



# Communications Internship Portfolio:

Reef Conservation International



# PRE-INTERNSHIP GOALS & PLANS

## DESIRE TO LEARN

I consider myself to be a learn it all rather than a know it all. I oftentimes feel overwhelmed by the world plethora information and how little time we have in this world and how little time we have to learn it. There is so much that I am interested, and I want to learn it all.

From our panel Q&A, we learned just how important it is to ask questions, and understand every minute detail, even if it does not feel relevant to your responsibilities. Everything connects, and many things matter that don't seem to at the time they are presented.

I am thirsty to learn more about Reef Conservation International and the tourism industry in general. Since I was a kid, I have been interested in ocean conservation and travel. I am also excited to learn how the skills and information I have absorbed from Miami will apply to my internship at ReefCI.

I plan to ensure that I am using my desire to learn by coming up with weekly questions for my meeting with Frank and Anthony... and not just questions about my position. I will also inquire Anthony about being included on other meetings that they have to listen in and learn more from people in the industry!

Just last week, I sat in on a webinar for "Islands' response to COVID-19 and its impact on the tourism industry"

## ABILITY TO THRIVE AMIDST AMBIGUITY

With COVID-19, the world and the tourism industry could not be much more ambiguous. While many see this as a struggle for smaller companies like ReefCI, and even more so in the tourism industry, I see it as an opportunity. An opportunity to shape the future how they want to see it, and grow from the unknown of the future.

Ambiguous assignments, deadlines, outcomes, etc. push me. They push me to do the best work I possibly can... even if I end up failing. One way or another, it is a learning experience. Being able to stay confident in my work and what I am producing will be a challenge (especially as a *measly* intern). I am up for it.

I have grown tremendously in the last year, and the projects I have worked on have prepared me with the "figure it out" mindset. I am excited to use it.

I will ensure that my ability to thrive amidst ambiguity is padded with the "plus one" mentality, and providing confident work to my supervisors. I will also frequently seek feedback to learn from my mistakes and navigate / wade through the ambiguity in the most successful way possible.

## PASSION

Check.

Ever since I was a kid, I have asked myself "what are you going to do with your future?" I loved the ocean, I loved people. I loved scuba diving... but I was told over and over - "That isn't a job. You have to make money. You have to find a job in the real world."

One of my favorite teachings that I have learned at Miami is to make it happen. And that is exactly what I did. In the comfort of my Miami home (the ESP hallway), I called the CEO of my dream company. I confidently positioned myself and nestled my way into the tiny network of Reef Conservation International as their social media intern... an ocean conservation - people-centered - scuba diving company. Woah.

I couldn't be more excited about this position, this company, and my ability to make a difference for them in this unprecedented time of COVID-19. I have no expectations, and feel like a sponge... ready for anything that I can absorb from the opportunity.

## SCRAPPINESS & GRIT

The country? Shut down.  
The tourism industry? On pause and in shambles.  
ReefCI? Closed until ???  
Money? None to spare.

In what ways can we spin the situation into ReefCI's favor? How can we make them money without offering their service?

The only way to find out is to make it happen. Using my network of help, mentors, professors, and any information I can gather... I will figure it out. Trial, error, failure are all part of the process.

I intend to use scrappiness and grit often in my internship. It's an internal challenge for me... how much of a difference can I make *without* paid ads... *without* expertise in the industry/field... we will find out, won't we. I'm excited.

I will begin doing this pretty soon by starting up their social media marketing - developing their brand and building their community.

## WILLINGNESS TO PUT THE COMPANY BEFORE ONESELF

I have been trying to keep my cool when I talk to them... but this company gives me butterflies... almost like I have a 13-year-old girl crush on the company.

My values align with ReefCI's immeasurably. In a way, I am not putting the company before myself because the company represents a lot about who I am as a person.

My life dreams, passions, and aspirations are in line with the goals of ReefCI. I hope to build a future working for a company similar to theirs. After having been a customer of theirs twice, I strive to be more like their employees. The company culture and values pushes me to become more passionate, excited, and at peace with the world.

In every love story there is a honeymoon phase. So what happens when something happens that disappoints me about the company? Like anything else, selflessness extends into compromise. Into understanding. Into empathy... all things we practice in ESP. I am looking forward to that first feeling of struggle. Of disappointment. Of frustration so that I can react with EQ and process the situation in a different way than I have before.

## EXCELLENCE AT COMMUNICATION

The cultural barriers of their employees is significantly different than what I am used to. They are casual. Their lives are slow. They are islanders. This is going to take some getting used to. I am going to need to adapt my need for immediacy into their culture.

How can I make the adaptation to excel with a new style of communication? How can I adapt my expectations to fit their needs... in the way they do it.

One way I have begun to establish some kind of understanding of their communication styles is by staying in communication with my supervisors, and with some of the employees on the island (the divemasters). In a non-creepy way, I have been tracking them, learning how they talk, and trying to empathize with them.

In addition to understanding the differences in culture, I plan to excel at communication by over-communicating in this virtual world. In attempts to build a personal relationship, I will frequently meet with my supervisors, and seek feedback from them to better understand their needs. Video call preferred (I need a face to talk to!!!)

This will be one of the most important pieces to learn in my internship this summer because I would ideally like to enter into this industry once I graduate... the sooner I learn the intricacies the better.

# PART 1: REEF CI COMPANY OVERVIEW

## TOUCHPOINTS

ReefCI Background

Company Name

History

Business model

# Get to know ReefCI...

Reef Conservation International (ReefCI) is one of the leading **NGOs/non-profit marine conservation organizations** in Belize. They have been developing and working on a wide variety of marine conservation projects to protect the Belize Barrier Reef and ocean ecosystem **since 2006**. ReefCI is a registered NGO in Belize as well as a registered non-profit in the USA. Anthony Saner is the current ReefCI Director.

## THEIR SLOGAN

Individually, we are a drop.  
Together, we are an ocean.



## THEIR PROGRAM

ReefCI offers a **volunteer marine conservation diving program**. Their program is an all-inclusive Monday thru Friday trip on a small private island in the Caribbean Sea situated on the Belize Barrier Reef. Volunteers make a difference during their trip.



## THEIR MISSION

ReefCI's mission is to protect our oceans through science, action, and advocacy. They accomplish this through their conservation programs, education, and marine research. Through their volunteer citizen-scientist projects, they empower everyday global citizens to take an active role in directly protecting and conserving the Belize Barrier Reef and our oceans.



## THEIR ISLAND

ReefCI is located on a beautiful, idyllic remote private island that is part of the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve Park, located in southern Belize. The island, **Tom Owens Caye, Belize** is a 'castaway' coral caye island located directly on the Belize Barrier Reef. The island is ~1½ acres and has a large living area, great views and lots of hammock space.

# REEFCCI DELIVERABLES REPORT

## PART 2: REEFCCI DELIVERABLES REPORT

### TOUCHPOINTS

Projects  
Challenges  
Process  
Creations  
Outcomes  
Skills Acquired

# ReefCI: Brand Book

CONTEXT

ReefCI's brand is strong. Their community is powerful. Their experience is unique. Their team defines their personality. The only problem is: a newbie wouldn't know what it is! Even though the ReefCI brand is clear to a ReefCI community member (team member, previous volunteer, partner), it was not to the outside world. To improve ReefCI's brand position and add depth to their business strategy, I tasked myself to create a brand style guide for them.

## CHALLENGES OVERCOME


Anthony's expectations are low. He is unfamiliar with marketing, and has not had anyone take initiative to update their branded materials. His kind critiques, and niceness slowed me down in the beginning of the creation process. It wasn't until I asked for only negatives that I was able to iterate and grow. Anthony previously had an intern group create documents (i.e. a brand book) which he hated and never used. Anthony did not know what a style guide/brand book could be used for.

ACTION

## PROCESS

Because I have experienced the ReefCI volunteer experience, I had a grasp on what the company's brand position/personality was... what I didn't know was what Anthony wanted it to be. I started to break through his visions/goals with empathy interviews, asking him to envision and share what the ideal experience for a volunteer would look like. His ideals and values gave me a different perspective for the style guide. After designing a shitty first draft, I sought Anthony's criticism and iterated multiple times using insights from our conversations.

## CREATION

I am too excited about this accomplishment to not link it... [ReefCI's Style Guide](#). This style guide includes everything needed to onboard new ReefCI employees, re-establish cohesive brand position and strategy, and create a stronger brand identity for ReefCI.

## OUTCOME

This style guide will influence all of ReefCI's marketing campaigns, communications and experiences. It will also help ReefCI directors explain what the brand position is to new and existing team members. They have already begun using the updates on their website (altering the orange to match their logo!)

## SKILLS ACQUIRED

- Working through ambiguity
- Using empathy interview techniques
- Customer-based critique / feedback (ReefCI)
- Designing and curating a branding style guide

RESULT



# ReefCI: Social Media

CONTEXT

At the core of my internship was the expectation to manage ReefCI's social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook Page, and Twitter). Their previous social media was weak and didn't provide brand identity for users. They posted infrequently (~1 time a week), did not have cohesive bio's/handles/platform profile pictures. The lack of consistency was off-putting and confusing.

## CHALLENGES OVERCOME

Starting from scratch. With no branding style guide, and no consistent posting schedule... posting was like shooting into the dark. Patience is key when it comes to social media. Lack of engagement/progress on Facebook and Twitter. Inability to take current (not pixelated) photos of the island/Belize/diving... or anything tropical.

ACTION

## PROCESS

I approached this assignment using techniques from my position as WCIW/D's social media manager last year. I started by running a social media audit of all of ReefCI's platforms (taking followers, target audience, successful/weak posts, etc. into consideration). I then researched competing organization's social media accounts and took note of successful accounts. In order to tailor posts to ReefCI's brand, I created posting pillars which guided content. Additionally, I curated a step-by-step playbook for ReefCI's social media management position (guidelines, personality, goals of the platforms voice, rules, etc.). I then cleaned up account followers/following, and began engaging with the audience.

## CREATION

I created content calendars for 4 months on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, updated all platform biographies/profile pictures, story highlights, and created/posted daily posts. I also created a playbook for the role.

## OUTCOME

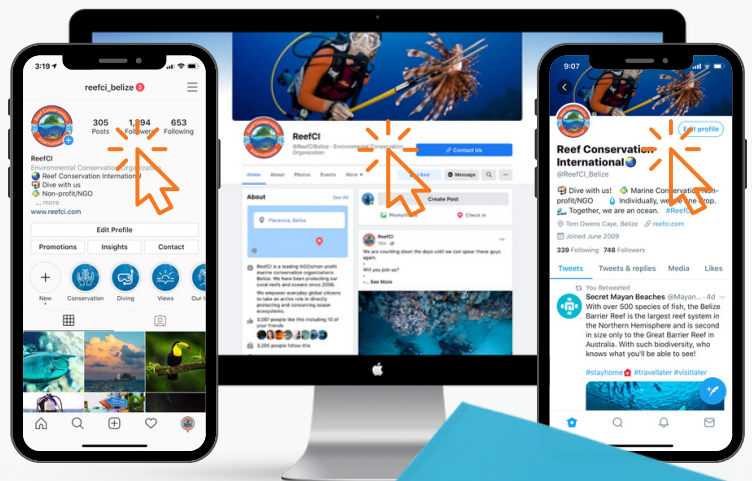
Branding recognition, consistency, and branding engagement. Engaged audience (reposts, shares, tags, etc.). Particular successful posts included a 'returning volunteer discount' post which influenced 5 volunteer inquires, and 'Amazon Smile' posts which raised contributing Amazon Users from 6 to 25.

+411 followers, 26 website clicks, 14,839 reach (Instagram). 814 post engagements, 3,879 reach (Facebook) +62 followers, 3497 impressions (Twitter)

RESULT

## SKILLS ACQUIRED

- Used stock photography seamlessly
- Managed an engaged audience
- Timeliness and consistency
- Creation of content/schedules/daily posts
- Tracking insights directly from each platform



@ReefCI\_Belize



# ReefCI: Grant Writing

CONTEXT

Half way through the summer, Anthony presented me the Beyond Tourism Innovation Grant. IDB was providing grants to a number of countries in an effort to rebuild the tourism industry post-COVID-19.

## CHALLENGES OVERCOME

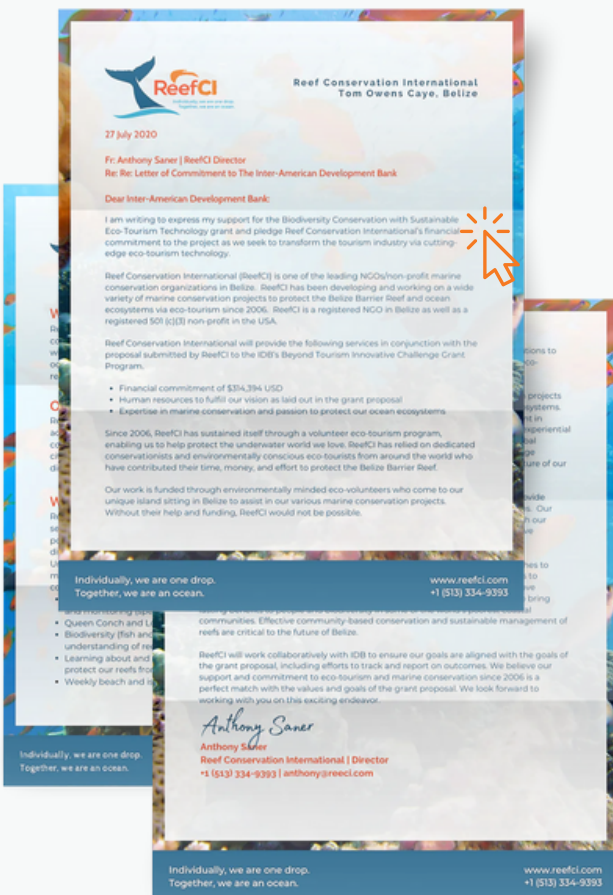
This was a new venture for me - I had NO idea how to write a grant. I completely missed the mark on my first attempt at the application, and had to rewrite the whole thing. Anthony did not give me extremely helpful documents (previous grants they had written) to iterate from until weeks into the process... this may have put me on the right track initially [I think he may have been testing me].

ACTION

## PROCESS

I researched grant writing, read everything about this particular grant, listened and asked about what Anthony wanted to use the money for, and took my first jab at completing the application. After pivoting from his responses, I completed a full draft of the application. I spoke with 2 networking people (a solar energy guy & a grant writer) who helped me along with my application process. Anthony and I reviewed it together and began tweaking wording [this would help me later in finishing the brand book and will help me understand their direction in conservation as well].

RESULT



## CREATION

I completed the application and chose my 150 word answers carefully. I also typed and designed the Letter of Intent for the grant. Additionally, I put together an organized folder with all grant information for future applications.

## OUTCOME

I am hoping the outcome is a \$500,000 grant and a solar-powered scuba diving boat... but for now: this application has reinvigorated Anthony's interest in seeking grant money. He expressed his lack of interest in the effort because of the low success rate. The last grant they applied for was in 2016. With this new application, all the information is organized and easily adaptable to other applications.

## SKILLS ACQUIRED

- How to make networking cold-calls
- How to storytell & wordsmith
- How to write a grant [never thought I'd say that!]



# ReefCI: Branded Materials & G-Drive

Being a severe green-brain, I immediately began by organizing everything. My social media plans, all company information (photos, employee list, scuba diving sites, etc.), and grant applications were organized into a Google Drive. ReefCI needed a place to store everything.


## CHALLENGES OVERCOME

Sharing issues, information overload, and disorganization. Their previous methods were not conducive to easy-use. Sifting through all the information and making sure that it is all well-written (occasional mistranslations from Spanish to English/grammar issues on documents) was tedious.

## PROCESS

I started by creating folders and developed the social media folder. Once that was set up, I moved on to company information and included all of my personal notes (from webinars/student volunteer experiences), and Anthony's notes to the drive. The organization of the G-Drive ended up being crucial to the outcome of my internship. It became a hub for information in the organization and will continue to be added to.

## CREATION

I created mockups of office materials (infographics, business cards, brochures, letterheads), merchandise (t-shirts, towels, coffee mugs), and style guides (social media playbook). Additionally, all materials I created, and any information I have gathered - including social media - was put it into a [google drive](#).  This way, it is easily-accessible and all in one place.

## OUTCOME

An organized (green-brained) space where iterations and information can be kept all together. Because they are a small team, they are able to share this information with everyone to stay on the same page.

## SKILLS ACQUIRED

- Prioritizing information
- Using a style guide for creation
- Managing my time and tasks
- Attention to detail



# PART 3: ARTICULATE YOUR IMPACT

## TOUCHPOINT

Accomplishment Story

# ReefCI: Accomplishment Story

The experience of Reef Conservation International (ReefCI) is truly unique. Their small and lean team of conservationists inspire eco-volunteers who spend a week with ReefCI on Tom Owens Caye become part of their greater community. It is thrilling and exciting, and it is one that volunteers will never forget; however, ReefCI did not present themselves well. Without branding guidelines, ReefCI struggled to maintain consistency in their marketing campaigns, communications and program. Their social media and materials did not emulate the beauty of their island or experience. To counteract the inconsistency, I designed and created ReefCI's branding style guide. These new strategic guidelines allow ReefCI to improve their brand position, streamline their message, and add depth to their marketing materials. Using this book, ReefCI's message has become clear to their team, their volunteers, and to their future volunteers.



# PART 4: SELF- REFLECTION

## TOUCHPOINTS

Six Characteristics of Successful Employees

# ReefCI: Reflection

## SIX CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYEES

### DESIRE TO LEARN

I consider myself to be a learner rather than a knower. I often feel overwhelmed by the world plethora information and how little time we have in this world and how little time we have to learn it. There is so much that I am interested, and I want to learn it all.

From our panel Q&A, we learned just how important it is to ask questions, and understand every minute detail, even if it does not feel relevant to your responsibilities. Everything connects, and many things matter that don't seem to at the time they are presented.

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Asking 'why?' like a 5-year-old works well in understanding A LOT. I often times found myself simply wrapped up in asking Anthony a million questions to pick his brain - just to understand ReefCI better. I was curious about Anthony's current and future goals for ReefCI. I asked him about ReefCI's history. About their staff. About their infrastructure. I wanted to know why... when... how... where... I wanted to know what he DIDN'T like. He was shocked by that. He hesitated to give negative feedback until I directly asked him what he wasn't a fan of. His feedback allowed me to learn and grow. I attended webinars, company meetings, called random connections, and watched YouTube videos... just to learn.

The switch from in-person to online was not an easy one. Where was I going to find pictures to post? How could I make connections and do empathy interviews with locals? How in the world was I going to write a grant proposal? What even was a grant? I was constantly confronting ambiguity in my projects. Many of the projects I worked on, I had to rely on what I learned and waded through the ambiguous struggle.

I pushed myself to make the most out of the projects and focus on what I could control rather than worrying about what I could not. My excitement to try and passion for making things better excited Anthony fostered collaboration.

### ABILITY TO THRIVE AMIDST AMBIGUITY

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Ambiguous assignments, deadlines, outcomes, etc. push me. They push me to do the best work I possibly can... even if I end up failing. One way or another, it is a learning experience. Being able to stay confident in my work and what I am producing will be a challenge (especially as a messy intern). I am up for it.

I have grown tremendously in the last year, and the projects I have worked on have prepared me with the "figure it out" mindset. I am excited to use it.

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One of my favorite teachings that I have learned at Miami is to make it happen. And that is exactly what I did. In the comfort of my Miami home (the ESP hallway), I called the CEO of my dream company. I confidently positioned myself and pressed my way into the tiny network of Reef Conservation International as their social media intern... an ocean conservation - people-centered - scuba diving company. Woah.

I couldn't be more excited about this position, this company, and my ability to make a difference for them in this unprecedented time of COVID-19. I have no expectations, and feel like a sponge... ready for anything that I can absorb from the opportunity.

I was just that. A sponge. I truly cannot believe that this internship happened... and panned out. My excitement, passion, and vision for ReefCI has influenced my success in my projects and in building my rapport with Anthony.

Anthony was often discouraged and unenthusiastic about the future plans of ReefCI in COVID times. He was blocked by the negativity and was not able to see the opportunity in the situation. My optimism, and eagerness to push through and seize the 'downtime' reinvigorated his spirit. He appreciated my passion for the work I was doing, and reinstated his vision for the future of ReefCI.

My projects at ReefCI were some of the best opportunities to be scrappy and gritty. Without a way to get into the country for pictures, capture the guest-experience, and learn the local way... it was difficult to learn the brand.

Without them making money from their volunteer programs, they've had to adapt. Rather than dwelling on their losses, this summer has encouraged them to attend to neglected projects: branding, social media, grants, partnerships, and conservation efforts. The team has begun developing what their return will look like, and strengthened the organization in the meantime... embracing the entrepreneurial mindset.

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In what ways can we spin the situation into ReefCI's favor? How can we make them money without offering their service?

The only way to find out is to make it happen. Using my network of help, mentors, professors, and any information I can gather... I will figure it out. Trial, error, failure are all part of the process.

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In every love story there is a honeymoon phase. So what happens when something happens that disappoints me about the company? Like anything else, selflessness extends into compromise. Into understanding. Into empathy... all things we practice in ESP. I am looking forward to that first feeling of struggle. Of disappointment. Of frustration so that I can react with EQ and process the situation in a different way than I have before.

I am still waiting for the honeymoon phase to wear off. It is true: ReefCI needs a lot of work... but I have thrived in this truth. I find it invigorating to hustle and take on the heavy plans. I find it exciting to learn and understand more about ReefCI's future, Anthony's vision and goal, and how I can help achieve it.

My one feeling of hesitation happened when Anthony began wondering what my post-graduation plans were. The mix of butterfly feeling, passion, excitement, massive undertaking, and overall startup-vibe terrifies me... but what is life if you are not using your risk muscle? Although I didn't accept an offer yet... I felt the weight of a decision on the horizon - I look forward to facing it soon.

From the very start of the summer, I established organization and consistency. I emailed Anthony a weekly update which included what I needed from him, what was new/accomplished this week, what my goal was for next week, my overall summer goal (which stayed consistent), and miscellaneous thought-bubbles of his that I wanted to act on one day. I kept a chart to let him know exactly what and when I was working on projects. The biggest stride in our communication was pushing for him to use video rather than just call. Before the summer began, Anthony was hesitant... so I tricked him by telling him I needed to share my screen. He adopted Zoom quickly and now we meet 2-3 times/week.

## EXCELLENCE AT COMMUNICATION

The cultural barriers of their employees is significantly different than what I am used to. They are casual. Their lives are slow. They are islanders. This is going to take some getting used to. I am going to need to adapt my need for immediacy into their culture.

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# PART 4.5: WHAT'S NEXT?

## TOUCHPOINTS

5WH

Annual Report

Conservation Projects

Dive Master Island Blog

Grant Writing


Photography & Videography

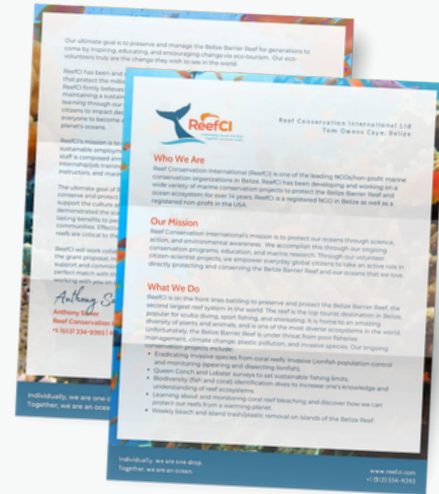
Social Media Engagement & Influence

# ReefCI: What's Next?

My time with ReefCI is not over. Anthony has asked me to continue working towards branded materials for every part of the company. Working with ReefCI has been, and will continue to be, a fantastic real-world opportunity to develop my skills. Some of our upcoming project include...

## 5WH

Friedman sent me a green-brains' dream tool early this summer called 5WH. I began using this tool early on to organize ReefCI's information but did not completely exhaust the tool. I'd like to learn as much as possible about ReefCI, and that comes from asking questions. Using 5WH to it's fullest potential (by bringing Anthony into the ideation/questions) will provide a base for building ReefCI's strategic initiatives.



## ANNUAL REPORT

ReefCI wants to put out an annual report sometime in September. Although COVID stopped their operations in their tracks, they have made leaps and strides in the downtime. They are preparing for a strong return and want to display their successes of 2020 (i.e. strengthened branding, social media, conservation projects).

## CONSERVATION

Anthony has expressed his concerns about their current structure of conservation projects. He has identified that ReefCI is spread too thin, disallowing any of their conservation efforts to be as effective as they could be. He wants to streamline the island's program by focusing on their invasive lionfish conservation efforts when they return. Some of his ideas to progress the program are to provide lionfish filet to local restaurants, and provide fins for local jewelry makers.

"If we're a jack of all trades, We're an ace of none."

- Anthony





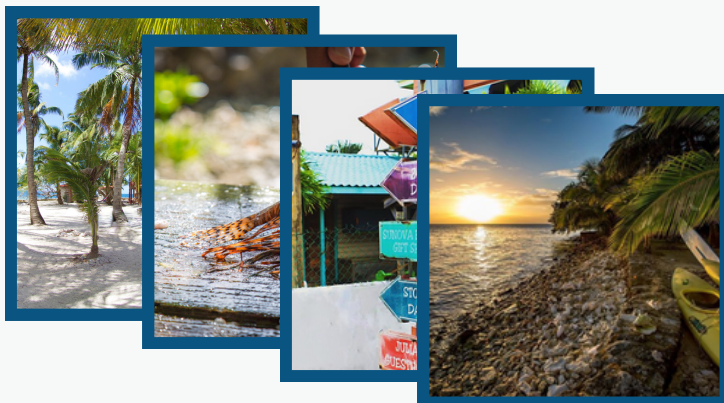
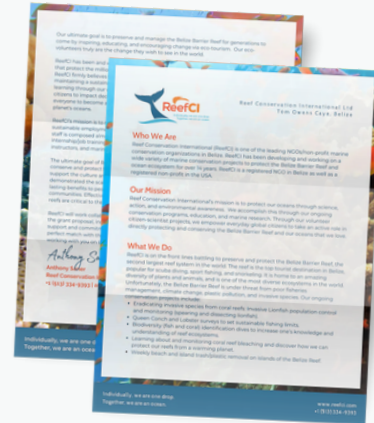


## DIVE MASTER BLOG

Once ReefCI returns in person, I hope to begin capturing the experience of being on Tom Owens Cay through perspective blog posts. Told in stories, this will deepen prospective volunteer experiences with ReefCI's brand prior to their arrival.

## GRANT WRITING

Like the application I completed this summer, ReefCI will be seeking more grants to apply for in an effort to make Tom Owen's Caye more conservation oriented, and to develop their volunteer-conservation programs.



## PHOTO & VIDEO

For as absolutely stunning as this island is... ReefCI's pictures of the paradise are few and far between. That has got to change!!

## SOCIAL MEDIA

And of course, social media efforts are a forever commitment - with engagement & influence, better is always possible. I have some exciting plans to virtually attend industry conferences by using hashtags to join the conversation. I would also like to find and invite social media influencers to the island for their promotion and recommendation.

