

Step Up Remote Internships:

step up

Tips and Tricks for Creating High-Quality Experiences

Step Up and our employer partners are experts in creating high-quality, in-person internships, providing over 30,000 internship experiences for Minneapolis youth since 2003. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Step Up has responded to the needs of our youth and employers by offering remote and hybrid internship opportunities. We have learned a lot and are excited to share new best practices and technologies that support work – and internships – outside of traditional workplaces.

How Remote Internships Can Benefit Your Company and Interns

In addition to being a safer option during COVID-19, remote internships can offer important skill-building opportunities for employers and young people, including:

- The development of new digital skills for effectively managing projects and work tasks.
- Greater understanding of remote work expectations and best practices, which are increasingly essential in the 21st century workplace.
- More flexible schedules, greater efficiency and cost savings due to reduced travel.
- Opportunities to build digital leadership and remote management skills.
- Greater inclusivity with expanded pool of applicants.

Tips for Creating Step Up Remote Internships

Set clear expectations from the start:

Concepts that might seem very basic or common sense to you could be new to your intern(s). As you create a work plan with your intern, make sure to be clear about expectations for all aspects of the internship experience. Provide a schedule for your intern and include independent work time that allows for some flexibility. Explain how their work hours will be tracked and whether they are expected to track hours themselves. Also share any other details that can help their internship and your organization thrive and succeed. You may also need to revisit this information with your intern at various points throughout the internship.

Be intentional about multiple touchpoints with your intern:

We recommend setting up a check-in routine that is consistent and robust. This is key to helping your intern feel connected with you and your organization and confident about what's expected in their internship role. This might include checking in daily through video chat, phone or email, even if only for a couple of minutes. Also share with your intern the best times and platforms for reaching out with their questions throughout the day.

Identify projects that are a good fit for a remote work environment, such as:

- Creating or reviewing documents
- Organizing or entering data
- Conducting research
- Translating documents
- Contributing a youth voice in already-established projects
- Communications tasks, including writing, interviews, design work, web updates, social media or newsletters

Provide technology tools when possible:

While not required by Step Up, we highly recommend that you provide the tools interns need to be successful. This can include a laptop, mouse, keyboard, hotspot, headset, software or any security functions necessary for their internship. Make time to train your intern on the functionalities of the equipment you provide and platforms you use (for example, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google applications or other technology). Refer to our technology agreement when discussing expectations for the equipment you provide.

Tips for Creating Step Up Remote Internships

Provide clear instructions for use of remote technology:

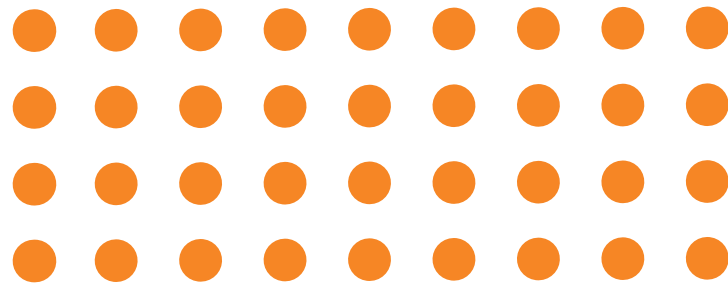
Talk through remote meeting logistics and protocols. This includes expectations for turning cameras and mics on and off, where to find the chat feature, how to set up virtual meetings, how to share files or screens, how to turn notifications on and more. Also talk with your intern about appropriate dress for video meetings. Be sure to be mindful and sensitive to their privacy concerns, especially when it comes to remote video meetings in which other participants can see their homes or other remote work environments.

Keep your interns engaged with your organization:

Consider adding responsibilities and tasks that can connect their work to the bigger picture and create opportunities to engage with other departments and team members. Talk with your intern about their career interests and introduce them to colleagues in various departments. Identify a mentor early on who can share their professional experiences and connections. You can also set up virtual meetings, shadowing opportunities or include them in department meetings and team events.

Provide professional development opportunities that enrich their internship experience, such as:

- Virtual informational interviews or coffee chats with leaders in your organization
- Virtual worksite tours
- Staff trainings
- Deeper dives into your company or industry
- Opportunities to connect with similar companies or organizations in your industry



Utilize Step Up Support and Resources

We're here to support your Step Up experience! Check out our Step Up job description library, templates, a sample technology agreement, work plans and check-ins, guidance on coaching and providing feedback, and much more.

Our Step Up employer engagement associates are industry and youth service experts who can assist you in many ways, including:

- Translating and transitioning in-person roles to virtual or hybrid experiences
- Structuring job descriptions or thinking about potential projects
- Providing guidance on onboarding, training and welcoming your intern virtually
- Identifying company-specific resources to support interns and supervisors
- Finding professional development opportunities to add value to your internships
- Providing resources to make planning your internship as seamless as possible

Each Step Up supervisor/intern pair is also assigned a job coach. Your coach will be in touch regularly throughout the summer to share helpful tips and best practices, conduct formal check-ins, alert you to upcoming events, remind you of key program milestones, and help with any challenges that arise during the internship.

We look forward to working with you!

For more information, contact Ashley Grell agrell@achievempls.org or 612-455-1535.

