioning:

Whenever you’re developing something new, the concept of human-centered design is very important. You’re listening, you’re learning, you’re interacting. The second phase is how you sustain innovation... once you grow past the founding stages, you hire people for functional areas, and you need more capital and partnerships to do that.

Multiple interviewees name processes of listening and including diverse opinions throughout the development of an organization, whether it be in the form of human-centered design, appreciative inquiry, or community needs based assessment, to name a few. The quote above also starts to get into the different stages or phases of growth that most organizations go through, as well as the importance of funding and partners.

In the first data analysis table (Table 2 below), each interviewee is identified by role and years of experience, and then marked for thematic areas discussed in his or her interview. All interviewees note leaders that listen and funding that is flexible as vital to innovating organizations.
Table 2: Thematic Analysis – Interviewees by Role & Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert Interview</th>
<th>Listening Culture</th>
<th>Inclusive Solutions</th>
<th>Risk-taking &amp; Iterating</th>
<th>Awareness of Stages</th>
<th>Maximized Partnerships</th>
<th>Flexible Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Funder (15-20 yrs)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Founder, BOD (25+)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Director (15-20)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – Manager (5-10)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – Researcher (5-10)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – Employee (5-10)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After mapping the initial results, other ways of organizing the data can be considered. What features of interviewees matter most in how they speak about innovation within an organization? Looking at interviewees’ geography, gender, size of organization, length of organization’s operation, and subsector does not yield transformative results. One of the most important considerations revolves around how the director and manager (interviews #3 and #4) come to arrive at all six essential elements of innovation. If it is not something about demographics, is it something specific about their organizations? Are their organizations more innovative? The answer is yes, they describe their organizations as currently rethinking, prototyping, iterating, and scaling solutions – and with clear processes in place around innovation. These two interviewees speak about their organizations specifically having a positive correlation with each and every one of the thematic areas. Table 3 highlights this finding.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis – Interviewees by Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert Interview</th>
<th>Listening Culture</th>
<th>Inclusive Solutions</th>
<th>Risk-taking &amp; Iterating</th>
<th>Awareness of Stages</th>
<th>Maximized Partnerships</th>
<th>Flexible Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Social Enterprise</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Direct Service</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Education Tech</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – Public Health</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – Women’s Policy</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – Education Policy</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, it is interesting to note in Table 4 that interviews #3 and #4 both spoke most about risk-taking & iterating as well as awareness of stages. Given the innovativeness of their organizations and their role as operators of the innovation process, this makes sense. It is worth noting too that level in an organization has some effect on how innovation is seen. For some, a factor like funding was a huge enabler of innovation while others described more ideal wish list scenarios based on their experience and expertise.

**Table 4: Top Focus – Two Most Discussed Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert Interview</th>
<th>Listening Culture</th>
<th>Inclusive Solutions</th>
<th>Risk-taking &amp; Iterating</th>
<th>Awareness of Stages</th>
<th>Maximized Partnerships</th>
<th>Flexible Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Funder, Social Enterprise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Founder, Direct Service</td>
<td>★</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Director, Education Tech</td>
<td></td>
<td>★</td>
<td></td>
<td>★</td>
<td></td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – Manager, Public Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – Researcher, Women’s Policy</td>
<td>★</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – Employee, Education Policy</td>
<td>★</td>
<td></td>
<td>★</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final analysis helped elucidate how the themes could be modeled. Pairing them up helps show the big picture of an organization, while still giving a lens into the specific predictors of innovative progress:

- Listening + Inclusion = Culture
- Risk-taking + Stages = Operations
- Partnerships + Funding = Resources

As illustrated through the models in the next section, organizational leaders can use the results to consider some of the essential elements of innovation and which might be most applicable to the current stage of their organizations.
Section 5: Implications and Recommendations

Implications

The implications for social sector participants at all levels – funder, founder, board member, executive director, program director, manager, employee, and more – are multifold. Drawing on this study’s thematic analysis of organizational innovation, reconsidered “preferred states of organizational being” (theorized by Light, 1998) help inform practitioners. The resulting model, Essential Elements for Innovation in the Social Sector (Figure 2), incorporates and elaborates on the main findings of the primary research conducted through expert interviews and supported by the literature (Light, 1998; Seelos & Mair, 2017) on innovating organizations. An ideal way for social sector organizations to approach culture (using listening and inclusion), operations (by taking risks, iterating, and appreciating stages), and resources (maximizing partnerships and seeking flexible funding) is described in this model.

Figure 2: Essential Elements for Innovation in the Social Sector
Reframing the findings from a leadership perspective, Figure 3 shows how an organization’s leader and the culture he or she inspires are central to being an innovative organization.

Figure 3: Leading an Innovative Nonprofit Organization

Each offshoot of central leadership is important, and emphasis should be placed on the resulting “state of being” (Light, 1998) shown here in bold. In the effective organizations Light described, leaders adapt throughout the innovation process and behave more like ecologists than anything else, priming the environment for innovating.

Recommendations

The following recommendations come directly from the primary (interview) and secondary (literature) data described throughout this study on innovation. They refer back to the models of essential elements for innovating organizations and leadership. Beginning with direct
and concrete next steps, these recommendations then move into more broad sector-wide applications for this study.

Based on the findings and models presented in the preceding sections of this report, it is recommended that social sector practitioners:

1. **EXPAND RESEARCH** by surveying organizational leaders and employees across more sectors, fields, geographies, organization sizes & stages, and experience levels. Use the data to build out thematic areas and more specific indicators.

2. **REFINE INDICATORS** into a questionnaire for organizations seeking to measure capacity to innovate. While such an instrument has yet to be fully developed and pilot tested, a sample of three potential questions is included here:

   Was client involvement prioritized from the start, using a community needs assessment, appreciative inquiry, or another method for including community members’ perspectives?
   
   Yes  or  No

   What percentage of the organization’s funding is unrestricted?
   
   0 —— 10 —— 20 —— 30 —— 40 —— 50 —— 60 —— 70 —— 80 —— 90 —— 100

   How many hours each week does the average employee spend on creating and sharing ideas, versus day-to-day tasks?
   
   0 —— 5 —— 10 —— 15 —— 20 —— 25 —— 30 —— 35 —— 40 —— 45 —— 50+

3. **PILOT TEST** the questionnaire with organizational representatives from all levels, as well as funders, clients, and other stakeholders in the social sector. Develop a scoring system, and from this, map out a spectrum of innovation on which to plot organizations.

4. **EMPHASIZE INNOVATION** within the sector, and consider it especially during the early stages of establishing an organization.
5. **REVISIT ELEMENTS** of innovation throughout organizational planning, hiring, researching, implementing, growing, evaluating, and scaling processes.

By building on the research already published and taking findings discussed here to new levels, this study could have an impact on the way social sector organizations conceive of and pursue innovation. Applying this research in the field will take a joint effort involving practitioners at all levels of organizations across subsectors, geographies, and generations.

**Conclusion**

Given the complex issues that societies worldwide continue to face, inspiring organizations to innovate for the greater good needs to be high on the priority list of social sector practitioners. In offering practical steps toward processes of incremental (if not disruptive) innovation, this study has provided leaders at all levels a new lens for considering sustainable organizational innovation. Emphasizing the six essential elements for innovation within an organization will indeed lay the groundwork for innovative ideas to thrive. Keeping the thematic pairs of in mind when assessing organizational culture, operations, and resources can bring about real progress.

The next steps for research include an expanded sampling of innovation experts and practitioners. This study was certainly limited by its small sample size and lack of timing to reach more participants and synthesize results. From a larger pool of data, this study’s thematic areas of innovating organizations could be even further refined into more detailed diagnostic indicators. These indicators may then form the basis for a questionnaire for organizations to help determine capacity to innovate, and it could be applied to existing organizations perceived to be
either innovators or “dinosaurs.” The ultimate aim for applying this research is a spectrum of innovation, as mentioned in Recommendations, on which any organization could be plotted.

Determining the innovative capacity of an organization does not necessarily translate into social impact. But it is an important piece of the progress pie and can be tied to social impact measurements within organizations and social sector collaboratives. In fact, the innovation landscape is prime for collaborating not just within the sector but also across sectors to generate maximum impact. To truly innovate and make social progress, we will certainly all need to work together.

The applications of this innovation research, particularly around strengthening organizations, are far-reaching. To see the frameworks and elements of innovation fully realized in more and more social sector organizations could eventually change the sector, communities served, and society at large.
References


Author’s Bio

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A native of the San Francisco Bay Area, Emily Grossman is a professional with ten years of experience. Her background spans Operations and Human Resources at both not-for-profit and for-profit organizations.

Emily’s career began in the nonprofit sector with internships at Prevention Institute, an Oakland-based organization, as well as with their research partners at the UCLA School of Public Health. She went on to work at a private foundation and family office in New York City, where she administered and tracked millions of dollars in charitable giving and coordinated the CEO’s involvement as a member of public, private, and charitable Boards of Directors.

Back in San Francisco, Emily joined the People Operations team at Square, the hyper-growth company that started with a simple mission to make payments easy for small business owners. She helped hire and onboard over 300 employees during her time at Square. She currently volunteers with the Development team at Worldreader, focusing on corporate engagement. For the last five years, she has also given time to SFMOMA, mainly to support their Family Sunday programming.

Emily earned her undergraduate degree in Global Studies and Art History from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and her Master’s in Nonprofit Administration (MNA) at the University of San Francisco (USF). While completing her degree at USF, Emily has been working as a Research Assistant with the MNA Program Director. She presented a co-authored paper to the International Association of Jesuit Business Schools World Forum in July 2017. As a graduate student, Emily also helped organize the USF for Freedom symposium on forced migration and refugee resettlement.

A Dean’s List recipient at the USF School of Management, Emily was recently inducted into three honor societies: Nu Lambda Mu, Pi Alpha Alpha, and Pi Gamma Mu, for outstanding scholarship and public service. She expects to begin working again full time, while continuing to volunteer, once she completes her final capstone project in August 2017.