

What is an internship?

An internship is a short-term work experience where companies host qualified students to work on clearly defined projects outlined by the company. Students work under the guidance and mentorship of a point-person from the host organization. Internships provide opportunities for students to gain general hands-on workplace experience and industry-specific skills while building a positive relationship with a local professional. These opportunities can be in-person or virtual, and paid or unpaid. The following guide will outline suggested expectations and requirements for internships, highlight programs around the state that are successfully coordinating these experiences, and share keys to success for both in-person and virtual internships.

Why internships are important to both students & industry:

When coordinated well, internships can be mutually beneficial for both the student and the company hosting them. Supporting a young person in an internship can provide management opportunities for existing employees and can increase morale and productivity in current workers. Additionally, investing in a hands-on learning opportunity for local students can build community, retain local talent from the region, and increase positive public relations for an organization.

For students, the implications of a successful internship experience can be even more transformative. A quality internship can change the course of a student's life through meaningful interaction with professionals. Additionally, the student can gain relevant work experience and build professional skills through hands-on learning. These opportunities provide real-life learning for students, help them gain confidence, and develop a sense of agency that empowers them to make decisions about their future career plans.

Preparing for the internship

Internships should be mutually beneficial for students and employers. The host organization should create 3-4 projects that the student will work on during their time with the company; these project ideas could be used for recruiting purposes to attract interested students. Within each project, the author should include a list of tasks involved, student deliverables, and describe which professional skills will be practiced. When developing project ideas, keep in mind that a typical internship experience can range from 60-100 hours or more, so the projects should be achievable in that timeframe. **Work plan template (one per project):**

Project Summary

Activities

Documentation

Skills Required

When considering taking on an intern, hosts should think through who within the company should supervise the student. This person should be able to be available to the student, more than they would to a regular employee. Next, hosts should think through where the intern will work within the building if the internship can happen in person. The intern should be given a work area near their supervisor, equipped with the necessary office supplies and technology, if possible. Lastly, the host should inform their existing employees before the intern comes on board. Employees should be encouraged to be approachable, welcome the intern warmly to the office space, and offer to be of help to the intern as needed.

Meet & Greet

When the time comes to meet the intern prior to their first day, hosts should be prepared to share the projects they've outlined for the student to work on. They should go through each project in detail, highlighting the activities within each project, the documentation process, the skills learned, and the timeline. Then, hosts should invite the intern to share their personal learning objectives. Ensure that the projects outlined for the student will help them work towards their learning objectives. If in their current state they will not, hosts should be open to adjusting the projects so that they're mutually beneficial for both the host and the student.

During the second half of the Meet & Greet, hosts should review the following logistics with the intern to ensure that they're fully prepared for their first day. When discussing details like dress code, parking, etc. it is very important to be REALLY thorough. For many students an internship is their first real work experience, so hosts should err on the side of being too thorough versus not thorough enough. Lastly, save time at the end of the Meet & Greet to answer any additional questions that the student has.

- 1. Location** — Where in town is the office? Describe the building, include landmarks to look for, etc. Also include details about who will greet the intern on their first day.
- 2. Parking** — Where should the intern park? If the company doesn't have a private lot with ample parking spots, please point them to the nearest free parking.
- 3. Daily schedule** — Share the intern's daily schedule with them (hosts are encouraged to document and email this to the intern).
- 4. Dress code** — Go over your company's dress code in great detail. Help set the student up for success by being thorough and giving examples of what not to wear. Include direction around styling long hair, hats, shoes, etc.
- 5. Breaks & lunch** — Hosts share with the intern what breaks they can expect during their work day and how long/when their lunch breaks will be (reminder, all workers are entitled to a 30 minute paid lunch when working for six hours or more).
- 6. COVID** — Discuss your company's COVID protocols (masks, temp checks, vaccine cards, etc.).
- 7. Contact info** — Swap contact information! Be sure to share email addresses, work phone/cell numbers, and hosts should make their texting vs. calling preferences **very clear.**
- 8. Timesheet** — Go over how the intern should track their time, who they should turn timesheets into, and when timesheets are due.
- 9. If the intern needs to show any type of ID or bring any paperwork with them on their first day, please share that with them.*

During the Internship

On the first day, welcome the student by giving them an orientation to the workplace. This can happen virtually or in person. It is best to assume the student has no previous knowledge about the working environment and approach the orientation through that lens. Take the student on a tour of the building, point out restrooms, different departments,

supply closets, etc. The student must know who they should go to (virtually or in person) with general questions and concerns. During the orientation, emphasize workplace cell phone policies. The host organization should also provide thorough safety and equipment training to the student, if applicable.

Review the project work plans and learning objectives that both parties agreed to. Ensure the student has a clear understanding of the projects, timelines, and expectations.

The host organization (and coordinating body) should also provide regular, weekly check-ins with the student to make sure they are on track with learning goals and completing tasks outlined in their work plan. Check-ins can be conducted in person, on the phone, or via video conferencing. These weekly meetings provide space for the intern to share any celebrations or concerns with the coordinating program. Check-ins with the coordinating organization should happen on work days but outside of regular work hours.

After the Internship

After the internship, the student and their supervisor should meet to discuss the overall experience and review the final projects. Students should walk away from the meeting with a clear understanding of their areas of strength and growth. Lastly, the host should complete an exit survey designed by the coordinating program to gather feedback around the experience as a whole. This feedback can inform potential adjustments that will strengthen the program itself and help ensure future student success.

Unpaid Considerations:

There should be little difference in the direction provided by the host organization to paid and unpaid student interns. Unpaid students should still be provided safety and equipment training, be provided appropriate supervision, and feedback. Unpaid students should be able to refuse work, there must be no expectation of pay, and they should not be given stipends or gifts, or promised jobs in the future. When working with an unpaid intern, organizations should follow their respective policy around volunteer workers' compensation (no coverage, volunteer workers comp coverage, voluntary injury coverage).

Learn more about unpaid intern liability: <https://www.oregon.gov/das/Risk/Documents/RWVolunteer.pdf>

Paid Considerations:

There are three main things to consider with an internship; Workers Compensation, BOLI, and OSHA regulations. The entity hiring must be prepared to protect the student under their Worker's Compensation should an injury occur. The other two considerations; BOLI and OSHA, should be looked into by both the host site and the hiring entity, should those two be different.

BOLI regulates wages, hours, and working conditions. See State laws: http://www.oregon.gov/boli/WHD/docs/statelawswages_english.pdf

Child labor laws protect young people in the workforce. Although minors are no longer required to have permits, they, their parents, and their employers should be aware of laws and regulations applying to young people (ages 14–17) and the jobs and working hours that are allowed.

See BOLI Employment of Minors: <http://www.oregon.gov/boli/WHD/CLU/docs/employmentminorsbrochure.pdf>

OSHA's Employer Responsibilities For Keeping Young Workers Safe:

<https://www.osha.gov/youngworkers/employers.html>

Check your compliance and make sure students are not asked to do jobs that violate the law or given prohibited tasks such as operating heavy equipment. Lastly, train students to put safety first.

Depending on how an internship is structured, students may be hired and paid by the host organization or paid by a third party, such as a school or other coordinating program.

Industry Considerations for Virtual Internships:

While an in-person internship provides the most hands-on and holistic learning experience for students, virtual opportunities may be utilized for a variety of reasons. When designing a virtual experience, some in-person considerations will not apply. Those may include some safety protocols and equipment training. State BOLI laws should be followed in regards to wages, hours, and working conditions. OSHA regulations may be adjusted as well to take into consideration the virtual work environment.

Virtual experiences may offer more unsupervised time for the students than in-person experiences. It's best practice for students to keep a record of their hours and tasks so that the organization can monitor their progress.

Industry Considerations for In-Person Internships:

Safety should be a top priority for students. PPE requirements should be communicated to the student and program staff. If the hosting organization offers PPE to their employees and volunteers, the student needs to be provided the same equipment. If the hosting organization does not provide PPE, the coordinating program should provide it for the student.

If your host has a home-based business, it is encouraged for them to work with another employer who has a local worksite, the coordinating body, or the local STEM Hub to identify a daily workspace for the intern.

For In-Person Internships:

- Weekly check-ins with the supervisor (phone, video meeting, or in-person)
- Schedule check-ins early in the week so students are set up for success
- The coordinating program should schedule weekly check-in surveys to monitor student progress and ensure the student is comfortable and successful
- Ensure the student has dependable transportation
- Give parking & building entrance directions
- Introduce the student to other staff during orientation
- Give clear safety and equipment training
- Give clear direction on what to do when tasks are completed early
- If the experience was positive, the industry host could offer to be a professional reference for the student