

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM BASICS

FOR EMPLOYER PARTNERS



What makes an internship an *internship*?

An internship and a summer job are both types of temporary work at an organization. A summer job is intended to fill an immediate organizational need for which the employee is financially compensated. An internship, however, is intended to be aligned to the person's area of study and provide them with direct work experience to gain exposure to a specific industry and position, as well as the broader work environment. Although not required, interns tend to be current students at either the college or graduate school level.

Although there are limited circumstances in which the Fair Labor Standards Act permits unpaid internships, providing interns with financial compensation (in the form of an hourly rate, stipend, housing, transportation reimbursement, etc.) encourages a wider array of students to apply for the position, thereby increasing the likelihood of bringing on board the best and most diverse talent. If you intend to offer an unpaid internship, you should consult with your company's legal counsel to understand the conditions and requirements.

Where should an intern be placed in your organization?

Interns should be placed in departments and offices that:

- **Produce enough work to keep an intern busy.** The office should be able to provide enough work to maintain a full schedule for the intern, without placing undue demands on them. Because the intent of an internship is to ensure exposure to your company and its industry, the work assigned to an intern should incorporate an appropriate amount of substantive tasks (as opposed to administrative tasks).
- **Have the time and bandwidth to actively manage an intern.** An intern will require a greater amount of hands-on management than a typical new employee, so it's important that the team you place an intern with has the time and willingness to provide guidance and feedback on an ongoing basis.
- **Are willing to integrate an intern into their team.** Seek out departments that are willing to embrace interns as full members of their team by including them in meetings and activities (as appropriate) and providing them with ongoing mentorship throughout the internship.
- **Would consider bringing the intern back as a full-time employee after graduation.** Interns are a great pipeline for entry-level positions in your organization. You'll have the chance to assess their work over an extended period of time and determine if they're a cultural fit for your organization.

Note: This document is provided for informational purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice. We strongly recommend you meet with your company's legal counsel to ensure your internship program adheres to all relevant statutes (including but not limited to the Fair Labor Standards Act), regulations and policies (such as those protecting your company's confidential information).

Developing Your Internship Posting

Your internship posting should give prospective interns a realistic preview of the work they'll be performing should they join your organization. It should include information about your company, the department they'll be working in, and the type of work they'll be performing. It's also important to detail qualifications for the role so you can effectively screen résumés.

Components of a Successful Internship Program

While the internship period is a great opportunity for you to assess interns as potential fits for full-time positions in your organization, it's also an opportunity for them to assess you and your organization. Giving interns a meaningful experience increases your odds of converting them into full-time employees.

- **Core responsibilities.** Core responsibilities are the substantive and limited administrative tasks that comprise the bulk of an intern's day-to-day activities. The majority of these will be assignments related to the work of the departments in which they're assigned, such as research, analysis, writing, presentation development, media tracking and note-taking, among others. Core responsibilities may also include administrative and operational tasks that they're responsible for on a regular basis; for example, filing, answering phones, scanning business cards, setting up for meetings, etc.
- **Exposure to your broader organization.** Integrating activities that provide them with exposure to the broader organization will help interns learn more about the company, its work, and how the departments to which they're assigned fit into the context of the overall organization's work. This can include formal and informal meetings and "brown bag lunches" with leadership from other sections of the organization, cross-department assignments, and brief rotations with other offices, among others.
- **Social and organizational culture elements.** Beyond the more traditional "work" components, weaving social and organizational culture elements into your internship program will allow interns to get to know the various individuals they'll be working with and get a fuller picture of the organization's values and what it would be like to work there. Additionally, these types of activities will allow your organization to get to know the interns better if you're considering them for full-time positions. These events need not be costly; rather, consider what activities are already being planned for your employees and invite interns to join them. Relevant social and organizational culture activities might include a company picnic, an informal gathering of employees and interns eating lunch together, or an outing to a sporting event, among many others.

In addition to the above, consider including the following:

- **Exposure to your broader industry.** Providing interns with exposure to your company's broader industry will allow them to more fully understand the context of your organization's work. Useful information could be industry best practices, current events, and trends. This could be incorporated into an internship program by organizing discussions among interns and subject matter experts within your company, regularly sharing relevant articles and thought pieces, and connecting interns with external experts for informational meetings.
- **Professional development.** An internship is a valuable opportunity for students to not only learn about a particular job and company, but also to grow as professionals. For some of them, the internship they have with your company may be their first time in a professional setting. Given this, you might consider integrating broader professional development elements into your internship program. This might include holding résumé-writing workshops, inviting interns to participate in existing networking events, presenting on professional etiquette best practices, etc.

Additional Resources to Explore

As you begin to develop your internship program, there are many existing resources online that can assist you in the process. Here are just a few that you may find useful.

- [12 Steps to Setting Up an Intern Program](#) (Internships.com)
- [15 Best Practices for Internship Programs](#) (National Association of Colleges and Employers)
- [Creating a Successful \(and Legal\) Internship Program](#) (Business News Daily)
- [Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program](#) (University of Virginia Career Center)
- [Department of Labor Fact Sheet #71: Internship Programs Under the Fair Labor Standards Act](#) (United States Department of Labor)



FUTURE
HOUSING
LEADERS™



@joinFHL

Visit [FutureHousingLeaders.com](https://www.FutureHousingLeaders.com)
for more information.