

Future Leaders Project

Employer Guide

A Win-Win Opportunity:

The Future Leaders Project (FLP), a partnership between Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW), Columbia River Economic Development Council (CREDC), and Washington State University Vancouver (WSU Vancouver), offers paid summer internships with local employers that build skills, expand networks, and provide meaningful professional experience. All WSU Vancouver students are encouraged to apply, especially those who may have faced extra challenges on their path to college such as being the first in their family to attend or coming from a low-income background.

Benefits for Employers:

Hosting Future Leaders Interns can provide your company with:

- New ideas and fresh perspective, as interns bring enthusiasm and diverse points of view
- Much needed support for projects that employees otherwise might not have the time to complete
- Proven, cost-effective way to recruit and evaluate potential permanent employees
- Opportunities for staff to gain supervisory skills through mentoring and managing interns
- Effective public relations ambassadors, as interns often help increase the visibility of their host organization on campus and with their peers and family members
- Opportunities to promote community involvement and demonstrate your organization's commitment to workforce development – an excellent public relations tool

Benefits for Future Leaders Interns:

By participating in internships, students have the opportunity to:

- Gain insight into potential career paths and reflect on their career goals
- Connect with professionals in a field or organization of interest
- Expand their professional networks and develop social capital
- Set and accomplish work-related goals
- Gain confidence as they develop relevant work experience
- Apply classroom knowledge and training in a professional context

We recognize that recruiting and hiring interns can feel like a big undertaking, and we want to assure you that we are here to help lighten the load!

As the talent recruiting partner in the Future Leaders Project, the partners agree to:

- Recruit from a pool of diverse, talented WSU Vancouver juniors and seniors
- Facilitate the selection process to present qualified finalists for the final round of interviews
- Convene company partners and Future Leaders Interns for an end of summer celebration and networking event
- Conduct a post-internship evaluation
- Publicly represent the partnership between the partners and companies participating in FLP

Developing Meaningful Intern Positions:

Crafting intentional, well-developed internship position descriptions will help ensure the Future Leaders Interns your organization hires have a solid sense of your organization's expectations and help provide supervisors with a roadmap for setting goals with the interns they supervise.

Essential elements to include in Future Leaders Intern position descriptions:

- **Position title** - Develop a title for the role that relates to the work being performed (e.g., Business Development Intern, Commercial Banking Intern, Community Connection Intern, Economic Development Intern, Social Media & Marketing Intern, etc.)
- **Company overview** - Provide a summary description of the organization that highlights your mission, the industry you operate within, and the overall culture of the organization
- **Primary responsibilities** - Include a description of duties and/or projects that will be completed by the Future Leaders Interns, calling attention to the skills they will have the opportunity to develop
- **Knowledge, skills, and abilities required to succeed in the role** - When crafting this section of the position description, it is important to keep in mind that students often under sell themselves as candidates and tend to quickly "opt-out" of applying for roles if they feel they are underqualified. Providing a concise, reasonable list of requirements that includes skills individuals can develop through their lived experiences (e.g., self-awareness, resourcefulness, problem solving, adaptability, dedication, creativity, persistence, social justice orientation, etc.) can be helpful. This section of the position description may be broken down into minimum and desired/preferred qualifications but doing so is not required.
- **Internship duration** - A typical FLP internship provides each intern with at least 200 hours of employer paid work experience. The position description should provide anticipated start/end dates and the average number of hours per week each Future Leaders Intern should anticipate working.

- **Compensation information** - Make sure to list the hourly wage and/or stipend amount, along with any additional benefits that are “perks” of the internship. If offering a stipend, your organization must pay each intern at least \$3,800 for 200 hours of work. If your organization will pay interns hourly, Future Leaders Interns must be paid at least \$19 per hour; if a Future Leaders Intern is performing the same job as other employees, however, they should be paid an equivalent wage.
- **Location and logistics** - Provide insight into where the organization is located and whether work is expected to be completed on-site, remotely or in a hybrid format

Need some inspiration to help you get started?

As you consider which projects and job responsibilities you would like to assign to Future Leaders Interns who are joining your team, take a look at the examples below:

Example 1:

- Actively support the mission and vision and demonstrate the values of the organization
- Work effectively as a team player with fellow interns and all employees
- Research organization history, organizational activities, and current projects. Develop a report that highlights the most interesting facts learned
- Research public markets and report on environmental best practices that can apply to current development efforts and surrounding spaces
- Actively participate in the department weekly staff team meetings
- Conduct informational interviews with at least two C-suite level executives and participate in at least one executive-level briefing
- Present to Board of Directors on internship experience and findings
- Perform other duties as assigned

Example 2:

- Be an ambassador of the organization’s mission and vision to other students and education-focused stakeholders, and specific clients and partners
- Conduct research and establish baseline data that will inform investor relations activities and marketing efforts
- Generate short and long-form content for digital platforms, including social media channels and blog

- Support the development of new or enhanced digital media strategies to engage key audiences
- Network and build connections with business and community leaders through supporting programming logistics for summer events
- Shadow and/or meet one-on-one with the President and leaders in the organization
- Attend Board of Directors meetings, committee meetings, and other meetings with regional partners to get an insider view of how strong collaboration with stakeholders across the county and state moves the economy forward
- Complete other special projects as assigned by supervisor and/or the President of the organization

Example 3:

- Work with residents to promote independence and stability. Efforts may focus on youth, families, and/or seniors depending on assigned property demographics
- Facilitate connections to community agencies, services and/or activities that promote health, self-reliance, and community engagement
- Educate residents on resources and services available, providing advocacy as appropriate
- Conduct surveys and interviews to help identify activities and events that meet the needs of the community; collaborate with staff members to develop plans for implementation and work with supervisor to carry out agreed upon activities/events
- Track information related to engagement (e.g., number of participants) and feedback received
- Participate in weekly department meetings and attend local health awareness events as directed by supervisor
- Conduct informational interviews and/or job shadow current employees to learn more about the various staff roles within the organization and expand professional network
- Establish and maintain positive, productive relationships with employees, residents, vendors, and other work-related contacts
- Consistently comply with department safety and attendance standards

Internship Best Practices:

As your organization prepares to bring Future Leaders Interns on board, it can be helpful to keep the following best practices in mind.

Orientation and Onboarding

- As you would for any new employee, help reduce first-day anxiety for Future Leaders Interns by reaching out to them to confirm their exact start day and time and where to go when they arrive. Consider sharing an agenda for their first couple of days and remind them of the documentation they need to bring to complete essential HR paperwork. It can also be nice to offer a welcome kit with company swag to help show the interns how excited you are to have them joining the team!
- Help set Future Leaders Interns up for success by providing a thorough orientation and onboarding process. It is important for interns to have a solid understanding of how your organization operates and to be aware of company policies and procedures. It can also be valuable to provide a tour of the facility and help facilitate introductions to other employees to ensure interns feel welcome and connected to the team.
- As Future Leaders Interns get started, it can be helpful to review their position descriptions together and establish clear expectations and goals for their time with your organization.

Projects and Work Assignments

- Interns crave the opportunity to work on real projects and deliverables! Assure each Future Leaders Intern is assigned real work assignments and/or projects that allow them to contribute to the greater good of the department and organization. If you are like most employers, you likely have a long “wish list” of special projects that an intern can help tackle (e.g., planning special events, developing special promotional campaigns, conducting in-depth research on a specific topic, designing a webpage or specific marketing materials, jump starting your social media channels or campaigns, etc.).
- Rather than just assigning interns tasks, make sure to provide detailed explanations of your expectations and ensure interns have the resources they need to complete the assignment or project. It can also be helpful to provide context and communicate why the work is important to the company and success of the team.

Supervision and Mentorship

- Ensure each Future Leaders Intern has a dedicated supervisor who has the time and capacity to conduct training, answer questions, and provide the intern with meaningful feedback throughout their time with your organization.
- It is important to remember that, like any new employee, each intern may need different levels of mentorship and support. Encourage intern supervisors to maintain open channels

of communication with the interns. It is important to learn what motivates them and how they prefer to receive feedback and be recognized.

Access to Leadership

- A key aspect of FLP is to provide each intern with access to leaders who can help them build their social capital and gain experience that supports their long-term economic and career mobility. Interns should be given the opportunity to observe leaders in action. When appropriate, interns should be invited to attend meetings with executive-level leaders, board meetings, and other senior-level meetings where they can learn more about real-world business operations and establish connections with leaders in the community.

Networking and Professional Development

- Provide professional development opportunities for Future Leaders Interns. Include interns in key meetings, workshops, lunch & learns, and trainings where they can learn more about the industry and profession.
- Provide opportunities for interns to connect with multiple professionals in the organization so they can network, job shadow, and conduct informational interviews to learn more about the organization and career paths in the industry.

Showcasing Intern Work

- Interns work hard to complete their work and are often proud of their accomplishments, some of their very first ones in a professional setting. Providing an avenue for Future Leaders Interns to present their work and demonstrate their achievements can be a great way to showcase the success of the internship program to all employees. You may also wish to showcase the successes of Future Leaders Interns externally by spotlighting them and their accomplishments on social media or your organization's website.
- If your organization's confidentiality guidelines permit you to do so, provide each Future Leaders Intern with copies of the projects they worked on so they can continue to build their work portfolios.

Closing Out the Internship

- At the end of the internship, we encourage you to conduct an exit interview with each intern to learn about their experience. Exit interviews that incorporate open-ended questions and emphasize the importance of reflection can help interns better recognize and articulate the skills they have developed while working with your organization.

- Make an intentional plan to stay connected with Future Leaders Interns and, if you are willing to serve as a reference, please make sure to tell them so they have professional references to share as they launch the next phase of their career.
- Encourage Future Leaders Interns to leverage LinkedIn to keep in touch with colleagues, mentors, and supervisors after their internship has ended.
- Make sure to complete the end of program evaluation to provide feedback on your experience working with FLP so we can continue to strengthen and improve the program!

If you have questions or need support preparing to host Future Leaders Interns, please contact Nolan Yaws-Gonzalez at nyaws-gonzalez@workforcesw.org or 360.567.1066.

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