

MANAGING A REMOTE INTERNSHIP

Onboarding

- Managers should **set clear expectations** for their interns, such as:
 - Working hours
 - Communication requirements and preferred channels
 - Dress code
- Review the **responsibilities and duties** of the position
- Discuss the intern's personal and professional **goals**, and how the intern desires to make an **impact** on the organization
- Facilitate a **welcome event** and introduce your intern to:
 - Administrative processes and resources
 - Team members and stakeholders
- Create a **first month roadmap**:
 - Virtual meet and greets
 - Meetings and projects

Management

- Establishing personal connections:
 - **Weekly check-ins** are encouraged
 - Social platforms: MS Teams, Slack, Zoom, etc
 - Phone and text
- **Understand your intern** - discover what they need to do well, and the degree of interaction they prefer
- **Include your intern** in meetings and encourage them to share updates
- Utilize a tool, such as MS Planner, Excel, or Asana, to **track progress on projects**



TOP TEN BEST PRACTICES

1. **Access.** Allow the intern access to staff and the chief administrative official, and encourage the intern to attend meetings and events, including

- a. Department director meetings
- b. One-on-one mentoring sessions
- c. Board/council meetings
- d. Nonpublic/executive sessions
- e. Regional manager meetings
- f. State association conferences.

2. **Variety and meaningful work.** Provide various projects and participatory experiences in a number of different departments. For example,

- a. Set the council agenda
- b. Put together a RFP/RFQ
- c. Develop a budget for a specific cost center
- d. Update a section of the strategic plan
- e. Conduct a citizen survey
- f. Update the emergency plan
- g. Update the hazard mitigation plan
- h. Prepare a fixed-asset report.

Tasks that are important to the goals of the organization will attract quality interns. Résumé-building experiences often are more valuable than a paycheck.

3. **Individuality.** Each intern will have his or her own set of career goals. Help meet the intern's needs and interests by eliciting input from various departments and agencies for potential work projects. Discuss the intern's career goals and provide an opportunity for the intern to work with departments in the organization to meet those goals.

4. **Education.** Educate people in the community about careers in local government and seek out opportunities to promote the internship program. In particular, target nearby colleges or universities to ensure a sustainable internship program.

5. **Frontline Experience.** Provide an opportunity for the intern to learn to appreciate and respect the work of frontline service providers who exhibit

good management practices. Such opportunities could include

- Providing customer service/answering phones
- Responding to resident inquiries via e-mail or postal mail
- Responding to a Freedom of Information request
- Providing time in the intern's schedule for ridealongs with public safety or other service providers, as well as for the possibility of actually helping to do the work in the field.

6. **Mentoring.** Provide the intern with a stable mentor to offer guidance and encouragement throughout the internship experience. Remember, today's interns are tomorrow's leaders. Avoid putting interns in basements, back rooms, or conference rooms. Instead, provide them with workspaces near as many people as possible so they can engage with other staff.

7. **Supervision.** Avoid having the intern report to a supervisor who may lack the experience and authority to provide the intern with tools for learning. Have supervisors supervise.

8. **Flexibility.** Remember that interns may have difficult academic schedules. Discuss projects and deadlines with interns and their academic counselors to ensure that everyone's needs are being met. If necessary, allow for flexible work hours.

9. **Evaluate.** Give interns feedback throughout their tenure and have them evaluate their own experiences before leaving. Remember that this is a growth experience for them. Help them work through their learning mistakes, and offer guidance and/or help when needed.

10. **Assimilate.** Make the program a routine part of the organization. Train regular staff to expect and appreciate the value added by interns. Continue to seek out qualified candidates and to share enthusiasm for local government. Budget funds each year for internships and, if possible, spread the funds out among several cost centers so that the financial impact extends throughout the organization.