

# A Day in the Life of a Small Planet Institute Intern

*By Emma Zimmerman, 2018-2019 SPI Intern*

You might love the energy efficiency of Boston public transit (we do too!) but by the time the red line has reached Harvard Square, you have grown overwhelmed by the individualistic vibe—the scrolling, the earbuds in, and the downcast eyes. When you arrive at 12 Elliot Street, you are ready for a more collaborative energy. As soon as you enter the door, you are greeted with enthusiasm by SPI's Managing Director, Heather. Frankie walks away from her standing desk, delighted to share her latest story of inspiration—this week she visited her granddaughter's school to find inclusive language displayed on posters around the building.

There's a common trend that inundates the newspapers, the podcasts, and your social media feeds each morning, and it's seldom a trend of hope. But at SPI, those feel-good stories are never hard to find. And how could they be? We are at the forefront of highlighting a powerful Democracy Movement, characterized by courageous citizen action, and you're right there with us working to grow the movement!

You sit down at the communal, intern work table, and open your laptop, ready to launch into your tasks for today. There are multiple projects on the intern to-do list: organization research for our new Democracy Movement website, email outreach for Frankie's latest article, social media content creation, responding to emails and messages, and some administrative tasks too. When those projects are complete, Frankie could use help on research for her latest book project. Which communities have launched creative initiatives to increase wind and solar power? How have co-ops and social benefit corporations grown in the past decade? You delve into these questions and more.

While you work independently for most of the day, there is always space for collaboration. The office is an airy and open space, where Frankie often walks over to the intern table to share an invigorating finding, Heather sits down beside you for a brainstorm session, and you are welcome to share your ideas at any time. There is coffee in the break room, and apples and trail mix on the snack table, ready to energize us as we grow a thriving democracy movement together!

Everyone's favorite part of the day is lunch, and not just for the obvious reasons! At lunch time, we gather around the communal table to eat together. It's a time of learning between the lines. There may not be spreadsheets, no book chapters, or research documents in site, so instead we share stories, listen, and laugh. Sometimes we talk about our democracy work, but often we don't. You bring a welcome perspective to the conversation, as do each of our team members.

After lunch, the dishes are washed, the laptops opened, and you launch back into your individual tasks. But the other team members remain in view, their typing noises just audible above the music playing through your headphones. Side-by-side, you grow a thriving Democracy Movement—one void of hierarchies, filled with hope, and where everyone has a story to share at the lunch table.