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**CENTER FOR
INNOVATION
AND IMPACT**

Alumni Spotlight: Tori Fessenden

Innovation Policy Associate,
Breakthrough Energy



Q: What does your professional life look like today?

A: Today I am working at an organization called Breakthrough Energy on the US Policy team as an Innovation Policy Associate. I help manage and implement BE's policy and advocacy efforts to expand federal clean energy innovation efforts. On a day to day, I am doing things like coordinating with our grant partners, analysing legislation and federal programming, and researching emerging technologies.

Q: What was your role at CII?

A: At CII, I was a Program Analyst working on the Innovation team.

Q: What makes you passionate about your work?

A: I love working on innovation because it constantly challenges me to think differently. I love being able to talk to innovators and hearing about their roadblocks and opportunities, and thinking through how we can shape federal programming to better support them. Climate change is similar to global health because they both require us to innovate and change the way we work to solve the toughest challenges.

Q: What was the most important thing you learned at CII?

A: CII taught me the value of failure, and that if you aren't being told no sometimes then you aren't pushing the boundaries of your work enough. Taking risks is a vital part of innovation and being able to manage and learn from failures is the best way to make progress. CII taught me how to work through challenges and pushback, and how to think differently about risks and failures.

Q: What was your favorite memory of your time at CII?

A: My favorite memory at CII is every one of our outdoor, distanced, sometimes chilly and rainy, DC park happy hours during peak COVID quarantine. Everyone is so committed to building relationships and supporting one another, it was great every time we could see each others faces in person and just chat for a while.

Q: Any advice for current or future members of the CII team?

A: Ask questions! Everyone at CII has had so many amazing experiences and advice, ask lots of questions and take advantage of the wealth of knowledge. Plus, the whole team is so cool and funny and friendly, it's always a great conversation.