



Rural Internship Program Definition and Guidelines

The DDCT Rural Internship Program awards scholarships to Economic Development Organizations for the internship of high school juniors or seniors in their local area. Students will gain hands-on experience promoting economic development in rural communities. In turn, the communities will benefit through advanced efforts of economic development and assist in cultivating ambassadors for rural Central Texas.

Definition of Internship

Because the word “internship” can have various meanings, Development District of Central Texas (DDCT) recommends the following definition promoted by The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE):

An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent.

How would Economic Development Organizations benefit from the Rural Internship Program?

Interns can:

- Provide freedom for paid and/or volunteer staff to pursue more advanced projects.
- Assist the Economic Development Organization in applying the latest strategies and techniques.

- Maintain and increase the relationship between the Economic Development Organization and the academic community.
- Promote community awareness/involvement.
- Create awareness among other students broadening the field for future internships.

How will student interns benefit from the Rural Internship Program?

A well-planned internship program will:

- Give broad exposure to the workings and purpose of Economic Development Organizations.
- Give broad exposure to how businesses interact with the Economic Development Organization and with each other.
- Give exposure to how important small businesses are to the local economy.
- Ensure the assignment of challenging projects and tasks are accomplished.
- Introduce the intern to the inner workings of the professional business environment.
- Introduce the intern to the concept of setting, pacing, and accomplishing goals.
- Enable the intern to begin establishing a network of local business connections.

Designing the Rural Internship Program

Questions that may determine what kind of program will work best for your Economic Development Organization:

- What does your Economic Development Organization hope to gain from the program?
- Is your Economic Development Organization looking to fulfill a need on a specific project?
- Will this internship encompass one major project or involve a variety of small projects?
- What are the tools and workspace necessary to provide to the intern?
- What talents, academic background, and/or experience do you want in an intern?
- Who will be primarily responsible for the intern?
- Will that position be a mentor, a supervisor, or both?

Hours

While each Economic Development Organization is distinct and has unique needs, it must be remembered that the intern is a student and, as such, school must be their highest priority. This

may be a new experience for most interns and they will need support in balancing their schoolwork and internship. Agreeing on a set number of hours each week and offering flex-time for freedom to plan their schedules on a weekly basis are two ways to support that balance.

Goals

At the start of the internship, it is recommended that the supervisor and intern create a list of learning goals the intern hopes to complete as well as the goals of the Economic Development Organization during this program's life. The learning goals serve as the academic and professional roadmap for the intern's time with your Economic Development Organization.

First Day Orientation

It is very important for the intern to be welcomed and introduced throughout your Economic Development Organization.

Be sure to review:

- Hours
- Dress code
- Overall responsibilities
- How to cope with absenteeism
- Safety regulations and requirements
- It is also encouraged that the intern's parent(s)/guardian(s) be in this meeting to address any concerns they may have about the program. School officials with knowledge of the program are also invited.

Contact Information

DDCT encourages the Economic Development Organization to reach out to our staff for any assistance that we can provide during the course of the internship program.

Please contact Dominic Elizondo at dominic.elizondo@ctcog.org, or at 254-770-2379.