



SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT *of* ADMINISTRATION

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM TOOLKIT

Developed by

The South Carolina Department of Administration's

Division of State Human Resources

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Introduction

The South Carolina Department of Administration's (Admin) Division of State Human Resources (DSHR) designed this toolkit to provide agencies guidance on the design and implementation of an internship program.

Topics covered include:

- Benefits of internship programs
- General information concerning internships
- Recruitment of interns
- Internship program design

For additional assistance, please contact the Division of State Human Resources (803-896-5300).

General Information

Definition

Internships are temporary positions designed to give employees new to the workforce, or new to an employment field, the opportunity to gain real-world experience in their chosen field while also completing meaningful work for their employers. Internships also provide employers with the opportunity to assess the performance of individuals who may later be considered for a Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) position. Internships can provide a valuable recruitment tool for agencies struggling to find employees for hard-to-fill positions.

Because of the time and effort required to administer and support a successful internship program, careful consideration should be given to which positions will be included in the program. Priority should be given to positions that are historically hard to fill, are critical to the mission of the agency, have historically high turnover (particularly if this turnover often occurs early in an employee's tenure), or where a large number of vacancies are expected in the near future.

Internship Participants

Employers often restrict internship participation to individuals enrolled in institutions of higher learning or recent graduates new to the professional workforce. This narrow focus, however, excludes many potentially successful employees. Rather than defining specifically where intern participants can be found, a broader approach should be taken to allow anyone with no, or limited, experience in the relevant job function to participate in the program. In addition to current students or recent graduates from colleges and universities, internship participants can include:

- Recent high school graduates;
- Students enrolled in continuing education programs through the South Carolina Technical College System;
- Individuals completing military service;
- Individuals who have experienced a reduction in force and are entering a new career field;
- Individuals who have been in the workforce for some period of time but have decided to pursue a new career field;
- And, retirees.

Classification

In most cases internships will be classified as temporary positions. As internships are designed to last for a finite period of time, it would not be appropriate to place an employee taking part in an internship in a FTE position.

Internship positions can be full-time or part-time depending on the needs of the agency and the availability of the intern. If the intern is enrolled in school during the period of the internship, agencies may consider flexible scheduling to work around the intern's class schedule.

Compensation

Interns employed in temporary positions are not subject to the pay ranges established by classified state pay bands. Therefore, agencies may set the pay rate for these employees based on internal policies and procedures so long as the policies and procedures adhere to applicable state and federal laws and regulations. Some things to consider when establishing hiring rates are:

- The market rate for similar positions.
- Available funds.
- The contribution interns will make during their time with the agency.
- Salaries for similar positions within the agency.
- Difficulty filling the applicable positions.
- Other incentives the agency may be able to offer. For example, educational credit, flexible scheduling and training opportunities.

Note: *Agencies considering unpaid internships should proceed with caution. While the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) does allow individuals to volunteer their services to governmental and nonprofit entities without compensation, the guidelines for volunteers are strict and specific. In addition, offering unpaid internships will limit the applicants able to participate in the program to those that can afford to participate in an unpaid internship. For additional information, please visit the United States Department of Labor website.*

Benefits of an Internship Program

Internship programs offer benefits to both employers and interns. Benefits to employers include the following:

- Interns provide a source of potential hires.
- Observing the work of an intern over an extended period of time allows for a more accurate evaluation of an individual's ability to perform a job and of his or her soft skills.

Benefits to intern participants include:

- Opportunity to gain real-world experience in their chosen profession. This experience provides a realistic perspective on the duties and conditions of a job or employment sector.
- The opportunity to evaluate a potential employer during a limited period of employment.

Recruitment

Recruiting for internships is very similar to recruiting for any other position. However, there are some unique aspects to keep in mind when designing your recruitment strategy.

Job Postings

While agencies are not required to follow normal posting requirements for temporary positions, agencies are encouraged to post internship positions and allow for normal recruitment and competition for these positions. This increases the pool of applicants from which to choose from and the transparency of the internship program.

Job postings for internships should be crafted in a way that clearly differentiates the positions from other temporary positions. Any special opportunities available as part of the program should be highlighted. For example, if the intern will have the opportunity to work on a high-profile project or with a particular program, this should be included. Any specific requirements should be noted as well. For example, if an agency is recruiting students pursuing a degree or area of study, this should be noted in the job posting.

Job postings should describe not only the duties the intern can expect to perform but also the mission of the agency and the services provided. Any unique, positive, aspects of working with the agency should be highlighted to entice individuals to apply. Additionally, the benefits to the intern should be emphasized, including the opportunity to gain real-world experience and the opportunity to have a real impact on the citizens served by an agency.

Job titles should be used strategically to identify the position as an internship opportunity and provide some information about the type of work that will be done. Job titles should be as descriptive as possible in the limited space available. This is particularly important because potential applicants often decide whether to review a job posting based largely on the job title.

Sources

Recruitment sources can include:

- The state's e-recruitment system.
- University and college career centers.
- Technical college career centers.
- Department of Employment and Workforce.
- Job fairs.
- Niche or targeted job boards.
- Social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.).
- Employee referrals.

- Human Services Agencies (for example: South Carolina Commission for the Blind and Vocational Rehabilitation Department).
- Military career services.

Timing

The timing of the recruitment efforts related to an internship program will vary based on the applicants being targeted and the required schedule.

Internship programs designed to target current students for full-time internships generally take place during the summer months when students are not enrolled in school. Students begin to seek summer internships well in advance of the end of the school year and often have internship opportunities secured months in advance. Therefore, recruitment efforts for this type of program should begin in the fall semester or early in the spring semester (January/February). Agencies should also be prepared to make offers of employment well in advance of internship start dates.

For part-time internship programs designed to allow students to continue attendance in school while working, recruitment should begin toward the end of the summer and the beginning of the school year.

If an internship program is designed for non-students, recruitment efforts should be based on the availability of positions and the expected needs of an agency.

Interviewing and Selection

A different approach to interviewing and selecting candidates is required for internship participants because candidates often have limited, or no, relevant work experience.

Traditional interview questions focus on determining an applicant's previous experience and whether this experience has provided the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the duties associated with the position. In contrast, selection of an internship participant is based much more on the applicant's **potential** to be successful in the position. Therefore, questions should focus on other indicators of success. These factors can include:

- Grade-Point Average (GPA) history.
- Participation in extracurricular activities, particularly any leadership activities.
- Career goals and how they see the internship program supporting these goals.
- Personality characteristics like work ethic, ability to learn, positive outlook, teamwork and focus on public service.
- Recommendations from previous employers or teachers.

For applicants who have been in the workforce for a period of time but are changing careers, interviewers should look for skills and experience that transfer to the new career and job function(s). For example, someone who worked in a call center likely developed excellent customer service and communication skills. These skills will be valuable in any position that requires interacting with the public even if the position is not strictly customer service.

Students applying for internships often have unique circumstances; therefore, agencies may need to tailor recruitment and selection practices. For example, if a student is attending school in one location (i.e., Columbia) but will spend the summer in another location (i.e., Charleston), agencies may consider interviewing and selecting interns in a central location near the college or university and then assigning them based on the needs of the agency locations and the intern's availability.

Academic Credit

The ability to offer academic credit can be a valuable recruitment tool when hiring interns. Agencies interested in establishing an internship program which will qualify for academic credit should contact the applicable colleges, universities and technical schools to determine the process for establishing this credit.

School career centers can provide guidance on establishing this type of program as well as assist agencies in recruiting students for these programs.

Program Design

Meaningful Work

When designing an internship program, it is important to ensure that managers and supervisors view the internship as an opportunity to provide participants with the opportunity to take part in meaningful work and to gain skills that will aid them in future employment, preferably with the applicable agency. While it is inevitable that interns will spend some time on menial tasks, as all employees do, this should not be the focus of their internship experience. Therefore, careful thought should be given to what projects or tasks an intern will spend their time doing before hiring the intern.

This work may include:

- Completing a project that regular staff has not had time to complete.
- Reviewing an agency's website and compiling suggestions for improvements.
- Planning or coordinating a meeting or event.
- Creating a presentation.
- Conducting a survey of employees, customers, etc. and compiling and presenting the data gathered.
- Reviewing and updating process manuals or guides and making suggestions on process improvement.
- Attending meetings and discussions.

Current interns are also an excellent resource to review and suggest changes to an agency's internship program.

Interns should be assigned to positions in areas likely to have full-time regular positions available in the future. Alternatively, interns can complete a rotation through multiple departments, divisions or jobs to gain broad experience.

Mentor

Mentors provide an important support system for interns. Mentors should not be the intern's supervisor but, rather, should be an experienced employee who the intern can go to with questions or concerns.

Mentors should be prepared to:

- Listen to the mentee.
- Act as a guide, coach and adviser.
- Provide support and guidance.
- Share professional and personal experiences.
- Provide feedback and direction.
- Introduce the intern to resources and people.
- Share organizational knowledge, insight and perspectives.

Individuals who will serve as mentors should be carefully selected since they will have great influence on the success of the intern's experience.

Pre-Internship Communication

Communication should be maintained with an intern between the acceptance of the position and the start date. Both the intern's manager and the person responsible for coordinating the internship program should reach out to the intern during this time. This communication maintains enthusiasm from the intern and begins to build the relationships that will be important once the intern begins to work.

If an agency is hiring multiple interns who will be starting at the same time, the agency may consider providing a mechanism for new interns to contact each other before starting work. This will provide an instant network for new interns when they begin work.

Orientation/Onboarding

As with any new employee, it is important to have structured orientation and onboarding programs. It is particularly important to put processes in place to make the intern comfortable and productive as soon as possible due to the short duration of most internship programs.

In addition to the required paperwork associated with a newly hired employee, orientation programs should include:

- A tour of the facility where the intern will work. The intern's workspace should be set up and ready for use.
- A discussion of the expectations related to the intern program.
- Introduction to the intern's mentor.
- An explanation of how the intern and the work the intern will be doing relate to the agency's mission.
- Introduction to the rest of the team. If possible, this should be done in a relaxed environment such as a welcome breakfast or luncheon.

Interns should be included in employee activities such as employee appreciation activities, agency meetings, birthday celebrations, etc. throughout their internship. This will foster feelings that the intern belongs and will contribute to a successful internship experience. Interns who feel like they belong and have positive relationships with co-workers are more likely to consider long-term employment with an agency.

Performance Management

As temporary employees, interns are not subject to the formal performance management requirements outlined in State Human Resources Regulations. It is a good practice, however, to create a mechanism for frequent feedback concerning an intern's performance. This should include feedback concerning performance on specific tasks as well as general feedback and guidance on professional development topics.

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) should be drafted at the beginning of the intern's employment to provide a framework for development opportunities for the intern. These development opportunities can include both formal training opportunities and developmental assignments to be completed by the intern.

Ongoing Communication

Human resources should have periodic contact with both the intern and the intern's manager to discuss the progress of the internship.

Intern Cohort

If multiple interns are hired for the same period of employment, the interns should be provided opportunities to network with each other. Interns should be given the opportunity to share their experiences with one another to provide a broader perspective of the agency.

The contribution of these interns can also be recognized through targeted celebrations. For example, National Intern Day.

Post-Internship Communication

Exit interviews should be conducted immediately following the conclusion of the internship to determine if changes and improvements to the internship program are needed.

In addition, if the intern has performed successfully, and would be considered for future employment, maintaining a relationship with the intern once the internship concludes is critical. While employment cannot be guaranteed to individuals who complete an internship program, successful interns should be encouraged to apply for openings for which they are qualified.

If the intern is returning to school, efforts should be made to keep in touch with the intern and to notify them of opportunities for future employment when the intern's studies are completed. It is not unusual for interns to be offered regular, full-time employment, well in advance of completion of their degree. Many employers begin to recruit for anticipated openings in the fall semester or early in the spring semester. These timelines should be considered when recruitment for full-time regular positions is planned.

If the intern is not returning to school, efforts should be made to identify possible job opportunities for successful interns throughout the internship period. If no positions are immediately available, communication should be maintained with the former interns concerning future opportunities.

Agency Ambassadors

Former interns can be valuable ambassadors for an agency, particularly those returning to school. Those who have successful and positive experiences during their tenure will likely share this information with friends, classmates and others when the internship is over. Successful interns should be encouraged to share their experiences with others and refer any interested individuals to the agency's internship program.

If former interns are enrolled in the same school with interns who have been selected, but who have not yet started work, the former interns can provide a support system and guidance to interns nervous about starting work. Former interns can provide an inside perspective to newly selected interns which will prepare the new interns for their internship experience. An agency can facilitate this process by creating opportunities for former and new interns to meet and communicate with each other.

Additional Information

Interns **employed** by the agency are provided the same protections that other employees are provided. This includes coverage by applicable employment laws and workers' compensation provisions. Like other employees, interns cannot waive these rights. Therefore, the same precautions should be taken with interns as with any other employees.

Unpaid interns may **not** be covered by workers' compensation protections or other liability protections which apply to paid employees. Therefore, special consideration should be given to coverage for any injuries of other areas of liability unpaid interns may incur. **Agencies choosing to hire unpaid interns should consult legal counsel to identify areas of liability related to the intern's employment.**

Depending on the work performed by interns, they may have access to sensitive and confidential information. Like other employees with access to this type of information, interns should complete any required training and paperwork (i.e., confidentiality agreements) related to having access to this information. Special attention should be paid to interns who will have access to information protected by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Internship Success Stories

As illustrated by the following stories, successful and well-planned internship programs can benefit the intern, the employer and the state.

Sharadia Bolds: Helping People Help Themselves

As a graduate student, Sharadia Bolds took part in a four-month internship in the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department's Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluation Center: Career Planning and Evaluation.

During this paid internship, Sharadia performed aptitude and achievement testing and administered work samples. This included scribing for individuals who were unable to write. Following her internship, Sharadia joined South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation as a general counselor and, later, became a rehabilitation counselor for the deaf. Eleven years later she is an area customer services manager.

As an intern, Sharadia was able to learn about the various types of disabling conditions and turn book knowledge into reality. When asked how her internship prepared her for her current role, Sharadia said, "My internship was a tangible, hands-on experience working with individuals with the most severe disabilities. What I learned in school did not prepare me for the human aspect of what we do. I learned that it was not up to me to decide what someone else can or cannot do because of what appears possible on the surface. I was able to witness how our agency thinks outside of the box to make consumers' goals reality."

"My proudest moment was the first time someone asked my opinion in a staffing meeting. The fact that they thought highly enough of my abilities and insight to include me in deciding [the] next steps was huge for me!"

When asked if anything surprised her during her internship, Sharadia said "I was amazed by how much can be done to accommodate someone's needs and improve their functioning..." She added, "Their creativity is amazing."

Sharadia provided the following insight into why she continues to work for the state of South Carolina and offers some advice to employers looking to implement an internship program.

What can state employers do to best support interns?

They can make sure that interns receive exposure to various roles within the office. This will help interns find their niche and later apply for positions that are a good fit for them, rather than just getting a job to pay bills.

What keeps your working in state government?

I enjoy working for Vocational Rehabilitation because the work we do is important. Being here puts life into perspective in that we are all one situation away from potentially needing services. I have family members with disabilities, and I would want them to have service providers who genuinely care to help them.

Leah Schonfeld: Giving Back to Build South Carolina's Future

While pursuing a master's in public administration degree at the University of South Carolina, Leah Schonfeld completed an internship as a human resources specialist with the South Carolina Budget and Control Board's (B&CB) Office of Human Resources (now the South Carolina Department of Administration's Division of State Human Resources).

In the beginning Leah assisted with projects, policy creation and training facilitation. Later, Leah helped seasoned human resources consultants with classification and compensation reviews and questions related to human resources regulations. While the internship was unpaid, Leah received graduate credit for the hours worked during her time as an intern and gained valuable experience which helped shape her career path.

Following her internship, Leah was hired as a human resources specialist working on additional human resources projects. In less than a year, Leah applied and was hired for a human resources consultant position. After almost three years with the B&CB, Leah took a position as a deputy director managing classification, compensation and employment matters with the Citadel. Five years later Leah moved into her current role as the assistant vice president and chief human resources officer of the Citadel.

"I was invited to every staff meeting, included in decision making, and had a seat at the table."

Leah's commitment to public service, and her appreciation for the support she received as an intern, shine through when asked about her experiences working for state government.

Did anything surprise you about your internship, the agency you worked at, or working for the state in general?

I was excited to be a part of an agency that assisted other agencies in their day-to-day HR functions and issues. There are always surprises in the human resources profession, but that keeps our jobs exciting and challenging. What surprised me most of all was that the OHR (now the Division of State Human Resources) team was willing to give a young woman without any experience several opportunities to make mistakes, develop major projects, and learn from all of them along the way. You do not often find a willingness to share information and develop young professionals in every office environment. I gained lasting friendships from these experiences and working alongside a wonderful group of HR professionals.

What keeps you working in state government?

I grew up watching my parents work as public servants in the school system and with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. State and local government afforded them many opportunities to give back to the community and serve the wonderful state of South Carolina. I knew that a career in public service with the state would provide me similar opportunities. I remain in state government because of the mission of the agency I work for and because we serve a higher purpose in giving back to our state. At the Citadel, our mission is to educate and develop principled leaders in all walks of life, and I know that I play an integral role in educating our country and state's future leaders.

Erin Washington: Innovation in Action

In her nine-month internship with the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Erin Washington took the opportunity to explore a career outside of her field of study. She used the opportunity to explore the human resources field after taking a human resources course as a college junior. During this for-credit internship, Erin screened job applicants using the state's e-recruitment system, prepared personnel documents for electronic filing, created standard human resources operating procedures and worked with the agency information technology department to create a SharePoint site for human resources.

In the more than four years following her internship, Erin worked as the South Carolina Department of Administration's classification and compensation manager, the human resources consultant for the Public Health Division of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and currently works as the human resources director of the South Carolina Department of Insurance. She has used her experience as an intern working on a SharePoint site to create a SharePoint site for her current agency.

"There are so many innovative people and initiatives in state government right now, and I want to be a part of the new perception of who state government employees are and what we do. I also like the work-life balance I am able to have in my role, as well as the opportunity for student loan forgiveness under the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program."

The importance of an internship program in recruiting talent to state government is clear in Erin's answers to questions about her internship experience, her decision to work in state government and advice she gives to employer's considering an internship program.

How did your internship experience prepare you for your current role?

My internship with the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services exposed me to various areas of human resources which gave me the foundation I needed to explore what career path in HR fit my knowledge, skills and abilities the best. It also reminded me that one of the most important abilities you can ever have in any career is the ability to remain teachable and open to new ideas. Working with interns who had more education in the HR field than I did at the time, I was able to remain competitive by always seeking knowledge and being open to learning more innovative ways to contribute to the HR function.

Do you think you would have decided to pursue employment with the state if you had not had the opportunity to take part in an internship with a state employer?

I definitely would not have decided to pursue employment with the state if I had not interned with DHHS first. I had no idea of the opportunities available in state government prior to my internship.

What can state employers do to best support interns?

State employers can provide meaningful, career-based projects and assignments for interns to complete or be a part of during their internships. I think that they should also get the intern's buy-in on why working for state government is desirable and how both parties could mutually benefit. Considering interns for permanent positions within their agencies or providing references for them to work in other state agencies is also a great sign of support.

Christian Saville: Discovering a Career Path

As an intern in the Office of the South Carolina Attorney General, Christian Saville gained real-world experience working as a law clerk in the area responsible for Post-Conviction Relief proceedings. Christian noted that he had not heard of the Post-Conviction Relief proceedings before his internship and was surprised at how large the operation was. Christian began his internship in his final year of law school and continued as an intern until he passed the bar exam. He now serves as an assistant attorney general in Post-Conviction Relief.

During his internship, Christian drafted returns and other legal findings, researched legal issues and helped prepare briefs. Christian also had the opportunity to gain real-world experience in the courtroom working alongside seasoned attorneys. The experience allowed for a smooth transition from intern to full-time employee and helped him stand out from the other applicants for the assistant attorney general position.

"I learned a lot from an attorney in our office who I worked with on appellate filings. Her positive feedback and encouragement meant a lot to me and is a large part of the reason I'm working here now."

The impact of a successful internship program is clearly reflected in Christian's answers regarding his internship and decision to continue to work in state government. Christian also provides

valuable guidance to agencies interested in implementing an internship program.

What can state employers do to best support interns?

Give them honest feedback. It is very helpful when they are willing to sit down and explain practical matters of their profession, so a law clerk has a decent idea as to how things work when they're actually in practice. The attorneys in Post-Conviction Relief did a great job with this.

How did your internship experience prepare you for your current role?

Clerking in Post-Conviction Relief was extremely valuable as there is really no other way to get Post-Conviction Relief experience outside of it. Moreover, the people I was clerking for helped me learn time management, communication and work habits to keep up throughout my legal career. I became a better researcher, writer and legal thinker. Observing them in court also helped me tailor my approach to the courtroom.

What keeps you working in state government?

I still enjoy criminal law. The people I work with are great, I meet a lot of great lawyers in our own office in this job as well as defense attorneys and the legal community around the state. The stability and work schedule are a little more accommodating than private practice can be.

Issiah Bowman: Safely Climbing the Career Ladder

Issiah Bowman's first experience as an intern with the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) was certainly not his last. Issiah completed an internship after his freshman, sophomore and junior years in college. Following graduation with a degree in civil engineering, Issiah took a full-time position with SCDOT and is currently an Engineer I. After a year and a half on the job he hopes to continue to learn and grow along the agency's career path.

As an intern in the SCDOT Traffic Safety Department, Issiah completed many projects including:

- Analyzing intersection improvement alternatives for intersections across the state;
- Conducting a guardrail study along Interstate 26;
- Conducting traffic flow analysis;
- Determining the amount of materials needed to complete the repair of different roads in various counties;
- And, calculating turn radii of exit ramps on Interstate 26 and Interstate 20 in Richland, Spartanburg and Newberry counties.

These projects completed as an intern provided Issiah the opportunity to gain hands-on experience using the software and techniques he uses today as an Engineer I.

As can be clearly seen in Issiah's answer below, an internship can attract employees to state government who might not otherwise consider it a viable career option.

"The friendly work environment keeps me working in state government. The smiling faces I see around the office everyday refuels me with the passion I already have for safety."

Do you think you would have decided to pursue employment with the state if you had not had the opportunity to take part in an internship with a state employer?

I am honestly not sure. Outside of the department I have heard that private firms are the way to go, because the pay is higher and the opportunity to advance comes quicker as people are constantly moving. I do feel that having the opportunity to intern opened my eyes to what working for a state agency is like.

Charles Colton Greene: Road to Success

As a civil engineering student at Clemson University, Charles Colton Greene was already inclined to seek work in the public sector before his internship. His time as an intern in the South Carolina Department of Transportation's (SCDOT) Oconee County Construction Office only cemented that objective.

During his three months as an intern with SCDOT, Charles assisted project managers and inspectors as they performed their daily work duties. As time progressed, he was given the opportunity to conduct paint inspections, thermoplastic inspections, markers inspections and traffic control inspections. Charles took pride in the trust his manager demonstrated by allowing Charles to take on responsibilities in the short time of his internship.

Following his internship, Charles was hired as a Civil Engineer I with SCDOT and was promoted to a Civil Engineer II in March 2018.

When asked about his experience in applying and being hired as an intern it is clear the SCDOT hiring process is streamlined to allow interns to be recruited and hired quickly.

"I enjoyed the employees, their job responsibilities, and the low stress of a typical workday. There was ample time to learn and plenty of employee resources."

Describe your hiring process as an intern?

I was notified by Clemson University that the SCDOT was looking for summer internships. I applied online and was called in for an interview in two weeks. Two weeks later, I received an email from the resident civil engineer in Oconee offering me the position. (The process was four weeks from start to finish.)

William J. Loadholdt: Making 'IT' Work

You probably would not expect to find an Information Technology intern crawling through data centers and storage rooms, but that is exactly where William Loadholdt found himself while performing a needed asset inventory for the South Carolina Department of Administration (Admin) during his current internship. As a result of William's work, Admin has a more accurate and up-to-date inventory of technology assets. In addition to working with Admin, William has worked with dozens of other state agencies in support of their information technology needs.

William's experience is unique in that he is not enrolled in college; therefore, he is participating in a nearly yearlong internship. He chose to participate in the internship as

part of his transition to a new career. So far, William has completed a variety of projects including analyzing and reporting raw data and assisting in drafting and correcting documentation. Through these projects, William has already gained experience in a range of functional areas. As he said, "You can map out and document a process from A to Z, but you don't really get a feel for it until you actually go through it."

William offers practical insight into what state agencies can do to support their interns.

What can state employers do to best support interns?

Get them involved in long-term projects or else give them weekly tasks. A lot of folks participating in an internship program are doing so to test out how they'd like a career change. I feel the best way to do that is to get their hands dirty doing the day-to-day things.

"Having worked in the corporate world for a few years prior to my internship I can say that working for the state is different. In my first month with the state I had more interactions with high-level leadership than I had in almost four years of working in the private sector. It surprised me greatly to have that much exposure to leadership as an intern, it felt like everyone had a vested interest in seeing me succeed."

Jessica Stroud: New Opportunities

A four-month unpaid internship helped Jessica Stroud find a career opportunity she would not have otherwise considered. While working toward completing a program at a technical college, Jessica completed an internship as a general clerk in the Laurens Office of the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department. During this time Jessica performed general office duties and learned about the important work done by Vocational Rehabilitation. She was surprised to learn all the work done by Vocational Rehabilitation and noted that, before her internship, she had never heard of the agency.

When asked what her proudest moment during her internship was, Jessica recalled a time she dealt with a very frustrated consumer and was able to calm the consumer down and deescalate the situation. She was also provided the opportunity to gain real-world experience drafting professional documents.

“I absolutely love my coworkers and the job that I have now. Vocational Rehabilitation is an excellent agency to work for if you enjoy helping people get back on their feet.”

Jessica provided the following advice to employers looking to implement an internship program.

What can state employers do to best support interns?

Ensure they are trained in all areas of the office they are working in.

If you could change something about your internship experience, what would that be?

I wish I could have shadowed more individuals and learned about the different jobs at the time.

Conclusion

A well-designed internship program provides benefits both to the employer and the intern that extend beyond the period of employment. Using the guidelines provided in this toolkit will help maximize the benefits of an internship program.