

CREATING AND CONDUCTING SUCCESSFUL WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR PARTICIPANTS

THE H-1B READY TO WORK (RTW) PARTNERSHIP GRANT PROGRAM

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In October 2014, the U.S. Department of Labor announced nearly \$170 million in grants to expedite the employment of Americans struggling with long-term unemployment (defined as being unemployed for 24 weeks or more). The grants are part of the H1-B RTW Partnership initiative supporting and scaling innovative collaborations between employers, nonprofit organizations and federal job training programs to help connect ready-to-work Americans with ready-to-be-filled jobs. Grants, ranging from \$3 million to \$10 million, were awarded to 23 partnerships to serve individuals in 20 states and Puerto Rico.

Overall, long-term unemployed workers require specialized service interventions such as financial or mental health counseling to succeed in the labor market as rapidly as possible. The H-1B RTW grant offers innovative and flexible program models that address the unique and varied challenges facing this group of long-term unemployed workers, providing targeted and customized employment assistance, counseling, and training.

OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS

This handbook will be most useful when the reader treats it as a resource collection and selects information that is needed at the moment. Here are the sections:

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook and overview of content

This handbook is a how-to guide designed for H-1B RTW grantee staff who are implementing and guiding their H-1B RTW grant program at the local level. It focuses exclusively on internships as a learning experience and tool for H-1B RTW clients/students. Designed to be both a general guide and a resource, this handbook offers information, ideas, tools and tips on internships to facilitate planning and executing them successfully. It includes the following:

- An introduction to, and overview of internships as a learning vehicle;
- The planning process for establishing an internship opportunity for a student;
- Choosing and recruiting employer internship partners and managing the relationship.

Please note, this handbook is intended to serve as a tool to support grantees in implementing and managing their internships and other paid work experience, and should ensure all activities align with the H-1B RTW SGA and the grantee's individual Statement of Work (SOW).

Defining internships for H-1B RTW programs

As noted below and in essence, there is wide flexibility on the structure and composition of individual internship experiences, and grantees should ensure their activities align with the H-1B RTW SGA and their individual SOW. An internship plan will be a negotiated among the student, the appropriate training organization/college staff member, and the employer representative. Each internship may likely differ from others and be tailored to meet the training and knowledge needs of a specific student.

For H-1B RTW grantees, a general definition of internships is found in the *H-1B RTW Partnership Grants SGA*. "Internships provide a monitored or supervised work or service experience in an individual's career field where he or she has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what is learned throughout the experience. These learning goals can include: academic learning, career development, and skill development. Internships are part of a structured program where the grantee establishes the criteria for determining who will participate in these programs; are for a set period of time that is generally limited in duration, but may be flexible to allow interns to spend limited time in the classroom; support the attainment of credentials in the individual's expected career field (where such credentials exist); relate to training provided through the grant and help participants prepare for employment opportunities on which the grant focuses; and, do not necessarily carry an offer of regular employment upon successful completion of the internship."¹ For the purposes of this SGA, internships are required to be paid internships for long-term unemployed workers.

It should be noted that the *Funding Opportunity Announcement* does not define the details or structure of the individual's internship, but notes that each internship should:

- have learning goals and should reflect on what was/is included in the grant funded learning experience;
- be for a defined period of time generally limited in duration;
- be flexible to support work-place and classroom learning;
- prepare the individual for employment opportunities, and;
- be a paid experience.

Because no “official” definitions discriminate between a “paid work experience” and an “internship” this handbook reflects the language found in the FOA governing H-1B RTW grants. It appears that an internship differs from a paid work experience because oversight and monitoring is expected and occurs with more intensity with an internship. A paid work experience may well occur with little or no “learning” oversight and simply be experience in a work environment as more of an “enlightening” event rather than structured learning. Perhaps more insight can be found in the *SGA Section IV.E.6 Funding Restrictions* which is included here in Appendix III.

Employer Engagement Can Lead to Successful Internships

The key of a successful internship lies with a well-integrated relationship between the employer’s staff who oversee the intern and the educational institution’s professionals. Each relationship will be unique and based on the nature of the work, the employer environment and the expectations of the employer staff. Because the best insurance for a good internship lies with the employer, this handbook is heavily oriented toward building those relationships and presents specifics to plan, guide, and manage them.

II. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW TO PAID WORK EXPERIENCE AND INTERNSHIPS

Introduction: Work-based learning training strategies

As participants transition from classroom-based training to continued learning in the workplace, several kinds of learning experiences are used. The overall term for this type of learning is *work-based learning (WBL)*. It formally began in the U.S. in the early 1900s at the University of Cincinnati, where it was referred to as *cooperative education*. Currently, there are a variety of experiences in American education that are recognized under the rubric “work-based learning.” They include: paid work experience (full or part-time), paid or unpaid internships, externship/shadowing, and Apprenticeships.ⁱⁱ

“While On the Job(OJT) is an allowable activity under the H-1B RTW grantees, this toolkit focuses specifically on internships and other paid work experiences.” However, if you are interested in OJT specific information for your reference, we’ve included links to an OJT Toolkit to support your grant’s OJT activities, if appropriate.ⁱⁱⁱ

Comparing types of work-based learning

This handbook addresses work-based learning that is *generally a planned experience resulting from a negotiation between three parties: the educators/trainers at a school or training organization; the staff in an employer’s company, and; the training participant, or the student*. Together, both employer personnel and educators cooperatively oversee the learning experience for a participant. The participant may still be enrolled in the training institution and this is important because the training institution may carry the responsibility for the participant’s learning, experience, and safety. Additionally, a participant may still be receiving credit toward their academic goals for these experiences. The following paragraphs define and differentiate the various types of work-based learning and the criteria that separate one from another.

Paid work experience

“Paid work experience” is a general and loosely defined overall term for any type of learning that occurs in the work place for which the employee/participant is paid. It is usually a short experience – a few days up to a few weeks – that likely does not necessarily include a structured education plan. It can occur any time during the participant’s formal training and may serve as a vehicle to explore a type of job or a work environment. The employee/participant is often not assigned a specific set of tasks or a specific job but works with full-time staff as an “assistant.” H-1B RTW programs that are providing this type of training must be a paid work experience.

Internships

Internships, which for H-1B RTW programs must also be paid, provide a monitored or supervised work or service experience in an individual’s career field where he or she has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what is learned throughout the experience. These learning goals can include: academic learning, career development, and skill development. Flexibility exists for an internship to occur at any time during the training experience. The most successful experiences are generally structured with learning goals and supporting activities that are competency-based and tied to a participant's curriculum. Better internships are guided by a “formal” training plan which coordinates and integrates a participant's school-based instruction with a work site experience. The term “formal” implies that the plan is written and reflects agreement of all three parties. Length varies but is often a semester. The training plan specifies the occupational skills, employability skills, and the academic standards that the participant will achieve in the work experience.

Another important part of a formal training plan may also *define the relationships and responsibilities of all involved* and also describe the student evaluation process. The intern is supervised and monitored by a working professional, but is expected to engage in the entire range of professional activities that are expected of a professional. Participant progress in achieving the learning goals in the training plan is supervised and evaluated collaboratively by appropriate school and work site personnel. Work site supervisors/mentors also help participants use appropriate workplace skills to resolve real problems. In general, academic credit is usually granted in the subject area included in training plan.^{iv}

Externships/job shadowing

Externships are essentially job shadowing experiences that allow participants to spend a brief time with an employer for the purposes of introducing a participant to the workplace, or a particular career pathway or industry. Externships are typically held for a short time period, lasting anywhere from a single day to several weeks and sometimes may be held over a participant's winter or spring break. Externships typically are unpaid and the participant usually doesn't receive academic credit for their experience. Even though the participant is directly in the workplace, they are still only shadowing the professional or group of professionals rather than having work delegated and projects assigned, such as one would have in an internship. Externships are used mainly to explore interests and curiosities whereas internships are designed to serve as the bridge from participant life to professional life.

Practicums

A practicum is generally a one-time work or service experience done by a participant as part of an academic class. Some practicums offer pay, but many don't. Almost all are done for academic credit and are generally of short duration.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship as a training concept originated in the Middle Ages and essentially was the assigning of a beginner to an expert to learn skills or a trade. Today, Apprenticeships are a system of training primarily serving the trades and are often managed by trade unions and/or professional trade associations. They combine on-the-job training with classroom experience and reading. Apprenticeship often extends over several years (typically three to six), enables practitioners to gain a license to work in a regulated field. Most of their training is done while working for an employer. Individuals who successfully complete an Apprenticeship reach the "journeyman" level of competence. Apprenticeship programs that are under the supervision of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Registered Apprenticeship (OA), are called Registered Apprenticeship Programs. Registered Apprenticeships are innovative work-based learning and post-secondary "earn-and-learn" models that meet national standards for registration with the U.S. Department of Labor or federally recognized State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAAs)

Defining and Describing Types of Work-based Learning

	Paid Work Experience	Paid Internship	Externship/Shadowing	Practicum	Apprenticeship
Definition	A general and loosely defined term for any type of learning that occurs in the work place for which the participant is paid.	A structured, competency-based, educational experience at the work-site and is tied to a participant's curriculum.	Participant spends a brief time with a skilled professional within an industry or workplace.	A one-time work or service experience as part of an academic course.	Apprentice works under supervision of a “master” who teaches while working. Also includes classroom assignments.
Paid?	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Purpose	Opportunity to learn skills and knowledge to be applied in work place environment.	Intro to real work following academic program (capstone event).	Offers intro to a field or profession.	Provides specific learning for academic credit.	Practitioners earn a license to work in a regulated field, e.g., plumbing.
Duration	Varies.	Varies. Usually a semester but could be less/more.	A day up to several days or more.	Short, up to a few weeks.	3 to 6 years.
Participant Oversight Responsibility	Varies. May be academic institution, employer, union or other.	The academic institution.	Usually the academic institution.	The academic institution.	A trade union, association or the U.S. Dept. of Labor for Registered Apprentices.
Key Characteristics	May include other types of work-based learning noted in this table (though not externship or practicum).	Participant engages in the activities of a profession as a professional. Academic credit awarded.	No tasks are delegated. Participant follows expert during work day. No pay.	Learning by accomplishing one project or task . No pay.	On-the-job training with classroom experience and. Apprentice is paid.

These programs benefit from government oversight which provides assurances of: the safety and welfare of apprentices; issuing nationally recognized, stackable and portable certificates and credentials; promoting the development of new programs, and; programs that provide high quality training.

The value of paid internships and paid work experience

The opportunities that paid internships and paid work experience provide for participants to directly experience work in the environment in which they may spend part of their professional lives is extremely valuable. Skills and knowledge learned

theoretically in a classroom or lab now are tested in reality and exercised in a real environment with the added pressures of the employer's expectations, the burden of productivity/efficiency, and the responsibility to meet consumer or client expectations. Internships are often viewed as the capstone of formal education and the transition from school to work. The final honing of skills and the use of knowledge is the most critical value of the internship, but there are many other good reasons to use one.

Internships:

- Enable participants to experience the realities of various careers and make the choice that best matches their interests and career goals;
- Provide a prime opportunity to secure a job. Sixty-one percent of participants who had internships have job offers by the end of their senior year, compared with 28 percent of participants who skipped the internship.^v More than 63 percent of participants with a paid internship under their belt had received at least one job offer;^{vi}
- Are a good opportunity to earn money while remaining in school;
- Enhance participant resumes and subsequent interviewing opportunities;
- Help participants gain confidence in their skills and preparation;
- Develop the soft skills necessary to being a productive employee;
- Are a way to earn college credit while being treated like a real employee.^{vii}

Final comments regarding paid work experience and internships

A paid work experience increases participant satisfaction far beyond participation in unpaid experiences. Research also documents that participants require protection in a variety of areas including working overtime and performing tasks other than designated responsibilities.^{viii} Internships are for a set period of time that is generally limited in duration, but may be flexible to allow interns to spend limited time in the classroom and support the attainment of credentials in the individual's expected career field. Research shows that longer internships are more valuable to participants.^{ix} Internships that last only one or two months usually consist of simple repetitive jobs. Participants serving as interns for three to six months have an experience similar to an entry-level associate, while participants with longer internships tend to perform the same jobs as regular workers, and may have the opportunities to work on longer-term projects that have clear start and end dates. They complete meaningful projects and are assigned responsibilities, work deadlines and clear expectations. Sometimes, the internship is considered the "bridge" between training and the beginning of a profession.

Both of these training models provide an opportunity for participants to earn essential wages while still learning valuable professional experiences in the workplace. Each grantee will be able to ascertain which model will be most appropriate for their program design and may utilize both based on the participant and/or employer needs.

III. PLANNING AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM AND PROCESS

Arranging a Structured Internship Experience: A Potential Design Model

This section focuses on designing and creating an internship program at your education/training organization if a process is not already in place. Its objective is to prepare both the H-1B RTW grant training partner and the targeted employer(s) for a fully functioning internship program. The initial point of “readiness” (and an assumption) is that (1) you know what educational area, department, or program of study will be best for an internship experience and (2) that participants are available, prepared and capable, and interested in an internship.

A Potential Internship Design Model



Two related sets of actions will be accomplished: preparing your organization and preparing the employer(s) who will host your interns. This is a set of recommendations in the form of a design model to be used to plan your specific steps and activities. It is a compilation and integration of several models and noted in the references section at the end of this handbook. More information for each step may be found at the endnote below.

1. Identify and train an internship leader

Internships as an approved institutional learning process and program will require a staff professional working at the community college or university who will manage all the internship activities: planning and arrangements, participant preparation, employer preparation and communications among all parties. Often identified as the “internship coordinator,” it is important that this individual has a grasp of the legalities of internships, of curriculum design and approval and knows his/her way around the school’s processes and governing mechanisms. It is unlikely that a full-time instructor or professor will have the time required to effectively manage all internship aspects – and be quickly available if problems arise. Probably, the wisest choice will be to make internship management part of a full-time assignment and not an add-on. It will be critical that one individual becomes the easily available and identified representative for the school.

2. Recruit and select participants

Recruiting and selecting participants is one of the key activities that will impact the success of an internship program. Even more critical is a selection process that chooses individuals that are serious about success and want to fit into an employer's system. It is probably prudent to use a combination of selection processes including instructor recommendations, an application process to learn why the participant seeks an internship, and an interview including both school personnel and a representative of the employer. Even participant recruitment might be made to depend on faculty recommendations rather than open participant recruitment. Faculty too, will be the most reliable vehicle for promoting internships. In many cases, participants near the end of their programs of study will have a faculty advisor who may guide them into the experience. Other factors will impact both participant interest and their selection. Some may be too busy with an outside job, as will likely be the case for many community college participants. It may be that a participant may convert a current job into a credit earning internship with the aid of a faculty member, the internship leader and the employer. The end result of this step of, course, is to have a participant or several participants qualified and committed to being an intern.

3. Recruit and engage employers

Recruiting and preparing an employer as an intern host is as critical as a reliable participant selection process. A successfully designed internship experience is a structured and planned learning experience that: assures employer involvement/engagement for a monitored or supervised work or service experience; fits comfortably and safely within the employer's business model, processes and procedures; does not necessarily incur costs or disruptions of normal business and; focuses on developing and completing an individual's career education. It will require considerable work and commitment on the employer's part because it is above and somewhat beyond daily business processes. Within this handbook is a section on recruiting employers that lays out a process for identification and engagement (see page 10).

4. Plan and schedule intern experience with employer

Steps four and five should be accomplished simultaneously. The preparation steps for the participant and the employer are codependent and each will be impacted by the other.

a. Schedule

As simple as scheduling appears, it may be challenging. Consider that an intern must be prepared; that the intern will have a personal and perhaps a work schedule; that the internship will probably be subject to the school's calendar; and that the employer may have time-sensitive issues or project/production schedules that will need to be accommodated. All of these factors will figure into an internship schedule. Importantly, an internship should have a firm beginning and end date so that activities and experiences can be worked into that finite time period. It is also useful for the intern assignment to be regularly scheduled on a weekly basis so that all parties are aware of the intern's schedule.

b. Prepare employer: supervision, legalities, and expectations

Preparing your employer as an internship host requires planning and training in several areas. Clarifying expectations is first. Employer staff need to reach an understanding of how, where, and when the internship(s) will occur. Discussions should lead to employer staff knowing how the intern will work, what sort of work will be assigned, where the intern will work, and how supervision will be handled. Staff will likely have good suggestions that will enhance and smooth the internship experience. Discussions should also consider whether staff will need any training in the handling of participants and learn the extent to which they will actually supervise and what supervisory actions may be taken. The choice of an appropriate work site supervisor/mentor should be someone who is willing to share their knowledge of job skills and who is enthusiastic about working with the participant. Upon arrival expectations and obligations should be explained. Make sure they are aware of everything that they are expected to do.

The second step in preparation is to jointly consider the impact of legal issues. For this, it is wise to contact and work with the employer's attorney. An immediate concern is the protections of the employer's intellectual property. In some cases, an intern may be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement. Another will be the impact of the employer's benefits and insurance for the intern. Benefits are usually not offered to interns but some sort of insurance coverage is probably required. This coverage may be extended from the school or from the participant's parent's insurance program. Another concern is that the internship will be subject to the federal and state regulations regarding Equal Opportunity Employment. Other legal issues that work site supervisors/mentors need to be aware of include safety concerns, child labor, discrimination, and sexual harassment laws. Make sure that work site supervisors understand their legal responsibilities and potential liabilities in advance. All paid work experiences are covered under the Fair Labor Standards Act and child labor laws. Labor standards apply in any work experience where an employee/employer relationship, as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), exists.^x Page 33 of the Solicitation for Grant Application for this program states that that the experience must be governed by the FLSA.

c. Plan training curriculum and learning experiences with employer

The final, and perhaps most critical, task to be accomplished with the employer is to cooperate on the design of a training plan. The plan, which may take the form of both a calendar/schedule and lesson plans, will be the guide for the entire participant experience. The school's internship coordinator should share the participant's desired learning objectives with employer staff to determine if the objectives are practical and achievable in the work place. Once the objectives are defined, the school and employer staff can lay out a schedule and plan to accommodate the desired learning experiences. This plan will present:

- the duties and responsibilities of the employer, the worksite supervisor, the school and school staff and the participant;
- a brief pre-plan to introduce the participant to the employer environment;
- the learning plan with the objectives, activities, experiences (with locations within the workplace) needed to accomplish the objectives – tied to a calendar or schedule;
- a description of any adjustments that will need to be made to assure that the participant and work safely and accomplish the plan.

5. Prepare the participant and the participant's experience

a. Academic plan

Participants need to be fully prepared before attempting an internship. Each participant should have achieved the necessary mastery of skills and knowledge to accommodate a fit into a real work environment. The internship coordinator, in cooperation with the participant and faculty, should determine the learning objectives and the specific activities desired by the participant. Once a rough plan with learning objectives is designed, the appropriate school official should take all necessary steps for academic approval. This may require submission to an academic department or a committee that routinely reviews academic plans.

As found in section 4c above, the participant, with his or her faculty advisor and the internship coordinator, should cooperate on the design of a training plan. As noted above, the plan, which may take the form of both a calendar/schedule and lesson plans, will be the guide for the entire participant experience. It includes the learning objectives supported by a description of the academic skills, occupational skills, and employability skills the participant will be practicing and acquiring. It outlines the specific goals and activities of the experience.

b. Introduction to the internship work environment

Understandably, many participants will head toward an internship with little experience in the work world or little experience in the specific environment planned for their internship. It is useful to organize one or two brief visits by the participant (with the

internship coordinator) to the internship site where he/she may meet future colleagues and get a feel for the work and the work environment. Obvious things will make a difference such as: where and how to report for work; where to store personal belongings; how/where to eat and take breaks and use the restroom; where to park; how to dress and what is not permitted in dress choices; and where human resources and other useful offices are located. A participant who has a sense of “how things work” will enter the internship with less tension and be ready to focus on learning. Importantly, the participant should learn what tools or support equipment to bring.

6. Place participants, monitor and adjust experience

On the initial day of the intern experience, the internship coordinator should probably accompany the participant to the worksite. This is a “handoff” designed to relax the participant and assure a welcoming environment. Initially, the internship coordinator should check daily with employer staff to determine if the participant is off to a good start. At this early point, the coordinator can learn if the participant is a good fit for the job or if adjustments need to quickly be made. Reasonably, participants may feel overwhelmed for the first few days but should transition into a successful experience. If the “fit” is not happening, then the coordinator, employee staff and the participant should meet to discuss the challenges and make changes. Throughout the internship, the coordinator should have a routine and regular set of communications with the intern’s supervisor to confirm that the experience is a good one.

7. Evaluate and document

The participant’s experience should be evaluated and documented regularly. The documentation is most useful if it results from regular meetings between the supervisor and the intern. It is best to employ a standardized evaluation form which may be provided by the school. It is critical to evaluate and note the intern’s progress through the learning plan. Document learning activities and the level of success for each; describe specific projects assigned to the intern and the success with each, and; note how the participant is acclimating to the work environment and the colleagues at the workplace. Finally, the employer supervisor, in cooperation with the appropriate school faculty or staff member, should write a final evaluation for the overall experience. There may be a grade assigned as well.

Attention to planning will most certainly improve the internship experience, though it will not remove all the risks or assure full and clear communication. Armed with a good plan, the internship coordinator will be in a sound position to address issues and problems assuring a good outcome.

IV. CHOOSING, RECRUITING, AND MANAGING EMPLOYER PARTNERS FOR INTERNSHIPS

The value of strong employer relationships to your H-1B RTW Program

Developing employer partnerships can be challenging, each employer has unique business needs and skill requirements that align with your SOW. However, these partnerships are not just paramount to the success of H-1B RTW grant programs but also reflect the essence of one of the primary purposes of these grant programs. The importance of having numerous strong partnerships with your employers cannot be over stated. Your career and technical education/training program serves a single dominant purpose: train and place your participants in employment! To guarantee this critical employment outcome, you have been expected to partner with employers to provide relevant and hands-on experience in the workplace.

Benefits to your program

Working with your local employers yields an abundance of benefits. Interaction with an employer's business representatives will assist your staff to more fully understand the nature of the work your participants will confront and help them to adjust curriculum as required. Further, as they interact with employers, your team becomes aware of changes in the labor market and what skills participants need to effectively compete in the world of work. A successful paid work experience builds positive relationships with employers in the community and as a result, some employers become more involved in the curriculum development process. In addition, training programs may be able to provide a participant with a learning experience in an area that is not otherwise available in the curriculum.^{xi} Employers are a key partner helping to ensure that your curriculum and education methods are relevant and up-to-date – that they meet the knowledge and performance requirements for successful job performance of your participants. Also, employers may be the most powerful partner group to represent and to speak for the value and success of your program. When employers communicate their satisfaction with your H-1B RTW Program to your larger community, you earn almost instant credibility.

Benefits to employers

Advantages flow in both directions as employers cite many benefits from offering participant work experiences, including providing staff with a valuable opportunity to mentor an inexperienced 'colleague' and enhancing the organization's reputation. Employers that support paid internships value the work that is accomplished and believe that providing a wage or stipend encourages a professional attitude on the part of the participant.^{xii} Employers get other benefits as well, including:

- access to a pool of skilled job candidates who possess the specific skills, certificates, and credentials required for the current and future labor market;
- input on designing training that specifically meets the employer's needs and better aligns with specific skill requirements;
- the ability to assure that the right credentials and certifications are included in the program to meet their industry standards.

Understanding employers as partners

Be aware of two critical factors as you work with employers: first, the highest priority for each employer is meeting its own business's immediate demands. Hosting an intern will always be subject to actions taken to meet those needs. Second, most business environments move more quickly than educational organizations and decision-making in business is faster with little

time lost. You too, will need to step up the pace so that employers appreciate a similar “feel” to your management and decision process. Further, as you prepare participants for placement, tutor them to understand the differences in pace and pressure.

An employer’s initial willingness to become an intern partner does not reflect how the partnership will actually develop. At the outset, you will be learning about and communicating with your new partner and, in measured doses, you will clarify the expectations for an intern placement. Further, you will learn what the employer expects and what arrangements will be required for an intern to fit into the business. It is advantageous to learn everything that the employer might provide for an internship and/or for the planning of the educational experience. The best action is to involve employers very early in the planning process. Employers can assist or lead in the design of the internship and can assure that the experience is aligned with industry skill needs. “Earlier” also provides adequate time to make adjustments for hosting. The employer will likely want to provide some structured instruction or learning assistance along with real industry-based projects. Employers may also provide access to research or production spaces, labs, tools, machines and more but will need time to arrange how an intern will access and use them. Early involvement with your organization will smooth the planning and the placement of the intern.

Learn about each employer in-depth

The more you know about the employer’s work environment, the more your placement will be a good fit. Learn about the workplace “climate” in terms of it being supportive of training and skill-building and therefore how the company will welcome an intern. Employers will almost always have some system in place to train employees and you should expect that an internship will exist comfortably with the company’s system. You can

learn a great deal of this information in a series of meetings with key managers that focus on training as the key agenda point. Try and discover how routine training is conducted and what skills/knowledge are taught – and by what system or process. It is possible that the intern may access the formal training system used at the work site for an added training benefit.

Identifying potential employers often involves a few steps. The aim is to interview and recruit business leaders from the businesses who are hiring (hopefully your graduates) or need training assistance. Create an employer outreach strategy to identify the most useful leaders. That strategy is a three step process, which is described beginning on page 13.

BEST PRACTICE:

Vivint, a Security and Automation Company in Provo, UT

Vivint decided to build an internship program to elevate the intern experience from the basement to the executive wing. As an emerging technology company, they knew the value that could come from an infusion of young, forward-thinking individuals who have fresh ideas that can be partnered with the insight and supervision of those who have more developed business perspectives.

Five ways a company can build a world-class internship program:

1. Make the program selective from the start. Careful and constrained intern selection is the foundation of a successful program. Selectivity allows you to have real confidence in your chosen candidates, meaning you can give them high-impact assignments.

2. Provide opportunities to participate in hot trends. A powerful tool for recruiting the best participants is to focus on popular trends and future technologies. Vivint empowered interns by asking them to help us make the journey into the future. This draws in interns who are natural entrepreneurs. Harry Rein, an MIT participant in computer science, said he chose the Vivint fellowship instead of a Silicon Valley company because he wanted to “help define the next multi-billion-dollar industry.”

3. Give interns meaningful work and high-priority projects.

4. Invest heavily in training. Though it seems counterintuitive to allocate resources to aggressive training when interns are only with the company for a short time, it is one of the main drivers of an intern’s decision to return to your organization.

5. Create camaraderie among interns. Most internship programs do not take the time to develop a community. Interns are just embedded in different locations and any socializing is left to individual initiative.

Expectations for the internship host employer

Employers always appear more comfortable making a commitment if they know specifically what is expected from them. It is important for them to clearly understand how their roles or contributions impact the overall success of the program. As you work with selected employers, each will want to know as soon as possible what is expected as they prepare for an intern. To assure a positive and efficient entrance into an internship with the employer, the following recommendations, offered by InterExchange Career Training USA, are a good list to begin the conversation. A good host employer may follow this list of best practices for employers hosting interns found in *10 Best Practices for Intern and Trainee Host Employers*.^{xiii}

The value of internships to employers

As noted earlier, successful internships certainly benefit employers as well as participants. Employers report both economic and business operations benefits as well as more public-spirited and altruistic benefits. They identify participants as a potentially low-cost resource to the business and the useful work they performed for the business. A British study relayed an employer's comment that well prepared participants freshened the company's own teams by bringing enthusiasm, fresh ideas and awareness of current technologies and trends. The study also reported that 93 percent of the surveyed companies said the benefits had been worth the time and resources used in setting up the work experience opportunities. Finally, another common benefit was that internships provided a way of trying people out before hiring them.^{xiv}

Recruiting employers

The H-1B RTW Program requires that training and, subsequently internships, be designed to prepare and place individuals into jobs within occupations and industries for which employers are using H-1B visas to hire foreign workers because no American workers can meet the skills required. Therefore, your selection of employers for internships should be directed at those industries in your region, in alignment with your grant's SOW and SGA. Choosing employers for intern placement will have direct consequences on the learning value of the internship and the overall experience of the intern(s). There obviously is not a "typical" business nor will an employer's staff be similar from one business to another. Anticipate, even welcome, the differences because each employer may potentially offer differing, yet very beneficial, learning opportunities to meet the unique needs of each intern. Your goal is to learn about and then identify employers who are interested in hosting and satisfying the

BEST PRACTICES FOR INTERN AND TRAINEE HOST EMPLOYERS

- 1. Orientation:** Provide a formal introduction to the company so interns become familiar with the environment and meet the staff they will be working with.
- 2. Company/Internship Handbook:** It's important for interns/trainees to have access to information about the company and its policies if they have questions. It's important to have a written document that outlines intern benefits as well, such as paid time off, sick days, or any other company benefits you are offering.
- 3. Assignments:** Ensure that you are always providing challenging tasks and responsibilities to your interns.
- 4. Compensation:** (Required for H-1B RTW) Interns should be compensated in some way for their services, whether through a stipend, monthly or hourly wage.
- 5. Company Integration:** Include the intern in company activities and traditions-both in and out of the workplace. Some examples include office sports teams, group lunches, parties or picnics, or even a speaker series. Make them feel like a part of the team and encourage their involvement.
- 6. Evaluations:** Particularly for longer training programs, evaluations (written or in person) allow you to touch base with the intern and assess the program and the intern's performance. Weekly check-ins are another way to track progress and provide feedback and guidance, and they also put aside a set time where interns can discuss any questions.
- 7. Exit Interview:** Conducting an exit interview is a great way to gather feedback on interns' experiences at your company so that you can improve the program for your future interns/trainees.

education needs of the interns. The endgame is to make the best match between the education needs and personality of each intern with a company where the intern will “fit.” Identifying potential employers that may be both interested and appropriate is a three step process.

Review your general knowledge of the business community

Gather the H-1B RTW Team and other partners to informally discuss what each of you know about your local employers. Make a list of the companies and business people with whom you may be acquainted. Add notes explaining why a particular company may be a good choice (large company, routinely trains employees, someone has a contact at the company, etc.). After discussion and consensus, you should have a list of good potential businesses to explore further.

Use labor market information

Your next step is to expand your knowledge of local businesses and of the local employment picture by reviewing sources of labor market information (LMI) that focus on your local and surrounding region (county and state). The use of labor market information is an effective way to confirm the businesses that are growing and successful. LMI includes employment statistics, job forecasts, wages, demographics, and other data gathered and made available to increase understanding of today’s workforce. Your LMI search will help you add to and focus your initial list of employers from step one. Again, you are looking for business people from companies that will need trained job seekers from your collection of training programs.

Interview executives from local business organizations

Local professionals, including the leaders of local business organizations such as chambers of commerce, employer associations, and economic development agencies, often know the most about businesses and industries and can help you in two ways. First, they can validate your list and perhaps add other employers to it because they work with businesses on a daily basis. Second, they may personally know the individuals in businesses who will become your targets for first contacts and may facilitate a meeting or an introduction for you. At this point, you should have a plausible list of targeted employers and individuals that you will reach out to.

Having completed your research, you are now prepared to make a phone call to your intended industry contact. Hopefully, you have been given an introduction by a friend or colleague so that your contact is anticipating the call. Importantly, this call should be made by the chief officer of your organization (director, board chair, etc.) as this will signify the importance of your visit. You are seeking a meeting at the employer’s offices so clearly ask for that to happen. Be very clear about the intent of the meeting – that you are seeking a potential partnership. Hopefully, you will be scheduled!

Preparing for a meeting with an employer

You are now ready to prepare for your initial employer meeting. Prior to making the first contact, a member of your leadership team should take the responsibility of learning much more about both the company and, to a lesser degree, the individual with whom you seek to meet. A good internet search, including a deep review of the employer’s own web site, will give you the information you need to speak knowledgeably at the meeting. Your preparation will allow you to speak comfortably about the company you are visiting and ask pertinent questions.

Managing the employer meeting

Plan to take no more than two or three members of your team, including your leader and/or board chair. Hold a brief pre-meeting with your team members and review the planned agenda (See “Meeting Agenda” in the Appendices). Modify the agenda model to accommodate the time allowed and the level of knowledge that your industry contact may have. You may be meeting, for example, with the human resources director who may not know some of the information you are seeking.

Getting a commitment

As you close your initial meeting and your team senses from the discussions that there appears to be a good fit between your program and the employer for an intern placement, your team leader should clearly state that you would like a commitment when the time is right for the employer. Achieving a commitment may be a subtle process. It likely will only occur after your potential partners: (1) believe that an intern will integrate with and benefit the mission and processes of the company; (2) understand clearly the expectations and processes of internships and; (3) have the support of their senior managers or decision-makers. Do not push for a commitment and be prepared for the employer to move forward slowly. Always do what is best for the employer. At some point, you will feel that the relationship has developed to a place where you may introduce the commitment topic in a non-aggressive way and you should do so.

Create a written agreement

At the point where specific expectations and processes are being discussed, it will be useful to describe the employer's involvement in some formal manner. The value of a written document is that it removes much of the potential for misunderstandings and disappointments. Consider developing an agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) to describe specific responsibilities for each of you. List specific contributions and note limitations, issues, legalities, and the scope of responsibilities of the employer. This document can:

- List the contributions such as access to special equipment, training materials and supplies used by the intern, and how they are to be used;
- Describe how/when/where internships will be made available;
- Describe limits or issues on behalf of the employer (such as safety, liability, protection of company proprietary assets, limits on use of facilities or equipment, etc.);
- Note any financial commitments and limits – if necessary;
- Note how the employer and the H-1B RTW Program will monitor and manage the intern experience;
- Note how/when communications will occur, especially when problems arise.

Again, do not rush the employer toward a signed agreement. Be flexible and don't push it. One useful and non-threatening approach is to complete a discussion and then send your partner an email that reviews what you discussed and what the points of agreement were. Good sources for and descriptions of a memorandum of understanding may be found in the Appendices.

Sustaining and growing an employer relationship

Developing and maintaining reliable and useful partnerships with businesses requires a routine plan that includes multiple communications, predictable meetings, good use of the employer's time and resources and more. The business partner's expectation for good organization and planning may push your team to be more effective strategists – a benefit to your program. Your leadership team may discover that business folks have different decision-making expectations as well, with faster timetables and little acceptance of extended discussions.

Confronting challenges, obstacles and problems

Employer organizations are subject to a host of rules, regulations, insurance requirements, government oversight, protection of proprietary resources, and much more. Never place your employer partners in positions that may endanger their systems or controls or push against the legal and process-oriented controls they must honor. In most cases, the employer will be very clear

about what lines cannot be crossed. When close to these limits, you should acknowledge them and seek an alternative that is acceptable.

Partnerships will experience disagreements among personnel, find issues over which differences occur or experience situations that become obstacles. Expect these and as you are entering the agreement more formally, discuss how best to confront and manage them. Usually, open discussions held with the goal of maintaining a useful and friendly relationship ensures that your team and their team will find a way to overcome any problems while preserving the friendly and trusting relationship. In your discussions, underline your intent that the H-1B RTW Program will take great care to shield the employer from any negative issues or events.

Tips for maintaining smooth useful employer relationships

Sustaining employer relations should be a routine part of your team's business plan. Address the relationships regularly, even daily. Frankly, these maintenance tasks don't require a lot of time but do require many brief outreaches. Here is a list that summarizes actions your team should consider as you work with employers:

Early engagement!

1. Identify and engage your employers early in planning an internship placement. That early connection makes certain your training programs align with business needs and makes the employer feel valued.

Keep employer partners close!

2. "Hardwire" employers to your H-1B RTW Program by involving them in program decisions; work side-by-side with them; visit their firms; respond to their ideas. Be inclusive!
3. Meet individually with each employer and determine what each hopes to accomplish as an intern team member and what concerns or issues each holds. Also, share and discuss program management and outcomes.

Meetings, deadlines, and promises

4. Time management is especially critical for business folks. Schedule meetings far in advance and maintain a reliable and consistent calendar. Send an agenda. Remember that changes in meeting times, places or dates on short notice will assure that employers will miss;
5. Be sure to meet deadlines and complete actions that are expected by employer partners – and are important to them. Be predictable and reliable! Keep your promises.

Maintain reliable communications!

6. Build a routine and reliable communication system that involves more than a single vehicle; always send communications on roughly the same dates. Use the same vehicle (email, text message, letter, etc.) with a similar easy-to-identify look and feel; be sure that the communications are clear in the expectations that the team has for the employer member including key dates and times and subtle reminders;
7. On a routine basis, have the chair of your career pathway team phone each employer partner to chat, provide updates, complements, and to seek opinions; Return all phone calls and email inquiries. Listen, listen, and listen!

Big thanks and many celebrations!

8. Provide multiple thank you messages to each employer partner. Note their individual contributions and the importance that it had on a specific outcome. Send a copy to the intern's immediate worksite supervisor or the company's CEO;

9. Invite employers to regular celebrations where the team can note their overall successes and acknowledge special contributions; and
10. On a routine basis, use the team's outreach communication system (bulletins, news releases, blogs, etc.) to highlight the contributions of employer partners, interns, and their worksite supervisors and mentors.

CONCLUSION

The participant internship is a time-tested and valued learning opportunity. For participants completing a program of study, it eases the transition from formal training to the application of knowledge and skills in the real work environment yet does so under the guidance of a professional who may diminish the “real work-world shock.” It is also a prime vehicle for full time employment. For the participant, internships translate into a very high-percentage chance for a job offer. For an employer, a participant can be observed functioning in a specific job and can be assessed for his or her fit thereby assuring a good hire.

This handbook has presented a comprehensive overview of work-based learning with a specific focus on internships. Internship planning within the educational institution has been integrated with information to facilitate employer recruitment and relationship-building. Further exploration is supported by a broad collection of resources and referrals.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Agenda/script for initial meeting with a potential employer internship partner

- Introduce yourself and your colleagues and explain the purpose of your visit.
- Provide a brief description of H-1B RTW Program and a brief explanation of your management, and community team process.
- Explain your need for the employer's involvement in the H-1B RTW Program internship experience.
- Ask questions (to augment prior research) about the employer:
 - Strengths, market targets, products/services.
 - Size of business and number of employees.
 - Learn about the employer's internal training system and/or industry association training, if applicable
- Describe the specific benefits of H-1B RTW Program to the employer.
 - Access to a larger pool of skilled job candidates who possess the specific skills, certificates, and credentials required for your current and future labor market.
 - Training designed with your input and validated by you for your employees
- Explain in detail what you would expect if the potential partner would agree to serve as an internship site: estimate of employer's time commitment; numbers of meetings; types of help and resource assistance, if possible.
- Clearly explain the next steps if the employer appears interested in joining the team and begin to move toward a commitment.
- Thank the employer for their time and interest.

Appendix 2: On-the-Job Training Toolkit (OJT)

[On-the-Job Training Toolkit](#) can be accessed by grantees as guidance for establishing OJT contracts and programs.

Appendix 3: (The SGA) Notice of Availability of Funds and Solicitation for Grant Applications for H-1B RTW Partnership Grants: Section IV.E.6 Funding Restrictions.

6. On-the-Job Training

Under this Solicitation, OJT will follow the definitions and requirements under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) section 101(31). OJT is available for long-term unemployed or other unemployed individuals. Incumbent workers are not eligible for OJT under this SGA. OJT is provided under a contract with an employer in the public, private-nonprofit, or private sector. Through the OJT contract, occupational training is provided for the grant participant in exchange for the reimbursement to the employer of up to 50 percent of the wage rate to compensate for the employer's extraordinary costs of training the individual (subject to the policy exceptions described below). The employer pays wages to the participant. Consistent with Section 667.264 of the WIA regulations, grantees under this SGA are specifically prohibited from spending grant funds on payment of wages of incumbent employees. For complete information on the specific WIA parameters for OJT, please refer to WIA regulations 20 CFR 663.700 – 663.710, as well as 20 CFR 663.730. You will be required to follow the parameters for OJT included in the WIA law and regulations with the following policy exceptions:

- Eligible participants cannot be currently employed by the employer;
- Participant placements may only occur in private for-profit and non-profit sectors (i.e., the grant does not allow for public sector placements);
- No placement may be made in staffing agencies providing workers on a temporary basis to employers for which the agency receives compensation from an employer;
- The period of reimbursement should be an adequate length to ensure the participant has acquired the technical skills needed for employment but no longer than 12 months. Individuals may not be co-enrolled in other ETA programs for the purpose of extending OJT beyond 12 months. Twelve months exceeds the average length of time for current WIA OJT activities, so grantees should negotiate contracts with employers that lead to transitioning participants to permanent employment as soon as possible. DOL's expectation is that grantees would establish contracts that may be longer than 12 months; however, the reimbursement for each individual that participates in OJT cannot be longer than 12 months.

Typically, the negotiated reimbursement percentage for OJT under WIA may be as high as 50 percent of the participant's hourly wage. However, for grants awarded under this Solicitation, the negotiated reimbursement percentage may be as high as 90 percent of the participant's hourly wage based on employer size: up to 90 percent of the participant's wage rate for employers with 50 or fewer employees; up to 75 percent of the participant's wage rate for employers with 51-250 employees; and up to 50 percent for employers with more than 250 employees. We also encourage grantees to negotiate lower rates or variable rates (such as starting at 90 and reducing the subsidy over time) where possible to ensure that the maximum number of participants will be served by the project.

Finally, upon receipt of a grant, you must develop sound on-the-job-training (OJT) contracts. The contract process sets the ground-rules for an OJT with an employer and assists in making the determination if an employer is eligible to provide an OJT opportunity. The contract must include the federally-required elements of an OJT agreement; however, states, counties or municipalities may have additional contract requirements. Contracts also outline the terms and conditions that the employer and OJT provider agree to provide for an OJT experience. Contracts with an employer can be set up for a specific period of time but need not necessarily specify the individual trainees to whom they apply. This allows the employer to provide training

to more than one trainee. If an employer only has one position or plans to limit the training experience to one employee, then a contract must also include the individual trainee's information. For these grants, contracts must provide that the employer is responsible for documenting skills gained by participants during the training period. It should also include a description of how the reimbursement level was determined. For sample templates and other resources, grantees may access ETA's on-line technical assistance related to an OJT contract at the following web address:
https://ojttoolkit.workforce3one.org/page/contracts_and_mods

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Definitions and general information regarding internships

[Work-based learning and paid work experience](#) Defines paid work experience (PWE). Under “Types of WBL,” there are also definitions for Registered Apprenticeship, internship, service learning, unpaid work experience, and more.

[Paid work experience definition \(SGA\)](#)

The definition of PWE from the Solicitation for Grant Application is on pages seven and 51.

[U.S. DOL video on paid vs. unpaid internships](#)

[Difference between internships, co-ops, practicums, and externships/job shadowing](#)

[Difference between Registered Apprenticeship and internship](#)

Employer Perceptions of Internships

[Making the Most Out of Internships: An Interview with Christi M. Pedra, Senior Vice President for Strategic New Business Development and Marketing, Siemens Healthcare](#)

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[How College Participants Experience Work: Implications for Policy and Practice Development](#)

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Creating formal agreements between participants and employers

[Sample: unpaid internship agreement](#)

Sample unpaid internship agreement between an employer and a participant.

[Sample internship agreement between an employer and a sponsoring organization](#)

<http://southwestern.edu/live/files/226-academic-internship-contract-sample>

[Sample internship agreement between a participant and a school.](#)

Best Practices

[Ten Best Practices for Trainee Host Employers](#)

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[5 keys to building a world-class internship program](#)

[Meaningful Partnerships Start Here](#)

This site describes UC Berkeley many partnerships with business and industry through the University Partnership Program

Internship planning processes, models and examples

["Building successful internships: lessons from the research for interns, schools, and employers"](#), Career Development International, Vol. 19 Iss: 1, pp.123 – 142. Includes the definitions and dimensions of internships and success factors for maximizing internship outcomes Read this.

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[How to structure an internship that is great for the intern and the manager?](#)

121st ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition. Indianapolis, IN. June 15-18, 2014. Dr. Sudarsan Rangan, Texas A&M University Dr. Malini Natarajarathinam, Texas A&M University

[The SHRM Guide to Organizing an Internship Program.](#) Includes sample forms, resources, and benefits for participants and employers.

[Step-by-step guide to help employers start and maintain a quality internship program.](#)

[A step-by-step, customized approach for employers developing internship programs.](#) Includes best practices and information about leveraging relationships with training providers.

Dangers and problems of internships

[Legal Issues: Internships Employer Agreements](#)

[Employers' Top 5 Intern Time Issues – Solved!](#)

[What to do when your intern is a dud?](#)

The participant's perspective

[Seven Problems at the Beginning of Your Summer Internship](#)

Problems faced by participants at the start of their internships and how to fix them

[I'm in a Bad Internship. Now What?](#)

What a participant should do if they are in a "bad" internship

ENDNOTES

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