

## CAITLIN REILLY

### Featured Alumna

*Current location: Silver Spring, MD*

*Dialogue Role: Program Assistant*

*Office of the President, 2014-2016*



#### **What is your occupation or most recent work experience?**

I am currently a program manager at Counterpart International, an international development NGO based in Virginia. I started as a program officer in February 2016, and I have been there more than five years now.

#### **What has surprised you most about your career?**

How your career can evolve over time and how you can end up in places you didn't expect. I started my professional life as a paralegal at an immigration law firm and did that for about five years before segueing into the think tank sphere at the Dialogue, and then into international development. The type of work is different across these sectors and roles, but it's nice to see how many skills are transferable and how the in-depth knowledge you've accumulated can be relevant in your next position. For example, my immigration law experience comes into play as we plan to deploy expatriate staff to projects overseas, and of course development practitioners rely heavily on think tanks like the Dialogue for solid information and insightful analysis that informs our work.

#### **What advice would you give to a young professional?**

I suggest trying different things to find what is most fulfilling for you. You can still learn a lot (or even more) when a position is not the best fit, and then you know what you want and do not want for your career. And I think it's important to remember it's never too late to change course or try something new.

#### **What was your most impactful Dialogue moment/experience?**

I learned so much planning CAF conferences. It required a myriad of skills – developing panel topics and identifying speakers, logistics, communicating with speakers and guests, attention to detail, budgeting, graphic design, report writing, and more! On top of that, we had access to influential leaders and experts who spoke on the most important issues in the Western Hemisphere. I always came away learning something new and considering an issue from a different perspective. Helping carry out the events themselves was exciting, exhausting, and energizing at the same time. I learned so much and built so many skills that I rely on to do my job at Counterpart effectively now.