

Career Exploration Internships



What is a Career Exploration Internship?

Career exploration internships are designed for high school students who are exploring their post-graduation options and seeking the opportunity to try out different potential career paths before making a commitment. They give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields, and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent. Micro-internships last approximately 40 hours and often take place over a number of weeks, with the student on site 1-2 days per week. Most of the student interns are participating through the JMG Maine Career Exploration Badge program, which provides a \$500 academic award to students upon the successful completion of the Badge requirements.

These internships are an extension of the classroom with defined learning objectives and goals. Most students will be receiving high school credit for participating in these experiences. In considering whether to offer an internship experience at your company, please note that they are not free help or a replacement for a regular employee's position. That said, if a student has a great internship experience with your company, they are more likely to recommend your business for other interns and may consider working for you in the future!

Consider the Benefits

Benefits for the Student

- Get a first-hand feel for working in all departments of a company (rather than one, as they would in a traditional job)
- Learn necessary skills employers are looking for
- Earn academic credit and/or scholarship (depending on the school program)
- Try out an employer and an industry before committing to a job or pursuing a career path

Benefits for the Employer

- Change perceptions of working the tourism and hospitality industry, thus helping to stabilize the talent market for entry-level positions and leading more young people to stay and grow in the field
- Access a year-round source of entry-level talent and give those students a try on the job
- Advance their reputation as supporters of education and as community leaders among school leaders, teachers, parents, and students

Benefits for the Employees

- Develop and practice their training skills
- Increase their job satisfaction by connecting with youth in their communities
- Once trained, students can help with projects and work needs (as long as they are not replacing a regular employee)

Before the Internship

Decide What to Include

Conduct a self-assessment of your expectations of a high school intern and the career opportunities you intend to share with them. What departments does your business have, and what are their essential job functions? How should you divide the 40 hours of internship time to best cover all departments for the student? Be as specific as possible as you design your internship--interns need structure so they don't become lost, confused, or bored.

Create an internship description that clearly explains what the intern will do while onsite at your company, along with a breakdown by shift. Here is an example from a recent hotel with attached restaurant career exploration internship:

FRONT DESK - 12 HOURS (6 2-HOUR SHIFTS)

- Front Desk Overview- department, goals, working as part of larger hotel team, communication
- AM/PM Front desk overview
- Reservations, Phone Etiquette, Customer Service PMS use and Multitasking

HOUSEKEEPING - 12 HOURS (6 2-HOUR SHIFTS)

- Housekeeping Overview- department, goals, working as part of larger hotel team and communication
- Laundry, Room Cleaning , and Inspections

FOOD AND BEVERAGE- 16 HOURS (4 2-HOUR FOH SHIFTS) + (4 2-HOUR BOH SHIFTS)

- F&B Overview
- Set Up and Serving
- Prep and Recipes
- Food Safety/Rotation of Product

ACCOUNTING 2 HOURS (1 2-HOUR SHIFT)

- Accounting Overview
- Accounts Receivable + Accounts Payable

SALES AND EVENTS 3 HOURS (1 2-HOUR SHIFT/ 1 1-HOUR SHIFT)

- Sales Overview, Marketing Overview
- Events- Setup and Execution

Some other career learning opportunities you might consider include:

- Shadowing senior executives for a day
- Having students sit in on meetings
- Participating in training programs or workshops alongside staff
- Spending time with managers to ask questions

Not every internship needs to include something from every department, especially if a student has already expressed a particular career area interest, but keep in mind that this is about career exploration. Internships should be easily distinguishable from a traditional part-time job.

Select Supervisors/Mentors

Interns should have plenty of guidance and oversight. You might assign one direct supervisor/mentor for the student for their entire internship period, or you might assign a different supervisor in each department as the student explores different parts of your company, but either way, you should choose people with a real interest in being a mentor for your intern.

Supervisors should:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Complete orientation and training● Introduce intern to staff members● Be responsible for the safety and supervision of the student while onsite● Evaluate performance and if goals are being met | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Develop learning objectives● Meet with the intern on a regular basis, provide immediate and actionable feedback, and answer general questions● Correspond with MTA if the student fails to perform assigned tasks |
|---|---|

If possible, it's also a good idea to connect interns with one or more junior-level employees during their internship period as "buddies" or "mentors." Students may have questions they don't feel comfortable asking their manager, and this kind of buddy-system model can provide a more relaxed mentorship experience. Students are also much more likely to want to work for you in the future if they feel a social connection at work.

Recruiting and Hiring an Intern

The Maine Tourism Association will work with area school districts to find suitable candidates for your internship program. In order to be considered for our student intern program, please fill out this form:



We will contact you to discuss your program in more depth. We do our best to find students for every internship program, but ultimately internship placement is based on student interest. However, there are things you can do to increase your chances of a suitable match. Consider:

- Attending a presentation or workshop with MTA at a local school
- Hosting a career exploration field trip to your business (MTA can help!)
- Participating in local high school career fairs (MTA can help here, too!)
- Posting your internship on the Tourism Career Center at mainetourismjobs.com

Mock Interview

When an student expresses interest in an internship opportunity, we will notify you and arrange a meeting between you and the interested student. This meeting is best treated as a mock interview. Not only will it give students real-world practice at interviewing, but it will also give you a chance to learn about the student and help customize their internship to their preferred areas of interest. This is also a great opportunity to clarify expectations and discuss scheduling. If it hasn't already been discussed, please notify MTA of the student's first day, last day, and weekly schedule with your company.

During the Internship

Your Intern's First Day

Let your staff know in advance that an intern will be starting in their department, and make sure the supervisor is ready to greet your intern on their first day of work. Review the internship description with them and give them a tour of the facility. A representative of MTA will check in with you to make sure the student has arrived and is settling in.

Student Guidance

Throughout your student's internship, bring up career pathways and growth opportunities to the student as much as possible. The more exposure they have to possibilities, the more likely they are to ultimately choose a career path in this industry. Examples of this could include:

- Share upcoming job opportunities that students may qualify for in each department they work in, along with schedules, wages, and other relevant information.
- Have current employees discuss their career paths and ambitions with interns.
- Explain educational options that might help the student achieve the next step in a given career.
- Give context for how your business fits into the wider industry, both in Maine and nationwide.

Consider introducing the business perspective of each department with the students as much as possible, especially if the student has an entrepreneurial interest. Some examples of this could include

discussing food costs while the student is in an F&B department, RevPAR if the student works at a hotel front desk, ticket pricing if the student is working at a concert venue, etc.

Troubleshooting

If there are problems during the internship period, interns may be hesitant to speak up and address them. Therefore, make sure that supervisors and mentors are checking in with students regularly and anticipating any issues they may have. If there are concerns about tardiness, absence, or behavioral issues with your intern, please notify Maine Tourism Association right away so that we can address this with the student and their guidance counselor.



Exit Interview

At the end of the student's internship, conduct a brief exit interview before the end of their final shift. What did the student enjoy? What did they not enjoy? Would they consider a career in your industry in the future? If the student was a good worker for you during their internship and they are interested in continuing, this is a great opportunity to offer them a job!

Maine Tourism Association will send you a brief survey after the internship is over to find out how the internship went and get feedback on how to improve in the future. We appreciate you participating in our program and look forward to working with you to bolster the future of Maine's tourism workforce!

If you have any questions, concerns, or are ready to move forward, contact:

Contact	Email
Kathryn Ference, Director of Workforce Development	kference@mainetourism.com
Caroline Ridout, Workforce Development Specialist	cridout@mainetourism.com