

Spotlight on Selected Employers Career Services LSHTM

Date: March 3, 2022

Name/Title: Rebekah Chang, Associate Director, Accelerator

Organization: Evidence Action

Based in: New York, US

LSHTM Alum: No

Years at organization: 1.5 years

1. What's your background? Please share brief details of your previous education, work experience, career trajectory and overall career goals.

- **Education:** Masters in Development Economics / Internal Relations at Johns Hopkins SAIS.
- **Work Experience and Career Trajectory:**
 - Open Society Foundation (Health and Human Arts Program) – 2 years before the masters.
 - Internship at Kiva for 6 months as part of their incubator program.
 - Innovation Poverty Action (IPA) for 1 year.
 - CHAI for 6.5 years. – started as senior Analyst in CHAI Lesotho country team for 1 year, switched to associate position in Global TB and then held several positions before leaving as Senior Manager.
 - Evidence Action (EA) happened opportunistically through CHAI alum network. She is leading the Iron Folic Acid Program team under the Accelerator Unit.
- **Long-term Goals:** Staying in global health and a programs-focused role over next 5-10 years but with increasing management responsibilities.

2. Please share brief details about the organization – type of work, staff size, and presence in different geographies.

EA started as sister organization of IPA but was founded as a separate organization in 2013. It has a strong data-driven focus on identifying relatively simple interventions that are highly cost effective but still lacking scale in LMICs. They identify interventions in WASH, Nutrition and Health sector and the ultimate goal is the reduction of poverty through scaling such interventions. Once these opportunities are identified, there is a strong emphasis on implementation and service delivery – this could be direct implementation by EA or through technical assistance to the governments. TA is preferred but EA is open depending on the best method for scaling and sustainability.

EA has three programs at the moment –

- Dispensers for Safe Water (already at scale)
- Deworm the World, and (already at scale)
- Accelerator Program
 - Maternal Syphilis Screening and Treatment
 - Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation

EA currently operates in 7 countries. Staff are roughly 500 globally. They have programs in India and Pakistan in South Asia; Liberia, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya and Malawi in Africa. Except for Pakistan where they work with partners, every country has direct EA presence.

Organization's goal is to double in size by 2024 and is growing rapidly. So, naturally they are going through some issues operationally and one of their important priorities while they expand is to ensure how global/country teams are aligned on long-term future strategy. They have strong focus on M&E

and cost-effectiveness at EA and the organization tends to focus on low-tech/simple interventions that can be scaled. In future, maternal and newborn health is going to be a major area of focus. School health programs targeted at children and adolescents are also included in this category.

3. Please share details about the team you work in? (focus, size, presence, organizational hierarchy level)

Rebekah is part of the accelerator unit and leads the Iron and Folic Acid program. The broader objective of this unit is to assess potential new interventions. Accelerator has a new program development team, a cost effectiveness (CE) team and programs team when they are piloted and scaled up. Every intervention (50-100 interventions are being assessed at a given time) that gets scaled up goes through stages— first four stages include all the processes for due diligence, impact evaluation, cost effectiveness, etc. Then in fifth stage, the intervention is piloted/testing at scale, and finally they are scaled and become their flagship program. Once in pilot/testing and scale up stage – every intervention is managed by a separate new team.

The organization hierarchy is Analyst > Associate > Manager > Senior manager > Associate Director > Director > Senior Director > Executive level leadership

4. Please describe the kind of projects you work on? How does your average work day look like?

Rebekah's work is focused on leading the piloting of Iron and Folic Acid program in 5 states of India. Half of her work is implementation in India, rest is overseeing expansion geographically and helping in fundraising for the program. She has 2.5 staff in her team and usually has a lot of calls with the team in India.

5. What type of skills your team looks for in public health candidates?

EA seeks typical profile of development sector experience. Some programs however may require sector-focus or function-focus (e.g. cost-effectiveness). For current team - some have research background, some are generalists in delivery. It's less common for expats to work in CTs but there are few that are working in Africa country teams.

a. Entry level (0-1 years of experience) – education background is kept pretty open at this stage. Masters is usually preferred; MBA/MPH/MPA/MPP (masters in public administration / public policy) all could work. Very few analysts get hired at EA. 1-4 years of work experience is the range for associate.

b. Experienced (equal to more than 4-5 years of experience) – 80% of staff have mostly development experience at manager level (5-7 years). EA remains very agnostic between MPA/MPP and MPH profiles. Global health experience (if intervention is health-focused), strong analytical skills, field experience as proxy for their ability to engage with country teams, etc. is desired.

6. What is the advice you would like to give to public health candidates looking for job opportunities in your organization?

a. Is there any competitive advantage for candidates with LSHTM education background?

It's a good indicator. LSHTM is considered having a good reputation.

b. Are all positions (internships, country/global level fulltime roles, consultancies, etc.) advertised on the organization careers portal? If not, how can one apply or find out about these roles?

Graduate interns are hired and all these positions are advertised on the careers portal. They are hiring 5 interns in 2022 summer for the accelerator program at global level, there are two intern positions at country level (Kenya and India) as well. These are paid positions. Most of these are expected to be in the US (if global team) but the organization may be flexible this year.

c. How strong is the opportunity for interns to continue in full-time roles after their internship ends?

It's quite possible.

d. What type of academic skills/courses you think are interesting and/or useful to work for your organization?

Understanding of health economics/cost-effectiveness is usually desired for everyone in EA and specifically for CE team; epidemiology, systematic analysis for new program development. Generally good analytical skills and the ability to build excel models.

e. What type of work experience and application tips you have for candidates that are seeking to change careers at early or mid-senior level?

- **For career changers (experienced candidates who are looking to make a switch), what is important to highlight in their experience?** It's good to portray your mission alignment with the organization, emphasis on transferrable skills (analytical, stakeholder engagement). Candidates can indicate the courses they have taken or internships they did as part of the MPH program. It's usually uncommon for new managers to have a totally different background experience. But it's possible, they can definitely be considered if application is strong.

7. What are the possible career options after working at your organization?

Program Management at global level/big scale for a particular disease program/intervention.