

WORKING WITH HIGH SCHOOL INTERNS

TIPS, GUIDANCE, AND STRATEGIES FOR PROVIDING INTERNSHIPS AT YOUR WORKPLACE

“Internship programs not only help students connect the dots between work and school, but also empower them to visualize college and career pathways that they previously thought were unattainable.” - The Hechinger Report

What is an Internship / The Typical Internship Experience

What is an internship?

Simply put, Internships are temporary jobs that provide the people who do them, known as interns, with entry-level work experience in a career.

An Internship is not:

- Free Help
- Meant to replace an employee
- More than 20% busy work (Filing, covering phone, errands)

A Typical Internship:

- Includes developing intentional learning experiences
- Promotes academic, career and/ or personal growth
- Includes learning objectives, observation, reflection, and evaluation
- Balances the intern’s goals with the businesses needs
- May be part-time or full time. Typically last three months
- Most students will receive academic credit
- Provides adequate supervision in a reasonably safe environment with the necessary tools to perform the job

Benefits of Internships for Employers, Students, and the Community

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR EMPLOYERS TO BE ENGAGED

The development of the youth workforce is a **win-win-win** proposition that benefits young people, employers, and the community at large.

For Youth	For Employers	For the Community
<p>They are exposed to professional and career role models</p> <p>They develop a relevant and authentic base of</p>	<p><u>Short Term Business Interests</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increase productivity by providing an extra set of hands to help accomplish goals or finish projects 	<p>Promotes productivity</p> <p>Workforce development is emphasized at the younger end of the workforce spectrum</p>

<p>experience on which to make life decisions</p> <p>They get exposure to the workplace in the various industrial & career clusters</p> <p>They learn and understand work culture and the demands of the workplace</p> <p>They get the experience (i.e., projects, places, situations, people) that develop critical skills and advance employability</p> <p>They become productive members of the community and develop their self-esteem and self-confidence</p> <p>They get an ongoing learning experience and the opportunity for real work with real pay—a chance to make a living & develop a career pathway</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Enhance supervisory skills for your staff ❖ Minimized recruitment costs ❖ Positive public relations ❖ Develops base of potential future customers/clients ❖ Workforce diversity <p><u>Long Term Common Good</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Attract young workers to your industry ❖ You may acquire future workers from internship ❖ Build your future workforce by providing hands on training and experiences/ Minimizes recruitment and training costs ❖ Enhance productivity in your company with technology skills and knowledge of today's youth population 	<p>More workers mean more consumers</p> <p>Workers can attract new business and enable business expansion</p> <p>Promotes economic development, broadening base of work-ready young job candidates</p>
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Designing / Implementing the Internship

Source: Employer Guide to Structuring a Successful Internship; A collaborative effort of all of Rhode Island's colleges and universities.

Writing an Internship Description - helpful for employer, student, and school coordinator!

Write the description in clear, everyday language that will help the student understand the position and your organization culture. If the opportunity offers a broad exposure to many elements in your organization, be sure to state that in the description. Interns appreciate knowing the expectations upfront.

Designing Your Internship Program:

Prior to hosting an intern, an employer must understand how interns will fit within the company's goals and culture. Since organizations vary in age, size, industry, and product, so too will internship activities.

Questions that may determine what kind of program will work best for you:

- What does your organization hope to gain from the program?
- Is your organization looking to fulfill a need on a specific project? Will this internship(s) encompass one major project, or entail a variety of small projects?
- What are the tools and workspace necessary to provide the student?
- Who will be primarily responsible for the intern(s)? Will that person be a mentor, supervisor, or both?

Bringing on an intern:

- Learn about prospective Interns: Whether a high school student, college student or adult learner, we want to develop skills. The best way to know what skills an intern is hoping to gain is to interview (*informal is fine*).
- It is important that employers realize that school and classes must remain a top priority for interns if they are a current student. The internship position should enhance their learning experience.
- Understand that for most interns this is a new experience and they may need support in balancing their schoolwork and internship. Agreeing on a set number of hours interns will work each week is best.
- Required hours/credit may vary by school but most interns typically complete 5-10 hours per week.
- Make sure you are aware of and follow all Child Labor Laws (info provided)
- Be aware of insurance /liability coverage (info provided)

General Tips for Planning/Implementation:

- Think of feasible projects that you can use pre-existing content for - maybe from your website or from journals, catalogs, parts order forms, etc (varies across the sectors..be creative!)
- Set realistic goals! Aim for tasks/projects that will ultimately help your company, but understand limitations and plan to work around certain obstacles
- If possible, consider making the internship feature a project that can be done entirely in a system.
- Think of feasible projects where you can use pre-existing content - maybe from your website or from journals, catalogs, parts order forms, etc (varies across the sectors..be creative!) - Have them “research” something, whether for office use or specific to your industry
- In the beginning, take them to meetings and let them shadow you. Meetings that pertain to the work they’ll be doing are best, but past interns have said even meetings that didn’t directly involve them were interesting and helped with context- and after all, **part of an internship is watching, listening, and learning!**

- Check in routinely during internship hours but let them decide when they need to come ask for help. They need to be motivated to do something well and should take initiative to ask for additional guidance on projects.
- After a few weeks into the internship, conduct Review #1 of the WBLP. This is important and sets the tone for the remaining time of the internship.
- Make sure to acknowledge their work, in front of them but also when you're meeting with others and talking about work they contributed to. It is good to mention that you work with interns and they are directly supporting the work.
- At the end, if possible, give them a small gift/gift card and a thank you note to show your appreciation, especially if they are unpaid.
- Make sure they have your cell phone number and you have theirs – comes in handy
- Give a hard copy and/or send an email of tasks for each day of the internship, usually right before they arrive or the day before. Give yourself enough time to get projects ready, there's usually some amount of pre-work required. **When you take the time to really engage interns and set them up for success, it becomes worth the time spent because more work is accomplished.**
- Give interns a mix of “mundane” tasks and critical thinking/tasks that require leadership and initiative relating to your work. Be up front with them – the goals are certainly for them to learn and have responsibilities, but for work to get done employees all have to do some mundane tasks, i.e., survey/data entry, labelling, cleaning/organizing SWAG or other items, envelope sealing, etc...

Roles of Employer/Mentor

Source: Massachusetts Elements of Model Internship Programs Resource Guide 1.0; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Office for College, Career, and Technical Education

Role of an Internship Supervisor and Mentor:

It's going to be important to identify a supervisor for your intern(s) who will familiarize them with the organization, provide assignments and serve as a “contact” person for questions. An intern supervisor's responsibilities will include:

- Providing intern orientation
- Developing career specific skills/ goals youth will develop - WBLP
- Meeting with an intern regularly (once a week suggested)

Overview of Employer Expectations:

Employer Role

It is important for the intern to feel like a member of a professional team and have a sense of belonging to the organization. There should be communication between the employer, the student and the student's school liaison regarding goals and identifying activities to achieve them. Employers can use the MA Work-Based Learning Plan to structure student learning experience and complete evaluations.

Responsibilities

- Provide a safe workplace

- Create projects and provide training that leads to increased knowledge, skills and problem-solving capabilities
- Communicate with the student and school personnel about any disability-related workplace accommodations or supports that the student may need, including accommodations that will allow the student to communicate effectively with the employer and workplace colleagues
- Meet with the intern on a regular basis (weekly or biweekly) to discuss their progress
- **Evaluate the intern's work using the MA WBLP**, an online tool designed to structure work-based learning experiences. Formal evaluations will be conducted at the beginning and end of the internship to communicate objectives and track progress. Connecting Activities program staff will provide training on use of the MA WBLP.

Suggested Orientation Checklist:

1. Office/building Tour (Suggestions): restrooms, mail and supply rooms, break room, office culture, desk space and location, phone access, parking and food suggestions
2. Work Info: confirm work schedule, weekly or bi-weekly meetings, clear expectations, clear goals for the intern and the employer
3. Human Resource items: staff introductions, written policies & procedures, appropriate dress & behavior, safety and confidentiality policies
4. Organization information: History, mission, values and objectives, office hierarchy and overview of departments & industry jargon, etc

After Orientation:

- **Help design a student project or planned set of activities:** Everyone should agree on goals, activities, and the various ways the student can demonstrate learning throughout the internship experience. **(additional document with job description/tasks available)**
- **While completing their project should be a top priority, employer supervisors should allow the interns to interact with and observe people and situations that are everyday happenings in an organization.** Occasions for the intern to witness professionals at work with encouragement for them to participate and contribute when appropriate are great learning opportunities.
- **Over time, as the student becomes increasingly familiar with the business and confident with the work,** give the student greater independence and encourage him or her to accomplish the intended goals of the learning agreement. As the student becomes comfortable working independently on one set of tasks, the employer should provide instruction and mentorship in new skills and tasks that build on what has already been learned.

Tips/Keys for Success /Key Takeaways

- Internships can be beneficial to both interns and the companies who hire them.
- Intern feels like a stakeholder in the job; the employer feels like a stakeholder in the intern's career development
- **In the end, a successful internship means YOUR workload was enhanced or made easier by having them there, AND that the intern met their goals and/or learned new skills and had a positive experience.**

WBLP

The Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan (WBLP) is designed to provide structure and depth to work-based learning experiences: to identify the skills to be focused on in the work experience; to open conversations about learning opportunities; to provide a structured approach to skill assessment; and to encourage reflection about short-term and long-term goals.

The Work-Based Learning Plan includes a job description, list of skills, and reviews.

The WBLP was developed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education through an interagency collaboration of employers, educators and workforce development professionals. It can be completed as a pen-and-paper document or through the online WBLP screens or the mobile WBLP screens.

Evaluation Reviews:

A first (baseline) review should be held early in the work-based learning experience, and a final review near the end of the work experience. For longer-term work experiences, there may be additional reviews at regular intervals. The review is a meeting between supervisor and participant, sometimes facilitated by a program coordinator. The first review is important for providing feedback early in the work experience and for setting goals. **The second (final)** review is an opportunity for the supervisor to draw attention to areas of improvement and skill gain, and to share ideas with the participant about how to continue to improve skills. The review meeting is an opportunity for discussion and reflection.

Employability Skills through the WBLP - needed for any career:

- Communication
- Problem Solving
- Teamwork
- Motivation
- Time Management

Career Specific Skills through the WBLP - related to specific industry

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If your company is not ready to host an intern, perhaps you might want to connect with the schools by providing/participating in the following:

- Workplace Tours
- Participate in Career Fairs
- Career Talks
- Job Shadowing
- Career Mentoring
- Teacher Externship Opportunities

Learn more about these opportunities in the BWB Youth Employer Toolkit!