



Sample Internship Guide

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Table of Contents

About the Guide	1
About Internship Programs.....	1
Important Note: Student Assistants	1
Common Terms Related to Internships	2
Utilization of Interns	3
Possible Sources for Interns.....	3
Organization Internship Coordinator	4
When to Hire an Intern.....	4
Job Descriptions.....	5
Recruitment	5
Screening and Selection.....	6
Onboarding.....	6
Training.....	7
Setting Up Interns for Success	8
Best Practices for Supervising Interns	9
Evaluations.....	9
Internship Completion	10
Recordkeeping	11
Worker's Compensation.....	11
Getting Started Considerations– Creating an Internship Program	12
Sample Steps to Obtain an Intern	14
Sample Intern Onboarding Checklist	16
Sample Volunteer Service Agreement Template.....	18

About the Guide

This Sample Internship Guide was created by the California Government Operations Agency (GovOps) in consultation with the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) to be a reference document for organizations to adapt for their use.

While CalHR does not have oversight authority over internships the information provided in this guide is intended to raise organizations' awareness of the options available when establishing these programs.

CalHR recommends that organizations consult with their internal Human Resources, Contracts/Procurement, Labor Relations, and Legal teams early in the process of developing any internship program.

About Internship Programs

Internship programs can be part of an organization's strategy to create a talent pipeline of prospective candidates for current and future vacancies. Internships can offer a carefully planned and monitored work experience. Interns gain on-the-job training that integrates education, career development and public service, while agencies hosting interns may benefit from the contributions of their creativity and innovation. Interning in a specific job field can help an intern's resume stand out in their job search after the program ends.

This guide applies to:

- Interns hosted directly by the organization
- Interns placed through partner organizations
- State organizations seeking volunteers to build a career pipeline

Note: Most educational or nonprofit entities that offer internship opportunities for their students or members may already have programmatic guidelines, assessment forms, recruitment parameters, and other existing processes for their programs. The information contained in this guide is meant to be a sample and tool for organizations to use as a starting point.

Important Note: Student Assistants

Although the terms intern and student assistant are sometimes used interchangeably, this guide is not intended to cover the use of Student Assistants. For more information about Student Assistants in State Civil Service, please refer to the following:

- [Student Employment](#)

- [HR Manual Policy 1201 – Student Assistants](#)
- [HR Manual Policy 1207 – Hiring Preference for Student Assistant and Internships](#)

Common Terms Related to Internships

State organizations may benefit from being familiar with the following common terms to distinguish between internships and other opportunities offered in state service.

Internship:

At the State of California, internships are non-civil service positions that offer practical, hands-on experience and may also provide the opportunity to earn academic credit authorized by their educational institution. Internships may be paid or unpaid, depending on the program.

Fellowship:

At the State of California, fellowships are typically paid, non-civil service positions that offer new college graduates, graduate students, and post-graduate students practical experience, and may even provide academic credit authorized by their educational institution or a partner organization.

Volunteer:

At the State of California, volunteers are unpaid positions providing any participant with practical experience. “Volunteer” means any person who, of their own free will, provides goods or services, without any financial gain, to any state agency.

State Student Assistant:

Student Assistant classifications are designed for undergraduates performing pre-professional duties. The Graduate Student Assistant classification is restricted to students in a college or university curriculum leading to an advanced degree in a professional area and requires the performance of entry-level professional work. The work assigned to incumbents of both classes must be related directly to their college curriculum and academic goals.

A *state* Student Assistant (and/or Graduate Student Assistant) is hired through the civil service system and may accrue state service credit as a civil servant would.

Contract Student Assistant:

A contract Student Assistant is hired through a contract, and is employed by a third party, such as University Enterprises Inc. or the California Community College Foundation. Contract Student Assistants are subject to different rules in hiring than state Student Assistants.

Utilization of Interns

An organization may use their workforce and succession management plans, current or forecasted vacancies, or other workforce needs assessment processes to determine which areas of their workforce may benefit from developing career pipelines through an internship program. Intern assignments typically support defined projects or program goals, provide exposure to relevant public policy or operations, and include opportunities to observe meetings, processes, or decision-making where appropriate.

Organizations must also stay in compliance with applicable [Memorandums of Understanding](#) and [HR Manual Policy 1201 – Student Assistants](#) that may prohibit interns from performing duties reserved for civil service employees unless expressly authorized by law. Organizations are encouraged to consult with their Human Resources, Contracts/Procurement, Labor Relations, and Legal teams regarding how to best to explore the opportunities that internship programs can provide.

Possible Sources for Interns

An organization may consider a variety of sources for interns that would be a good match for their workforce needs. An organization may review previous sources for successful candidates or consider looking more broadly to establish a diverse and well-qualified intern candidate pool. Interns may be sourced from colleges and universities, professional organizations, or nonprofit organizations. These sources may recruit, screen, place, and evaluate interns in your

organization. Some entities may cover interns regarding worker's compensation or provide them with mandatory training. Organizations are encouraged to work with their Contract/Procurement teams to ensure any established agreement meets the organization's needs and is in alignment with [State Administrative Manual](#) requirements.

Organization Internship Coordinator

Depending on the needs of the organization, it may be helpful to establish an Internship Coordinator to:

- Advertise the organization's internship opportunities.
- Coordinate the recruiting and screening of intern applications.
- Assist in the selection of interns.
- Promote internship opportunities within the organization.
- Serve as the contact regarding the organization's internships.
- Review and revise the organization's internship procedures as needed.
- Serve as a liaison between intern supervisors and third-party organizations.

Please see the [Getting Started Considerations – Creating an Internship Program](#) for more information. An Internship Coordinator can be instrumental in ensuring an organization conducts the following activities in such a manner that serves its goals as well as maintains alignment with all its processes and procedures.

When to Hire an Intern

To determine if an internship program is a good fit for the organization, it may help to determine the following:

- Do you have a specific project or assignment that will provide a quality working and learning opportunity for an intern?
- Can you commit time to develop an intern, potentially strengthen ties with your community, and offer insight into your organization?
- Can you benefit from the latest technology, perspectives, and relevant skills being used in our schools or brought by a diverse pool of trainees?
- Would an internship program be a good fit for your overall recruitment strategy as a way to expand potential candidate pools?

Please see the [Sample Steps to Obtain an Intern](#) for more information.

Job Descriptions

Depending on the structure of the program, the organization may be involved in developing written job descriptions before recruiting interns. A duty statement template may be a guideline for intern job descriptions.

Internships are designed to provide learning opportunities and often include defined projects or learning objectives. Consider the following when drafting a job description for an internship opportunity:

- Job title
- Reporting division
- Expected duties and deliverables
- Eligibility requirements (e.g. participation in a particular major or course of study)
- Minimum and desirable qualifications
- Physical or environmental requirements
- Internship duration and estimated hours per week
- Training needs
- Supervisor name or unit/section

It is recommended to review job descriptions prior to each recruitment cycle to ensure alignment with program needs.

Recruitment

Depending on the structure of the program, the entity providing the intern may be responsible for sourcing candidates and may coordinate the selection process. In other programs, the organization may be involved in recruiting interns for the program.

Organizations will review all associated recruitment processes to ensure they are fair and transparent, and that they prioritize recruitment methods that reach diverse communities and meet any applicable requirements of [HR Manual Policy 1207 – Hiring Preference for Student Assistant and Internships](#) when recruiting interns and state Student Assistants. Outreach to community organizations, colleges and universities, higher education foundations and non-profit organizations, and workforce programs can be effective ways to identify intern opportunities.

If the organization is involved in recruiting interns, the organization may choose to advertise the program on the organization's social media channels and/or

the organization's website and as a best practice should include the following information for prospective interns:

- Whether the internship is paid or unpaid
- Eligibility requirements
- Minimum and desirable qualifications
- Location
- Expected duties and deliverables
- Time commitment
- Duration of the internship
- How to apply

Screening and Selection

Depending on the structure of the program, the organization may be directly involved in screening, interviewing, and placement for interns. The organization may use screening methods such as:

- Application review for
 - Eligibility.
 - Possession of minimum and desirable qualifications.
- Interviews or structured conversations that assess
 - Interest in public service.
 - Ability to perform assigned duties.
 - Alignment with learning objectives.
- Skill assessments or writing samples, when appropriate.
- Reference checks to assess
 - Relevant knowledge.
 - Skill level.
 - Past work/volunteer experience.
- Background check if required by organizational policy.

Onboarding

Depending on the structure of the program, the organization may be involved in providing an onboarding process for the intern.

Intern onboarding may include the following:

- **Information about the organization.** Interns at the organization should review documents that are important for them to understand the mission

of the organization. Interns may be provided with an organizational chart that explains various roles and responsibilities of employees.

- **Structure.** Interns might not be familiar with formal workplace procedures (e.g., attendance policies, break times, days off). Organizations are encouraged to review relevant expectations and procedures with interns on their first day.
- **Work Arrangements.** Interns may not have experience working in the setting they are placed in, such as an office setting or in a hybrid work environment. Organizations are encouraged to provide interns with information about organization and team habits for video calls, in-person meetings, and work-related events.
- **Introductions.** Supervisors may take time in the beginning of the internship to introduce the intern to key people in the organization. Making a special effort to encourage those contacts early on may make interns feel more comfortable asking for advice or support later.
- **Confidentiality.** If interns have access to information that is governed by principles of privacy and confidentiality, organizations are encouraged to review expectations as to how to ensure its confidentiality. Depending on their role, interns may need to understand that they must not discuss details of their work with others without explicit permission from their supervisor or that they may not share written materials produced for the organization without specific permission.

Please see CalHR's [Onboarding Resources](#) website and [Sample Intern Onboarding Checklist](#) for more information.

Training

Depending on the structure of the program, the organization may be involved in providing training to the intern. The intern's training program may depend on their specific job duties and may focus on learning new skills and increasing their knowledge. The supervisor may collaborate with the intern to identify meaningful training opportunities. Ongoing training may include the following:

- **Skill development.** There may be a need for training in specific skills such as computer programs, office equipment, or other tasks directly related to the job.
- **Shadowing.** Consider inviting Interns to participate in activities and team meetings as much as possible.

- **Questions.** Encourage interns to ask questions and engage with employees and supervisors.
- **Professional conferences or association meetings.** Consider exploring opportunities for interns to attend training or networking events that are related to their course of study and their duties as interns.

Depending on what training is provided by the educational or professional organization that placed the intern, the organization may need to consider providing standard training, such as:

- Sexual harassment prevention training
- Information security training
- Workplace safety training (as needed)
- Training specific to any software or systems
- Defensive driver training (if intern drives for their internship duties)
- Ethics training

Please note: In general, CalHR only provides training to civil service employees. Thus, if your organization uses CalHR's [CalLearns](#) learning management system for employee training, you may need to make alternate arrangements for intern training or maintenance of intern training records.

Setting Up Interns for Success

To create a meaningful learning environment for interns, the organization may consider best practices such as:

- Assign a committed supervisor with time to invest in the intern.
- Consider pairing with one or more mentors to supplement the experience.
- Provide a safe and supportive work environment.
- Ensure duties are clearly defined.
- Offer relevant training and professional development opportunities.
- Provide coaching, feedback, and guidance.
- Require supervisors to:
 - Set clear expectations.
 - Meet regularly with interns.
 - Evaluate performance at the end of the internship.

The program allows interns to gain valuable work experience and on-the-job training that can positively impact their careers. To maximize the experience, interns should:

- Perform assigned duties as outlined in their job descriptions.

- Adhere to organization policies, procedures, and rules governing professional behavior.
- Be punctual and work the required number of hours
- Notify their supervisor if they are unable to attend as planned.
- Behave and dress appropriately in the workplace.
- Respect the confidentiality of the workplace, its clients and its employees.
- If workload is too low, take the initiative and bring this to their supervisor's attention.
- Discuss any problems with their supervisor and, if necessary, with the internship coordinator at the organization.

Collectively, these expectations can help ensure that interns understand their duties and responsibilities before beginning work.

Best Practices for Supervising Interns

Depending on the structure of the program, the organization may be responsible for providing a designated site supervisor who is responsible for providing orientation, onboarding and supervision for the intern.

The supervisor oversees and assigns the intern's work product. Depending on the structure of the program, supervisors may need to monitor the intern's time and submit an intern evaluation form provided by the intern's college for those receiving academic credit.

The program may include a set time to meet with the intern and/or the organization they are affiliated with to review progress on projects, touch base, and provide feedback. During the regular student/supervisor meetings, as well as with the midway and final evaluations, supervisors may elect to discuss with the intern:

- How well they are meeting the goals/responsibilities.
- How they are developing professional skills related to the field.
- Areas for continual growth.
- Suggestions for ways to improve (further training, specific courses, etc.)
- Overall performance.
- Other issues that may need to be addressed.

Evaluations

Depending on the structure of the program, the organization may be involved in evaluation processes to help the intern acknowledge work strengths and areas

for improvement. It is helpful if supervisors evaluate the intern regularly throughout the entire internship, not just at the end. The evaluation is a learning experience and an opportunity for two-way feedback.

The program may include regularly scheduled evaluations to help avoid common problems with internships, including miscommunication, misunderstanding of job roles, and lack of specific goals and objectives. Supervisors may find it helpful to schedule a preliminary evaluation early in the internship (in the second or third week). This may help to clarify whether the intern's orientation, onboarding and training were sufficient or if there are specific areas in which the intern has questions or needs further training.

Criteria to consider when evaluating an intern may be provided by the organization they are affiliated with and/or may include aspects such as:

- Progress towards or accomplishment of learning objectives as stated in the internship agreement or duty statement.
- Skill development or knowledge gained over the course of the internship.
- Overall contribution to the mission of the organization.
- Dependability, punctuality, attendance and other work habits.
- Relationships with others, overall attitude.
- Potential for future career in the related field.

The intern may also be given the opportunity to evaluate the internship experience, which can be important in determining the value of the work experience for future interns.

Internship Completion

Depending on the structure of the program, the organization may be involved in completing a formal evaluation process such as the one described above. This may help both the supervisor and the intern bring closure to the experience.

Supervisors also may consider some form of recognition such as a celebration with co-workers in the final week of the internship. Because co-workers often have extensive contact with interns, this type of event can be a positive way to recognize the contribution of other employees as well as the intern.

At the end of the internship, the intern supervisor should consider the following activities:

- Complete college/university evaluation to assess the intern's progress and skill development (if applicable).

- Offer to write a letter of recommendation if job performance has been satisfactory.
- Speak to the intern about any work samples they may wish to use and have them pre-approved by the appropriate individuals.
- Ensure the intern returns any organization property.
- Have intern leave contact information (to contact about upcoming positions, if job performance has been satisfactory).
- Send a note of appreciation to the intern.

Recordkeeping

Organizations should consult their records retention schedule and maintain the following according to it:

- Volunteer applications, screening documentation, and training records.
- Signed acknowledgement of policies and responsibilities.
- Service hours and assignment history.
- Incident reports and performance documentation.

Worker's Compensation

An employer may choose to extend worker's compensation coverage to interns that perform services for the organization. This decision is an important one since it has further implications and should be discussed with the organization's Human Resources and/or Legal Offices.

Getting Started Considerations– Creating an Internship Program

The list below may be a helpful tool to plan and launch an effective internship program.

Status	Task
•	<p>External Program vs. Organization Program</p> <p>Is the organization interested in participating in existing programs administered by external partners?</p>
•	<p>Contract with an External Partner</p> <p>If the internship is administered by an external partner, which legal agreement will the organization establish with the partner (contract, MOU)?</p>
•	<p>Program Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In which city/cities will the internship be available? • How many interns can the organization support? • Will the internship be remote, in-person, or hybrid? • Will the organization have sufficient equipment and physical space (as needed) for interns? • How long will the internship be? • Will interns be required to travel?
•	<p>Legal /Human Resources/ Labor Relations Considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will worker's compensation coverage be extended to interns? • Which bargaining unit MOUs should be reviewed to ensure intern duties comply?
•	<p>Internship Coordinator</p> <p>Who will develop and manage the program for your organization?</p>
•	<p>Internship Guide</p>

Status	Task
	<p>Develop or customize an organization Internship Guide that includes the written rules governing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Job descriptions<li>• Recruitments<li>• Screening<li>• Intern training<li>• Responsibility of interns<li>• Utilization of interns<li>• Supervision of interns<li>• Insurance of interns

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Sample Steps to Obtain an Intern

Note: These steps refer to an “Internship Coordinator” within the organization, which is whoever is responsible for managing internship programs. This can be adjusted according to the roles and responsibilities within your organization.

Step	Who	Action
1	Program	Needs an intern
2	Program	Submits request for interns to Internship Coordinator
3	Program	Completes Duty Statement for intern and sends to Internship Coordinator
4	Internship Coordinator	Posts intern position information on organization public website with application instructions
5	Internship Coordinator	Begins recruitment for intern(s) via social media, partner organizations, local colleges and universities, (if appropriate), etc.
6	Internship Coordinator	Receives intern applications
7	Internship Coordinator	Distributes applications to program
8	Program	Reviews application materials and selects candidates to interview
9	Program	Conducts interviews, reference checks, and background check (if required by program)
10	Program	Selects final intern and offers internship. Notify unsuccessful candidates after offer is accepted.
11	Program	Notifies Internship Coordinator of intern offer, provides intern name, start and end date
12	Internship Coordinator	Closes job announcement on organization website, and any other channels
13	Internship Coordinator/ Supervisor	Conduct new intern orientation and onboarding in a cohort with multiple interns or individually to complete forms, discuss expectations, job duties, etc.

Step	Who	Action
14	Supervisor	Checks in with intern periodically through the internship to receive and provide feedback (see this guide)
15	Intern & Supervisor	At the end of the internship, each will complete an evaluation of the internship/intern/supervisor and submit to Internship Coordinator

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Sample Intern Onboarding Checklist

Status	Task
<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete all necessary forms needed for intern
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine training needed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Orient intern with the organization
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide information about the organization and discuss organizational structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Introductions to staff
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tour of the organization, division, unit
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give intern tools to do the job: desk, computer, chair, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inform intern of staff meetings, work-related events, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide information on where to go for help or if there is a problem
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review procedures for calling in sick, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine how often you will meet with the intern (weekly or bi-weekly) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be regular • Must be reciprocal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage good work habits from the intern (make clear expectations)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss the following with the intern: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific duties of the intern • Supervisor's responsibilities during the internship • How the intern will be provided with regular feedback, guidance, and support • If interns have access to information that is governed by principles of privacy and confidentiality, organizations are encouraged to review expectations as to how to ensure its confidentiality
<input type="checkbox"/>	During the regular intern/supervisor meetings, as well as with the midway and final evaluations, discuss with the intern: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well they are meeting the goals/responsibilities • How they are developing professional skills related to the field • Areas for continual growth

Status	Task
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suggestions for ways to improve (further training, specific courses, etc.)<li>• Overall performance<li>• Other issues that may need to be addressed.

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Sample Volunteer Service Agreement Template

Volunteer Name (First, MI, Last)	Phone Number	State Entity	
Division/Branch/Section	Supervisor Name	Supervisor Email	
Reporting Site Address	City	State	Zip Code
Is the Volunteer a Student? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Start Date	End Date	
Work Arrangements <input type="checkbox"/> Remote <input type="checkbox"/> Hybrid <input type="checkbox"/> In-Person	Work Schedule		
Volunteer Duties			
Indicate if duties will include any of the following: <input type="checkbox"/> Travel <input type="checkbox"/> Handling of Money <input type="checkbox"/> Driving a Personal or State Vehicle on State Business* *Please provide Driver's License Number _____ and expiration date: _____			
SERVICE AGREEMENT			
<p>The volunteer does not replace any employee and works under close supervision of an employee.</p> <p>I agree to comply with all organizational policies, regulations, directives and instructions, and to conduct myself in a professional manner, consistent with the same standards as established for employees.</p> <p>I understand that I will not be compensated for any work performed as a Volunteer, other than for reimbursement of necessary and allowable expenses</p>			

when authorized in my duty statement and in accordance with organizational rules.

I understand that any injuries I sustain in the course and scope of performing authorized volunteer services under this agreement shall be included within the scope of workers' compensation coverage maintained by the organization, to the same extent as injuries sustained by an employee. I also understand that the organization may, at its discretion, assume liability for tort claims against me arising from my acts or omissions occurring within the course and scope of my authorized volunteer service.

I understand that any training provided by the organization is to assist me in performing the functions and duties which are of benefit to the community and/or to me. I understand that I am not entitled to a job after completion of training.

I understand that if I operate a private motor vehicle as part of my volunteer activities, I must file a certification of insurance coverage and mechanical safety of the vehicle.

I understand and agree that all rights, title and interest, including copyright, in and to any materials

created by me as a volunteer during the term of this agreement shall belong to the organization upon creation and shall continue in the organization's exclusive ownership upon termination of this agreement. Such materials shall be a work for hire within the meaning of the Copyright Act of 1976, as amended. If and to the extent that any portion of the materials created by me pursuant to this agreement are determined not to be a work for hire, I assign to the organization all rights, title and interest in such portion of the materials, including all related copyrights and other proprietary rights. I agree that the provisions of this paragraph shall be effective unless otherwise agreed to in writing. I agree to cooperate with the Department and to execute any document reasonably necessary to give these provisions full force and effect, even if this agreement has been terminated.

I understand that this agreement remains in effect only so long as is mutually agreeable to both the organization and me, and that either I or the organization may terminate this agreement at any time, with or without cause, and with or without advance notice.

Signature of Volunteer

Date

Supervisor Name	Supervisor Signature	Date
Volunteer Coordinator Name	Volunteer Coordinator Signature	Date

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