



# SA WORX SUMMER INTERNSHIP

EMPLOYER TOOLKIT





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## Welcome to Your Toolkit

This toolkit supports the development of a youth internship program for your organization. The toolkit provides a step-by-step process on how to evaluate your workforce needs and how SA WORX can support you in establishing a robust internship program. We provide an overview of timelines, recruitment processes, onboarding, and mentoring/supervision.

### **Why should you establish a summer high school internship program?**

Employers benefit from hiring high school interns by gaining access to a pool of skilled and motivated potential future employees within the existing community and serve as a talent retention tool for our Greater San Antonio region. Young talent allows employers to also tap into creative energy, diversity, and innovation that can spur new and fresh ideas.

### **Employers benefit from providing high school internships through:**

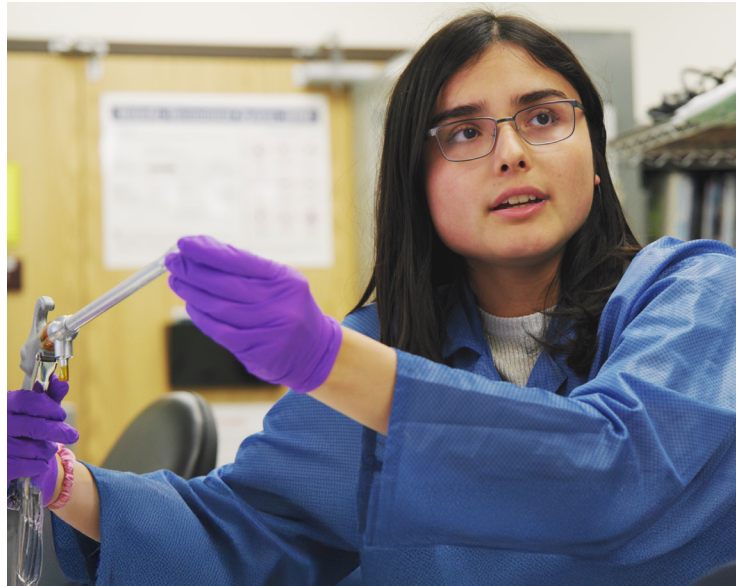
- Reducing training/recruitment costs
- Developing leadership skills for current employees
- Developing new projects with student assistance
- Filling critical gaps
- Fostering relationships and brand loyalty with potential future employees
- Increasing workforce diversity, which can foster greater customer connection
- Having the opportunity to provide community service

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To ensure young people are future ready, work-based learning can provide students with an awareness of industry and career opportunities. Work-based learning also supports the development of work-related behaviors and attitudes including responsibility, diligence, the ability to think critically, problem solve, work in teams, and resolve issues.

## Interns benefit from work-based learning through:

- Assessing and understanding the expectations of the workplace
- Observing the demeanor and procedures of workplace professionals
- Establishing a professional network for future college and employment success
- Forming relevant connections between school and work
- Applying classroom learning skills (both academic and technical) in real-world settings
- Assessing their interests, aptitudes, and abilities while learning about the career possibilities available to them
- Improving their post-graduation employment opportunities and interests
- Expanding and refining their technical skills



Internships can help build relationships between students, schools, partners, and businesses, thereby increasing the likelihood that talent will remain in the area. In addition, internship programs are a low-cost recruiting tool for employers and provide an opportunity to train future employees.

Overall, providing youth with meaningful work experiences puts them on a path to increase career and workforce awareness and readiness, contributing to building a better-skilled workforce that can also access economic mobility through high-wage, high-growth jobs.

# About the SA WORX Summer High School Internship Program

The SA WORX Summer High School Internship Program connects employers with high school students seeking paid internships. The program has the following key components:

- Open to all students ages 16–19 years who are enrolled in high school within Bexar County (graduating seniors may apply)
- Internships are between six and eight weeks long, throughout June and July
- Flexibility to offer part-time (20 hours per week) or full-time (40 hours per week)
- Recommended employer pay for interns starting at \$12.00/hour
- SA WORX partners with a staffing agency available to serve as an employer of record and support payroll/HR administrative needs. Additional fees apply.

Internships may be in-person or hybrid. Through previous survey data, high school students have shared how impactful their in-person internships have been, as they have enhanced their collaborative skills. In-person internships are highly recommended for the growth and workplace experience of interns.

# Getting Started: How to Hire an Intern

Interns who apply to SA WORX Summer Internships are typically Juniors and Seniors in high school. For many of them, this will be their first job—EVER! These students are highly motivated, curious, and willing to learn. Several of them are looking for an opportunity to grow their networks and career awareness opportunities.

- STEP 1:**  
**HOST A JOB SHADOW DAY**
- STEP 2:**  
**CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT & SET A GOAL**
- STEP 3:**  
**WRITE A PLAN & DRAFT AN INTERNSHIP POSITION DESCRIPTION**
- STEP 4:**  
**RECRUIT YOUR INTERN**
- STEP 5:**  
**ONBOARD & MANAGE YOUR INTERN**
- STEP 6:**  
**MONITOR & EVALUATE YOUR INTERN**

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## STEP 1: START WITH A JOB SHADOW DAY

In addition to summer high school internships, SA WORX hosts annual community-wide Job Shadow Days in the spring. Ahead of summer internships, this can be an intentional visit from a high school class to your job site. SA WORX helps coordinate and connect employers to a nearby classroom for a half-day visit where students are exposed to career opportunities through tours, panels, and presentations. This is a perfect starting point for employers considering a summer high school internship program.

Students who participate in an on-site tour are more likely to be interested in a summer internship. SA WORX will support the process from beginning to end by connecting an employer to a class within the community interested in your industry. From there, students who meet the requirements are invited to apply to future internships through our internship platform, Greenlight.

## STEP 2: CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT & SET A GOAL

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT:

For your internship program to be successful, it is important to identify the right role and operational need for the interns. Internship activities vary according to a company's age, size, industry, product, and needs. How do you know what kind of program will work best for you?

Here are some questions to consider when assessing the needs that your intern can best meet:

- Are you looking for help with special projects for a short period?
- Is there meaningful work that your organization can provide to someone with little to no work experience?
- Can your organization support multiple interns?
- How will your physical space and equipment accommodate additional individuals?
- Are there roles within your organization where you frequently hire new employees?
- Many organizations have particular roles for which turnover is high, or new employee recruitment is fairly constant. An internship program can help your organization develop a sustainable pipeline.

### SET GOALS:

When designing your internship program consider both your needs and expectations, as well as those of your intern.

### CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- Will the high school intern need to have specific certifications or skills to be considered for the position?
- Will the intern need transportation assistance to get to the job site?
- Do you have safety procedures set in place for a young employee?
- Are there roles/duties that will need parental consent?

## Write a Plan & Draft an Internship Position Description

### STEP 3: WRITE A PLAN & DRAFT AN INTERNSHIP POSITION DESCRIPTION

Another critical element in developing a successful internship program is planning. Planning elements include identifying project work, lining up a supervisor and/or mentor, and evaluating opportunities for experiential learning.

Ongoing evaluation of your internship program will allow you to improve it as needed.

#### WRITE A PLAN

Structure the internship ahead of time so that you can be sure to meet your goals. Here are some elements to consider:

#### PROJECT WORK

An intern wants to contribute to your organization. It is beneficial for each intern to be integrated into a department or project team, where they will not only learn from the completion of their assigned tasks but will also develop a sense of the “big picture.” Part of the learning experience should be an opportunity for the intern to see how their own work fits into the timeline and outcome of the project, as a whole.

Interns want to do meaningful work. Your intern is not looking to spend the summer making photocopies. Rather, interns want to apply and build upon the concepts they are learning through the classroom and implement them into the “real world” of your organization. For example, a marketing intern may be charged with researching market trends for your product and analyzing this data for use in your marketing materials and on your organization’s website.

In identifying suitable project work, consider the following:

- Do you want someone for a specific project?
- What about general support around the workplace?
- How about giving the intern a comprehensive overview of your company?
- Job Shadow opportunities within an internship are highly encouraged.

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**Pro Tip:** SA WORX can provide examples of internship positions and job descriptions to help employers develop their own materials.



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**Pro Tip (continued):** *Interns have shared that they enjoy rotating through different departments/roles within a company or organization to help them learn more about the organization and gain additional experiences outside their main internship role. Consider adding department rotations to your intern work plan.*

*Interns have shared that they value teamwork— how can this be incorporated into the project scope?*

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

Once you have identified the function you want your intern to perform, you are ready to develop your job description. Consider the following:

- What are realistic job tasks and priorities?
- What academic, extracurricular, or other volunteer experience do you want from a high school intern?
- Have you budgeted for the intern's pay and any other company equipment or support they may need to be successful?

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

- Do you have adequate workspace? Will you help make parking arrangements, etc.?
- Will there be special training, development, and networking opportunities, or performance reviews, etc.?
- Who will have the primary responsibility for the intern? Will that person be a mentor or only a supervisor?

A successful internship requires commitment on the part of the employer. It is very important for a specific person to manage the intern, such as a mentor or supervisor. The mentor/supervisor should be someone who enjoys teaching or training and has the resources and time to serve in that role.

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## THE SUPERVISOR

Like any other employee, interns should be assigned to a supervisor. The supervisor may or may not be the same person as the intern's mentor. This will depend on your organization's size and work structure.

The role of the supervisor is to assign day-to-day tasks, monitor progress, and evaluate the intern's work products or outcomes. It is important to set goals for your intern's progress. You can help your intern set goals for completion of various tasks, including daily goals, weekly goals, and monthly goals. If the intern is working on a project with deadlines, setting goals can help ensure that these deadlines will be met.

Additionally, guide your intern in breaking down larger tasks into action steps and setting goals for completion. Set milestones so that the intern knows that he/she is working toward something and has a sense of accomplishment when each milestone has been achieved.

## THE MENTOR

We highly recommend, if your organization has the capacity, to assign mentors to your interns. The mentor may be the intern's supervisor. The mentor may also be a department head or a seasoned employee who is knowledgeable about the project/area where the intern will work. You may even have a junior employee serve as a mentor which can serve as a professional and leadership development opportunity for a more junior staffer.



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The mentor's role may include some initial orientation for the intern, as well as developing an ongoing relationship to be a role model and provide support.

The mentor should be prepared to offer guidance on project tasks and responsibilities, including instructions on how tasks should be carried out. The mentor can serve as a resource to address general questions about the company or the industry, where the intern can learn from the mentor's experience. The role of the mentor should involve a commitment of time to the intern's experience and development.

Suggestions for mentors include:

- Scheduling lunch together on the intern's first day so that the intern and mentor can begin to get to know each other.
- Offer an "open-door" invitation to the intern to assist with any questions or concerns.
- Mentors might also prefer the structure of a regularly scheduled weekly meeting, where the intern is encouraged to bring a list of any questions, he/she might have from the past week.

Regardless of which option you choose, it is important that every intern knows that someone is available to answer their questions.



**Pro Tip:** *If you also hire college interns, consider having them provide supervision and mentoring support to your high school interns. High school interns have shared that they feel more confident in their workplace when there is another college or high school intern also working in the organization. Near-peer mentoring can provide added support that increases the confidence of your high school intern.*

*SA WORX provides training sessions for mentors to share tips and best practices to ensure that mentor/mentee relationships are meaningful, engaging, and beneficial.*

# Professional Development & Skills Building

Consider how your internship can help the student “learn by doing” and reflect on their work. Ask interns to share what they hope to gain through their internship.

Interns may:

- Be interested in learning more about how their schoolwork relates to your profession.
- Want to “test drive” a potential future career field to find out whether it is a good “fit” for their interests.
- Want to develop professional skills, such as time management, written and oral communication skills, initiative and creativity, analysis, and problem-solving.

In developing your internship program, consider how you can create the opportunity for your intern to develop these skills.

### SELF-PACED VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL SKILLS MODULE

SA WORX provides self-paced virtual professional skills modules to develop interns’ skills, such as money matters, communication, personal brand, growth mindset, and resilience. These modules can be easily incorporated into your internship program. Interns are incentivized through gift cards for completion of the modules.

Interns can opt-in to the Ignite Mindshift Professional Development modules offered through SA WORX. Ignite Mindshift sets interns up with an online account, offers weekly virtual check-ins, and has guest speakers to support interns’ development. At the end of the program, interns earn a digital badge that they can add to their resume.

### STEP 4: RECRUIT THE INTERN

A partnership with SA WORX will give you access to a large pool of high school students 16–19 years old who are ready to work and eager to learn. SA WORX recruits from all 17 regional school districts.

### SA WORX Internships Portal

Students register to apply for internships through Greenlight, the SA WORX Jobs Portal. You will simply complete a registration form, and then upload your intern job description. Once you have done so, students will begin applying for your posted intern positions. You will interview and select your intern in the same way that you would any other employee. In this way, students learn how to apply for jobs, prepare for interviews, and respond to a job offer or rejection.

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For many high school interns, this is their first work experience in a professional setting. To prepare students for success in their internship, SA WORX conducts an orientation session to set expectations, including how to dress for success, rehearse the basics of good workplace communication and work ethic, and consider their professional development goals.

## **STEP 5: ONBOARD AND MANAGE YOUR INTERN**

Just like any new employee, your intern needs to be introduced to your workplace and made to feel welcome.

When orienting and onboarding your new intern, here are some topics to cover:

### **EXPLAIN THE MISSION OF THE ORGANIZATION**

- How did the organization start? Why?
- What is unique about your product or service?
- Who benefits from your product or service?
- What are the organization's current objectives?
- How may the intern contribute to those objectives?

### **EXPLAIN THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

- Who reports to whom?
- Who, specifically, is the intern's supervisor?
- What is the intern's department responsible for?
- How are decisions made?
- Which personnel can answer different kinds of questions?

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## OUTLINE ORGANIZATIONAL RULES, POLICIES, DECORUM AND EXPECTATIONS

- Is there special industry jargon and acronyms?
- What are the specific work standards and procedures?
- What access to the supervisor (days, times, and duration) does the intern have?
- How should they process requests?
- How do the email and telephone systems work?
- What are the approved forms for correspondence?
- By what safety regulations must they abide?
- Is there a procedure for signing off completed work?
- What periodic forms or reports need to be completed?
- What local, state, and/or federal guidelines or laws apply to their work?
- Are there security or confidentiality issues the intern should be aware of?
- What is acceptable with regard to dress and appearance?
- How should they maintain the premises and their work area?

## DEFINE THE INTERN'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- What is the intern's role?
- What projects will be assigned to him or her?
- What resources are available to the intern?
- What training is necessary?
- How does the organization want the intern to deal with clients and vendors?
- What tasks can be completed without supervisory approval?
- Do other employees understand the intern's role?



**Pro Tip:** Interns have shared that they enjoy being welcomed by the company's CEO and having informational interviews with various senior leaders within the organization. Consider including this in your orientation or as an activity for interns throughout their internship.

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The internship is an opportunity for the intern to assess their strengths, interests, and career possibilities and develop and/or expand technical and soft skills.

When the mentor or supervisor meets with the intern, they should discuss these opportunities and ask the intern to share their learning objectives. Some guiding questions on establishing learning objectives could be:

- What new technical skills do you hope to learn during the internship? Skills the intern may have the opportunity to develop include: operating office or computer equipment, learning computer programs, research, organizing or analyzing data, records, or budgets. Assignments and work environment will determine the types of skills developed.
- What three new professional skills do you want to develop or improve through the internship? If your intern has not already thought about this, ask them to do so and set up a later date to discuss.
- Some suggestions you can make to your intern include, learning how to handle a variety of assignments/tasks simultaneously and improving teamwork, writing, and speaking/presentation skills.
- Additionally, you might suggest the following to your intern:
  - During your internship, make a special effort to observe the personal style of supervisors and colleagues.
  - Be able to identify clear examples of leadership styles that either promote good working relationships or hinder a productive work environment.
  - Note how to deal with pressure, tension, and praise in work relationships.
  - It is important to understand how to communicate knowledge to strangers, supervisors, and peers. Be aware of when to speak and when to listen.

## MANAGING YOUR INTERN

- Throughout the internship, you should monitor how your intern is settling in and understanding what is expected.
- Make yourself visibly available to the intern.
- Assign someone who can periodically “check in” with the intern.
- Encourage/nudge the intern to ask questions.
- Guide the intern by providing feedback and constructive criticism. Have regularly scheduled feedback sessions.
- Remember, the success of an internship depends on the partnership between representatives of the organization and the intern.

## Monitor and Evaluate Your Intern

### STEP 6: MONITOR AND EVALUATE YOUR INTERN

#### KEEP AN EYE ON THE INTERN

This does not mean that you need to watch their every move! However, do make sure that you are aware of the status of their daily tasks. Watch for signs that the intern is confused or bored. Silence may mean that an intern is busy, but it could also mean that he or she is confused and timid about telling you so. It's easy to be shy in a workplace full of strangers who are older and know each other. See whether your intern needs more direction or feedback. Make sure that work is taking precedence over web browsing. Paying attention early helps you mitigate problems and bad habits early on.

#### FEEDBACK:

It's important to give interns a lot of feedback. Especially if your interns have never done this type of work before, they'll want to know if their work is measuring up to your expectations.

No matter what the level of experience, they need you, as a more experienced professional, to let them know if their work is officially "okay." Periodically, examine what your intern has produced and make suggestions. Weekly supervision meetings can help you remain aware of your intern's work.

#### EVALUATE THE INTERN'S PROGRESS PERIODICALLY

You should continually discuss your intern's progress with him or her directly. Remember those goals you outlined before? A few weeks into the internship, it is time to evaluate how well you and your intern are meeting those goals. Consider a midpoint and final evaluation.

Evaluation processes differ. Yours might be as formal as requiring written evaluations every three weeks or as informal as occasional lunches with the internship coordinator and/or the intern's mentor. Additionally, some companies have the intern evaluate the experience and the company.

### SA WORX Summer Internships Timeline



*This timeline shows ideal timing of milestones for the whole process, from initiating contact, to the intern's first day of work.*



## Final Thoughts

Once internships are complete, you or your employer may have questions about how this program can lead to long-term pipeline strategies. A good way to start to think through this is by evaluating your internal team's overall satisfaction with the program. Debriefing with the mentors and supervisors of the interns is a good place to start!

### FORMAL EVALUATIONS:

SA WORX will ask both the employer and intern to complete a survey at the end of the internship. The survey results will be reviewed by SA WORX to make improvements to the program and share relevant information with the employers.

Some companies conduct exit interviews to determine if the interns are leaving the company having had a positive experience and to provide valuable feedback to managers and for program planning for the following year.



### INTERN CELEBRATION

Once interns have completed their summer internship, they become part of our growing SA WORX alumni program. As a next step, we continue to engage them by inviting interns and their families to an end-of-internship celebration that honors them and their supervisors and their hard work and accomplishments throughout the internship program. During that celebration, interns are inducted into our alumni program and encouraged to remain connected with us.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact School-to-Career Manager at [saworx@greatersatx.com](mailto:saworx@greatersatx.com)

Visit <https://greatersatx.com/>

*Internship Creation and Maintenance Guide based on Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program by Michael True.*