



Cornell University

Entrepreneurship@Cornell

Summer Internship Program

Employer Handbook



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This handbook is designed to help your organization get the most out of the internship experience. This step-by-step guide includes information about how to develop your internship, as well as the resources available to you, depending on the needs of your organization.

What is an Internship?

An internship is a period of practical training, carried out by a student within a company or organization. An internship can be offered by any type of organization or company and come from any industry or economic sector. An internship can provide many benefits to your organization. Several of these benefits include:

- Top quality work product from any intern you hire.
- An early start on the training of possible future employees.
- New technology and innovative ideas that students bring from the classroom into your organization.
- Diversity within your organization's workforce.
- A chance to tell students what your organization is all about.
- Exposure for your company as peers network.

The Internship

Internships are flexible, and you should develop your internship around the needs of your organization. For example, you may want to consider:

- Roles within your organization where new employees are frequently in demand.
- Skills required for various roles within your organization.
- Unique features about your organization or industry.

This handbook provides you with step-by-step instructions for starting your internship, including planning, implementation, and evaluation. Additionally, you will find answers to frequently asked questions.

Internships are a win-win situation for both employers and students. It is our hope that with your experience and vision, the motivation of your intern, and this handbook as your guide, this internship will be an enjoyable and highly productive experience.

PHASE ONE: DEVELOPING AN INTERNSHIP

To get the most out of an internship that you offer, it is recommended that you tailor it to meet the specific needs of your organization. An internship offers your organization the opportunity to get top quality work at a reasonable price. It is also your opportunity to get to know a potential candidate for hire while challenging them in this environment.

The following questions are some that could be considered when developing your unique internship:

Question 1. Do I consider this internship as a possible building block for future employment within my organization?

If you answered “yes,” you may want to ask yourself if there are any roles within your organization where you frequently hire new employees, such as:

- Sales/service representatives?
- Research?
- Technicians?
- Public relations and outreach?

Many organizations have particular roles for which turnover is high, or new employee recruitment is fairly constant. An internship can help your organization fill this pipeline and get a head start on new recruitment. During the course of the internship, your intern will have learned about your organization and how it functions. As a result, they can hit the ground running if they are hired as new employees after they have graduated. In addition, you will have greater insight of the candidate you have hired and their quality of work as a result of getting to know them personally and professionally during this time. Additionally, you will want to think about any specific skill sets that are beneficial to your organization that are not typically learned in the classroom, such as:

- Research skills
- Client interaction
- Business practices
- Software skills
- Business/grant writing.

A new hire who has interned with your organization will be able to utilize their “on the job” training that you have invested in them and will already be familiar with how your company operates. The intern will already have an understanding of any unique organization policies or procedures. Similarly, depending on how you have capitalized on time and communication throughout the internship, your intern may be partially trained. The time and energy you have invested in this intern and potential job candidate results in a clear advantage over other entry-level candidates applying for a similar position within your organization.

If you answered “no,” you may want to think about what types of projects would most benefit from additional manpower assigned to the task. If this is the case, you could start work on “back burner” projects or projects that are approaching a deadline.

Question 2. What other aspects of my organization are unique?

An intern may be interested in learning unique processes or technologies which your company utilizes. The educational system provides students with a wide array of background knowledge on the processes and technology that exist, but is unable to offer “real world” experience. Internships can fill this void. Additionally, by allowing the student to receive hands-on training with the unique procedures and features of your organization, the intern is able to experience and understand what sets your organization apart from the competition. It may also introduce them to a potential career path, perhaps even as a part of your organization.

This is also your chance to advertise your organization to the college community. The first question typically asked upon return from summer break is: “what did you do this summer?” Your intern has the potential to inform others about your organization and let them know what sets you apart from others in your field.

PHASE TWO: ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL INTERNSHIP

The basis of a successful and quality internship lies in good planning and preliminary organization. What will your intern do while they are employed with your organization? To fully understand how to make the most of your internship, specific elements should be identified.

Element One: Project Assignment

Identify what projects need to be completed.

Have any projects been sitting on the “back burner” as a result of lack of attention?

An intern is looking for a challenging work environment, so project assignment will be paramount to a quality experience. Projects that you designate for your intern or projects that your intern will be assisting with should ideally connect them to “real world” situations. While in school, students are exposed to a variety of concepts and practices. The internship experience is designed to have the student gain practical experience by connecting the concepts learned in school to actual professional situations. Interns are an invaluable source for completing legwork tasks, such as collecting or manipulating data from various sources, filing information, or even general researching. However, the intern can also be a tool for the application of innovative ideas learned in the classroom to your organization’s projects.

Element Two: Practical Experience

How can the intern learn about my organization?

The intern needs to gain some hands-on, practical experience in order to understand what sets your organization apart from the rest.

This may be the intern’s opportunity to apply principles learned in school to real world situations, thereby furthering skill development. The internship is designed to allow practical, real world experience so that the intern can learn through hands-on experience. A student chooses to pursue an internship opportunity based on their interest in the subject

or the field of study with which your organization is involved. Your intern is most likely thinking about possible employment in this sector or industry after graduation. This experience is the most important aspect of the internship opportunity because it allows the intern to:

- Have a “trial employment period” determining if this career would be a good fit;
- Have the opportunity to gain skills through practical experience;
- Learn from the experiences of others in the field.

And, the intern quite possibly could provide some creative insight to your processes!

Element Three: Provide a Mentor or Supervisor

Who will mentor and guide the intern?

The intern needs the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback on their performance.

The mentor should try to create a comfortable working relationship with the intern as this will play a large role in the internship experience. The role of mentor will be to provide meaningful guidance to the intern and to assist the intern with a task or project. The role of supervisor is important as this will be the individual assigning the projects that the intern will work on and the individual who is responsible for the professional projects/situations the intern will experience. The role of mentor and supervisor may be the same individual, but it is important that these roles are filled by an employee that is experienced in the company and able to commit time to this program.

Element Four: Timelines and Project Expectations

The overall design of your internship needs to be organized so that intern time and desired projects to complete are in sync.

The goals set must be realistic. You may find that by brainstorming project ideas for this internship, several other projects will surface that you would like to see come to fruition. The following are some considerations for broadening the range of experiences for your unique internship:

- Based on the workload and productivity desired, is one intern sufficient or should several be hired?
- Based on the designated projects, can a full-time intern be utilized or would part-time work be sufficient?
- Would it be productive to ask the intern to continue after the summer internship program is over?
- Would I consider hiring this intern as an entry-level employee after graduation?

Element Five: Program Evaluation

Will I have an evaluation system?

It is suggested that an ongoing evaluation system of your program be in place in order to allow for feedback on improvements in the future for both the program and your intern.

It may prove beneficial to create an evaluation form that allows for detailed feedback from the organization, the supervisor/mentor, and the intern regarding the internship that has just been completed. This evaluation method will provide useful information for both the organization and the intern.

Feedback for the Organization

The intern, as well as the employees involved with this program, will be able to provide comments on the success of this program and how it may be tailored for the future. Comments from staff may relate to:

- Portions of the project where the intern was most useful;
- If the additional manpower increased productivity;
- Whether they felt that time was used productively; and
- The future employment of the intern.

Comments from the intern may relate to:

- How the company could further facilitate this process;
- Some of the practical lessons that he/she learned;
- Comments regarding organizational procedures that were unclear;
- Helpfulness of the mentor/supervisor and other employees; and
- Overall program experience.

Feedback for the Intern

It will ultimately be useful to the intern to receive some type of evaluation of their performance. This could include information on the strengths and weaknesses of the intern that were observed while participating in the program or areas that will need to be improved upon to assist in career advancement in this field. Feedback for the intern may also identify additional educational programs that will help the intern develop the skills necessary to succeed in this field. Intern progress should also be discussed periodically with the intern, and it may be beneficial for both parties to conduct a midpoint and final evaluation of the intern. It may be valuable to ask the supervisor whether the intern possessed the skills necessary to complete the required tasks and the aspects of the program where the intern was most valuable.

PHASE THREE: PUTTING THE ELEMENTS INTO ACTION

Where *Phase Two: Elements of a Successful Internship* provided a brief overview of the elements that will be needed for you to benefit most from your internship, this section is designed to provide a more detailed examination of how you will be able to make the most out of your internship. The four steps listed below are preliminary actions that should be considered because they will be helpful to the organization and advertisement of your internship position.

Preparation is paramount to a successful internship. Therefore, take some time to think about what you have reviewed so far:

- The 5 elements that were discussed in the previous section;
- The needs of your organization; and
- How an intern will assist you in meeting those needs.

After reading each section below and answering the questions that follow, you will have a more detailed understanding of the internship that you will offer your intern, as well as some of the duties that you will expect your intern to complete. Once you have defined these aspects of your internship, you will be able to post a description of your program and begin the recruitment process.

Step 1: Defining the Organization's Needs

The internship should be designed with both internal projects and the needs of the staff in mind. The internship coordinator should work with staff to assess current projects and workload to determine appropriate situations where an intern may be able to contribute.

Step 1.
Define your organization's needs

Each staff member should consider:

- What ongoing tasks are taking place in my department or organization?
- What is the current workload of my department or organization?
- What projects are currently on the "back burner?"

One great use of an intern is to devote time to projects that might currently be on the "back burner" due to insufficient time or talents among existing full-time staff. For example, do you have materials you would like to develop or update? Would you like to redesign your organization's website, but just don't have the time? Given proper supervision, an intern can be a great source of assistance with these labor-intensive tasks. Similarly, an intern may conduct research for a report that another staff member will write.

What does the company need? Are there certain tasks or projects that will be most beneficial to the company?

Step 2: Allocation of Resources

Long before your intern arrives on the job, the allocation of resources will need to be considered. You will need to allocate financial, time, and material resources in order to create an environment in which your intern can succeed.

Step 2.
Define your resource allocation

Financial Resources

- How will the intern be paid?
 - Will it be a stipend amount or an hourly rate?
 - If a stipend is offered, is this for a project or the entire internship summer program?
- Are you conforming to state and federal compensation regulations?
- Will the intern be required to pay for parking?
 - Will the organization provide a parking pass?
 - Will the organization reimburse the intern for parking costs?

- Will the organization pay for mileage if the intern needs to travel?
- Does housing or a housing stipend need to be provided if the intern will be relocating to the area?

These are just some of the questions that need to be addressed when attempting to budget for the internship.

Time Resources

It will also be necessary to devote a fair amount of time to the intern. This will also involve activities such as participating in a new employee orientation session, attending scheduled staff meetings, scheduling meetings with the mentor and supervisor, and the intern's work schedule. For example, will the intern work 5 days a week or on an alternate schedule? Will the intern be allowed to work a "flex" schedule, only working a set number of hours each week? It also must be determined how much "face to face" time is needed between the intern and the other employees to complete a project. All of these possibilities need to be considered when designing your internship.

Material Resources

Your organization will need to provide a number of material resources to enable your intern to succeed. You should allow time to plan for the availability and acquisition of these resources so that your intern can begin work immediately upon arrival. Some of the resources that may need to be supplied include:

- Computer with special software installed;
- Workspace: cubicle, office, desk;
- An e-mail account;
- A telephone extension;
- Voice mailbox;
- General office supplies: pens, pencils, tape, stapler, paper clips;
- Work rules and company policies; and
- How the intern needs to record their work time.

Planning ahead and providing these materials will allow your intern to start off on the right foot and maximize the time they will spend working for you.

What resources (financial, time, materials, etc.) will need to be allocated?

Step 3: Assignment of a Mentor

Each intern should be assigned a mentor within your organization. Throughout their internship experience, the mentor will be the intern's first stop for questions or to solicit guidance regarding project tasks and responsibilities. The mentor should also be available for general questions pertaining to:

- The company or industry (where the intern may learn from the mentor's experience).
- Operational questions (ranging from use of the photocopier to the location of a local lunch spot).

*Step 3.
Decide on a
mentor*

The role of mentor should involve a commitment of time to the intern. The mentor may be a department head, project leader, or long-time employee who is knowledgeable of the project on which the intern will be working. The mentor's role should include:

- An initial orientation for the intern (conducting a tour of the facility, showing the intern where the office equipment is located (photocopier, fax machine));
- Introducing them to others in the department with whom they will be interacting;
- Development of an ongoing relationship.

Some mentors may choose to offer an "open-door" policy to the intern, encouraging the intern to stop by anytime with questions. Other mentors may prefer the structure of a weekly meeting, where the intern is encouraged to bring a list of questions they may have from the past week. Either way, it is important that every intern know that someone is available to answer their questions.

A mentor can be a valuable resource for the intern in many ways. During the internship, the mentor may provide input and an evaluation of the intern's work product. Additionally, the intern is beginning to build their professional network; therefore, a mentor

may look for opportunities to include the intern in meetings or introduce the intern to other company and industry contacts. Finally, after the internship has been completed, a mentor might offer to be listed as a reference on the intern's resume.

Who will provide orientation and guidance (be a mentor) to the intern?

Step 4: Identifying a Department or Project Team

The primary goal of each student seeking an internship is to gain "real world" and practical experience in their chosen career field. It is beneficial for each intern to be integrated into a department or project team, where they will not only learn from completion of their own assigned tasks, but also develop a sense of the "big picture". A large portion of the internship should be focused on how the intern's own tasks contribute to the outcome of the project as a whole. By integrating the intern into a professional department or project team, the intern will be able to improve their teamwork and communication skills. Other team members will be able to provide:

**Step 4.
Decide on a project**

- Guidance through experience related to specific project tasks;
- Guidance on professional work ethic (such as time management and meeting deadlines);
- Stories about learning from mistakes;
- Advice on handling difficult customers.

An intern can benefit greatly from the experiences of others on the team. Remember, an intern is looking to build skills that will add to what they have already learned in their coursework. This real world experience is an opportunity for the intern to build a connection between theory and reality. Therefore, it is important to assign the intern meaningful project work, in addition to the routine tasks.

What is Meaningful Project Work?

Consider tasks within the scope of your project with which an intern will be challenged to apply their knowledge and improve their skills. Remember, the

intern is there to learn and gain experience. Consider the skills of the intern, and give the intern the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the project.

When Can I Expect Completed Projects?

Set goals for the intern's progress. You can help the intern set goals for the completion of various tasks, including daily, weekly, and monthly goals. If the intern is working on a project with deadlines, setting goals may help ensure that these deadlines will be met. Guide the intern in breaking larger tasks into action steps and setting goals for their completion. Set milestones so that the intern knows he/she is working toward something, and has a sense of accomplishment when each milestone has been achieved.

What department or what project team will the intern work for?

Step 5: Developing an Internship Description

Now that you have answered the above questions and have thought about how your organization can make the most of this program, it is time to develop a detailed description of your internship. As is the case with any job description, the more detail you can provide for each section, the easier it will be for you to select the right candidate for your internship. Elements that should be included are:

**Step 5.
Develop an internship description**

- Information about your organization and/or project;
- A description of the qualifications or skills required of the intern;
- Preferred majors and/or fields of study;
- Compensation;
- The number of hours of work per week;
- Starting and ending date.

To post an internship, fill out the application form at <http://eship.cornell.edu/internships/company/> under

the application link. The form can be completed in a few minutes. If you have any questions, please email Debra Moesch-Shelley at d1m8@cornell.edu or call her at (607)254-2802.

Once received, **Entrepreneurship@Cornell** staff will look through our student resumes to find students whose skills match your needs. We will send you resumes to consider -- you make arrangements for interviews and decide on salary, work arrangements, etc.

PHASE FOUR: HELPFUL HINTS TO STAY ORGANIZED

You have already completed the basic steps for organizing, implementing and seeking students for your unique internship. This section will offer some suggestions to make the most out of your internship experience.

Timeframe

The internship was designed to be a summer internship, meaning the intern will only be part of your team for approximately a three-month period. This should be kept in mind as you assign projects for the intern to complete. It may provide the intern with a sense of accomplishment to assign a project that can be completed by the end of the internship. The intern will not only have gained working experience, but will also have something physical to add to their resume portfolio.

The Hiring Process

You should keep in mind that hiring an intern is much like hiring other new employees.

- **Step One:** Screen the applications to find which candidates meet your criteria.
- **Step Two:** Schedule telephone or personal interviews with your top candidate selections.
- **Step Three:** Once you have selected a candidate, you may wish to draft an internship agreement defining start/end dates, compensation, goals and expectations. Both of you will sign this agreement.

Create an Enjoyable Experience

Now that you have hired an intern, you will want to ensure that the program will be an enjoyable experience for all parties involved. This will most likely be the intern's first experience working in a professional environment. Therefore, it is important that once the intern arrives, the mentor/supervisor should plan to provide some type of orientation to your workplace. This should include:

- A tour of the facility;
- Introduction to staff and an explanation of their roles within the company;

- A copy of company handbook or employee behavior guidelines;
- A description of day-to-day office function.

The intern will also need to know typical working hours, when they should arrive, when a lunch break should be taken, where parking is available, and where the various pieces of office equipment are located and directions on using them. Guidance on proper work attire may also be appreciated.

Lessons

The internship provides an ideal forum for interns to learn how the professional world operates. The mentor or supervisor may have the opportunity to demonstrate proper business etiquette by inviting the intern to accompany them through a "typical" workday. It is also useful for an intern to sit in on meetings to better comprehend events and resolutions that happen during the course of these meetings. Again, this is most likely the intern's first professional experience, so it will serve as a basis for future professional encounters.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What types of skills can I expect from my intern?

The best way to determine the intern's skill level is by asking them during the interview process whether they are familiar with specific programs or concepts or with using routine office equipment, like the copier or fax machine. You should also ask about their "soft" skills, such as ethics, teamwork, and time management. In general, the student should bring advanced analytical, research or writing skills to the internship.

What types of tasks should I give my intern?

The tasks or projects assigned will depend on each individual company. Try to give the intern projects that will tie in previous coursework or will give them something physical to show at the end of their tenure with your company. The intern is working with you to advance their professional skills and is capable of contributing innovative thinking based on college courses that they have taken.

How can I make my program exciting and productive?

The intern will need to have a well rounded experience, with exposure to a number of different areas within the organization. Most importantly, there must be an organized plan. There should be an orientation process during which the intern will learn how their department fits within the structure of the entire organization. The best way to stay organized is to develop a plan before the intern arrives and outline the projects and goals ahead of time. A different assignment could be assigned each week, or the intern could rotate to different departments within the organization, developing different skills.

What are the legal issues associated with hiring an intern?

Some possible legal issues include compensation, confidentiality, equal opportunity employment, discrimination, and harassment. Please check with your organization's Human Resources Department for assistance. If you do not have an HR department, please email Debra Moesch-Shelley at d1m8@cornell.edu for further assistance.

Do I need to pay interns?

Most of the internships secured through the **Entrepreneurship@Cornell** program are paid. Once in a while, we do advertise non-paid positions to students. But most students are expecting a summer salary. Our program does receive funding from the New York State Centers for Advanced Technology (CAT) to help subsidize internships.

How long do I need to hire an intern?

This program was designed to encourage and provide summer internships. If you are pleased with your intern's work or have decided that internships are a great source of inexpensive labor with productive results, you are free to extend the internship opportunity.

What are my responsibilities as an internship employer?

As an employer, it is up to you to provide an open line of communication, a safe work environment, challenging and meaningful work, supervision, and feedback regarding the intern's performance.

Are interns eligible for workers' compensation benefits?

State workers' compensation laws do not distinguish between employees and paid interns. They are considered employees for this purpose. Your premiums should not increase by much because the interns will have little effect on your payroll and experience rating, two of the factors on which premiums are based.

Are interns eligible for unemployment compensation at the end of the internship?

Generally, the answer is no. Unemployment eligibility is based on a person's availability for work, thus excluding interns who currently are in school or will return to school after a summer internship. Ask the student if he/she intends to return to school. If the answer is no, you can prevent misunderstandings by explaining that the intern position is just for the summer and you can't promise regular full-time work when it's over.

What do I do if there is a problem with my intern?

Your organization is offering the intern an opportunity to gain hands-on, “real world” experience. As this may be the intern’s first professional experience, it is recommended that you constructively approach this subject. Just like any other employee of the company, there are specific rules to follow and appropriate behavior to be demonstrated. Hopefully, as a result, the student may learn something that can be corrected in the future. We can help you in this process. Please feel free to call Debra Moesch-Shelley at (607)254-2802 if problems arise.

Do equal employment opportunity laws apply to interns?

Federal laws, such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) do not define who qualifies as employees and who does not. They prohibit discrimination in recruiting, hiring and employment practices. Therefore, you should treat intern candidates the same as all other applicants and base your hiring decisions on their qualifications, rather than on gender, race, color, age, national origin, religion or disability.

Are you liable if an intern experiences or instigates harassment (sexual, racial or ethnic) while on the job?

Yes. If an intern is harassed at your worksite and you do nothing about it, your company is exposed to the risk of lawsuits. Therefore, take time to advise new interns of your guidelines regarding appropriate workplace behavior, your company’s harassment policy and its complaint procedures. To fend off any problems, let your regular employees know that the policy applies to interns as well and that you expect students to be treated appropriately.

How do I sign up?

All you will need to do is fill out the **Entrepreneurship@Cornell** internship application form at www.eship.cornell.edu/activities/internships/company/ by clicking on the application form link. If you have any questions, please email Debra Moesch-Shelley at d1m8@cornell.edu or call her at (607)254-2802.

