

Internship

Build your talent pipeline.

Internships are more than a learning experience—they're a smart business strategy. Whether you're hosting high school, college, or adult interns, you gain early access to motivated talent, strengthen your talent pipeline, and develop future employees who already understand your culture and expectations.



"Internship "beats all of our other hiring practices" when it comes to success with retaining new employees."

**-Kylie Ayala, Kline's
Employee Development
Coordinator at Team Kline**

4 Steps to Internship for Employers

This guidance document is designed to aid employers wanting to develop internships as a workforce strategy.



Step 1: Program Basics and Design

- Decide on your internship structure (typically one of the following):
 - Entry-level training for a specific occupation [[Example: Team Kline](#)]
 - Rotation – exposure to a variety of occupations in different parts of the company's operations, followed by a focus in one area [[Example: See RJ Lawn and Landscaping with Earlham High School](#)].
 - Special Project(s) – assigning specific real-world projects for the intern to participate in, complete or lead. What are those tasks and projects that you want to get done that keep falling to the bottom of the list. Inquire throughout your organization about these types of projects.
- Identify your target audiences for recruitment.
 - High School Students
 - College Students
 - Adults
- Complete the [Internship Basics Guide - High School Students](#) or the [Internship Basics Guide - Adults](#). This document will help you think through additional internship specifics. This document, if completed, will also provide you with an internship summary that can be easily shared.

**Step 2:****Create a Job/Project Description and Training Plan**

- Identify the intern tasks, work activities, qualifications, work environment and basic physical requirements [[Identifying work tasks and activities including AI Prompt](#)].
- Create an internship job description. [Find an internship job description template](#).
- Create a training plan. A training plan will help provide structure, identify competencies and provide a template for evaluation and feedback for the participant.
 - [Find a training plan template](#).
 - [AI Prompt - Intern Training Plan](#).

**Step 3:****Internal Hiring and Employment Processes**

- Work with your human resources team and/or relevant internal colleagues to:
 - Review any relevant internal policies [examples can include safety, dress code, hiring, other regulations.]
 - Discuss and determine intern wages.
 - Determine who will supervise and mentor the intern. [[Tips for mentoring interns](#)]
 - Define internship interview process.
 - Define on-boarding plan for intern(s).
 - Create an internship agreement (This can be a collaborative process if partnering with a school or other organization).
 - Create internship evaluation process and form. [[This training plan template may help with evaluation piece.](#)]
 - Review safety and other legal matters. The attached "[Work-Based Learning Legal Considerations for Employers](#)" document is a guide.

It is critical to consult with your legal counsel and insurance provider to ensure compliance with state and federal laws given your specific circumstances.

Special note: Under certain conditions employers can partner with high school programs on some student-learner opportunities that are generally prohibited by law for 16- and 17-year-olds. For more information about this topic please visit: workforce.iowa.gov/youth-employment-waiver.



Step 4: Recruitment

- Partnership can be part of the recruitment process and plan. Consider your target audience and, if applicable, what organizations might be good partners; schools, colleges, community-based organizations, local IowaWORKS offices etc.
 - Consider outreach to possible partners to discuss shared goals and possible collaboration.
- Finalize a marketing plan. Will the information be posted on your organization's website, shared with area schools, shared with non-profit organizations, posted on social media?
 - Prepare messaging
 - Identify timeframes
- Assemble internship packets or resources to include:
 - Clear information about how and when to apply.
 - Who to contact with questions.
 - Internship overview and job description.
 - Consider using a flyer to promote your internship. [[Example from Iowa Specialty Clinics.](#)] or review the [Internship Guide created by RJ Lawn and Landscape](#) – both of these are great examples!

Final considerations

- If working with partners, especially high schools, flexibility and communication are keys to success.
- Recognize that continuous improvement is a necessity in any program. Collect feedback (from internship and employees), evaluate, and adjust/adapt the program as needed.
- Successful internship programs require a dedicated commitment on behalf of the employer. It is important to identify an individual(s) who is responsible for the internship program, both in your business and at the school, if applicable.

For technical assistance contact:

Iowa Workforce Development's Work-Based Learning Team is available to walk individual employers through the process and offer employer workshops.

Please feel free to contact:

Kathy.leggett@iwd.iowa.gov

Business Engagement Liaison, Iowa Workforce Development

Additional Resources:

- [Work Based Learning Webinar Series](#)
- [Work Based Learning Success Stories](#)
- [Work Based Learning Office Hours](#) - IWD staff will be hosting regular office hours to help answer your questions about developing and expanding successful WBL programs.