



Internship Program

County Guidance Sheet

The County Guidance Sheet provides information for counties about their role and responsibilities while hosting an intern through the Hazard Mitigation Planning Internship Program. This guide lists county responsibilities and actions that should be taken throughout five phases of the internship program: (1) hiring an intern, (2) prior to the intern's first day, (3) on the intern's first day, (4) throughout the internship, and (5) at the end of the internship program.

Hiring an Intern

Determine needs and develop goals: Counties interested in hosting an intern should first identify projects or programs that would benefit from an intern's assistance, such as updating their hazard mitigation plan, assisting with implementing mitigation actions, or supporting disaster recovery planning efforts. The "Hazard Mitigation Planning Tasks for University Students" sheet on the PEMA Internship website offers examples of tasks that students may be able to accomplish for reference. The next step in this process should involve developing a list of tasks that an intern would assist with throughout the duration of the internship, and formulating realistic goals and benchmarks that can be accomplished within a typical internship time frame (one semester or one academic year). Counties should also identify an individual that would be best suited to serve as the intern's supervisor.

Coordinate with PEMA: Once a county has determined the need for an intern and has an idea of the types of tasks that an intern would assist with, such as research, data collection and analysis, writing, and/or GIS mapping, they should contact PEMA to assist with finding a qualified intern. PEMA advertises this program on their website and will receive applications from students interested in the program. PEMA will assist with matching students to counties based on county needs, student skills and interests, and location.

Conduct interviews: Counties should then interview qualified candidates for the intern position. After selecting a candidate, counties must notify PEMA and contact the candidate to inform them of their acceptance. PEMA may continue to match the other qualified candidates not selected with interested counties.

Prior to Day 1 of Internship

Communicate with the university: Counties must contact the student's faculty advisor or the university's internship coordinator to confirm any administrative requirements for the internship.

Contact the student and develop a schedule: The internship supervisor should contact the student to determine when his or her first day will be. This individual should provide them with directions to the office, arrival instructions, and any other necessary information, such as dress codes. The supervisor and student should also develop an appropriate work schedule. The supervisor should accommodate the intern's class schedule, other employment opportunities, and planned vacations.

Provide dedicated space in the office for the intern: The intern should have a dedicated workspace in the office, such as a desk, cubicle, or computer workstation. This could be a shared space, but it should always be available during the days that he or she is in the office. This space should be clean and inviting on the intern's first day. He or she should also be able to leave files, documents, office supplies, or other items in this location or in another designated, secure space.

Prepare paperwork: The internship supervisor should prepare any paperwork that the intern may have to complete during their first day on the job, identify initial assignments, and gather copies of relevant documents, such as the organization handbook or code of ethics.



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Day 1 of the Internship

Establish expectations and responsibilities: Supervisors and interns should discuss the overall project, specific objectives and goals, communication expectations, and job responsibilities on the first day of the internship. Supervisors should outline how interns will be trained and assigned daily work, and identify staff that can be resources or answer specific work-related questions.

Discuss organization policies and procedures: The supervisor and intern must discuss organization policies and procedures, such as the code of conduct or ethics, safety regulations, compliance, and security protocol on the first day of the internship. The supervisor should provide the student with the organization handbook and any other documents to review on his or her first day. Supervisors must address any violations of these policies throughout the internship and determine appropriate courses of action.

Acquaint the intern with the office and staff: The supervisor should give the intern a tour of the work area on the first day of the internship, including exits, restrooms, break rooms, parking areas, supply closets, etc. While giving this tour, the supervisor should introduce the intern to county staff, highlighting those who he or she may be working with throughout the duration of the internship.

Beyond Day 1

Be a mentor and provide leadership: Supervisors should not just give interns a list of tasks each day and walk away; they must provide guidance and feedback throughout the internship. Supervisors and interns should discuss strengths and development areas, as well as career goals and aspirations, job concerns, and opportunities for training and professional development.

Provide information and guidance with tasks: Supervisors should review tasks and assignments with students to ensure that they have the training and resources needed to successfully complete each task. The supervisor should also provide the intern with any documents, data, resources, or other tools needed to complete each task.

Incorporate the intern into other parts of the organization: Supervisors should incorporate interns into other parts of the organization, such as by inviting them to meetings and introducing them to colleagues. This will help the students learn about other parts of the organization and understand how different departments work together.

Provide a positive and supportive learning environment: Supervisors should understand that student interns may have little to no prior experience with hazard mitigation or working in an office environment. Supervisors should strive to create a positive and supportive learning environment to help interns develop as professionals.

End of Internship

Hold a final evaluation: The supervisor and intern should meet on or near the last day of the internship to have a final evaluation. The supervisor should provide open, honest, and constructive feedback to the intern and solicit honest input from the student about the internship program, including strengths and areas for improvement. This review will also provide an opportunity to discuss the development of skills, upcoming university coursework, and career goals.

Complete necessary internship documentation: The supervisor should ensure that any necessary documentation or administrative requirements are met so that the student receives academic credit for the internship, if applicable.