

Know Your Internship Hosting Responsibilities: A Guide for Organizations

Hosting an internship program can be a rewarding opportunity for organizations, offering access to fresh talent and new perspectives. But with this opportunity comes with important responsibilities.

This guide outlines key areas organizations need to focus on to create a successful and compliant internship program.

1. Provide a Structured Learning Experience

Internships should offer meaningful work experience that aligns with the intern's academic and/or career goals. It is essential to create a well-organized plan with clear learning objectives.

- **How to implement:** Assign relevant projects that challenge interns while contributing to your organization. This helps ensure the internship is mutually beneficial and structured for success.

2. Designate a Mentor or Supervisor

Interns need support and guidance to thrive. Assigning a dedicated mentor or supervisor helps the intern navigate their role and provides a go-to person for advice.

- **How to implement:** Schedule regular check-ins to assess progress and offer constructive feedback. Mentors should be willing to share industry insights, offer career advice, and help with professional development.

3. Ensure a Safe and Compliant Work Environment

Organizations are responsible for providing a safe, inclusive, and legally compliant work environment for interns, just like any other employees.

- **How to implement:** Follow labor laws regarding work hours, tasks, and compensation. Ensure your workplace is free from discrimination and harassment, and provide necessary safety or procedural training.

4. Communicate Clear Expectations

From day one, both the organization and the intern should understand the expectations. This includes the scope of work, hours, and professional conduct.

- **How to implement:** Provide a written internship agreement that outlines duties, expectations, and compensation (if applicable). Clear communication ensures both sides are on the same page from the start.

5. Consider Paying Interns

While unpaid internships may still exist, compensation plays a key role in attracting a broader and more diverse talent pool. Not everyone can afford to work for free, and paying interns shows they are valued contributors to your organization.

- **How to implement:** If possible, offer financial compensation, even if it's a stipend. Consider covering transportation or meals if full payment isn't feasible. If the internship is unpaid, ensure it meets legal standards, such as providing academic credit or focusing solely on educational experiences.

6. Provide Compensation or Academic Credit

If you're offering an unpaid internship, it is crucial to make sure it meets legal guidelines. In some cases, providing academic credit may be a viable option to compensate for the intern's time.

- **How to implement:** Partner with educational institutions to offer credit for internships, ensuring the program meets their criteria. If the intern is performing productive work for your organization, consider offering financial compensation.

7. Offer Professional Development Opportunities

Internships should be more than just task-oriented. Offering professional growth opportunities helps interns gain new skills and build their career foundation.

- **How to implement:** Host workshops, networking events, or offer access to training resources. Encourage interns to attend meetings and industry events, providing them broader exposure to the industry.

8. Provide Feedback and Evaluations

Regular feedback is essential for an intern's professional growth. Feedback sessions also allow for open communication and help improve the internship experience for both the intern and the organization.

- **How to implement:** Schedule regular one-on-one feedback sessions throughout the internship. At the end of the internship, conduct a formal review to discuss strengths, areas for improvement, and next steps for the intern's career.

9. Ensure Compliance with Legal and Ethical Guidelines

Internships must comply with all labor laws and ethical standards, from proper compensation to maintaining a non-discriminatory workplace.

- **How to implement:** Stay updated on labor laws relevant to internships, such as work-hour regulations, wage requirements, and non-discrimination policies. Protect the intern's rights concerning intellectual property and confidentiality, especially if they're working on proprietary projects.

10. Create a Pathway to Future Opportunities

For many interns, this experience serves as a stepping stone into their professional career. Providing a clear path to potential future opportunities can increase their motivation and improve your talent pipeline.

- **How to implement:** Consider offering successful interns future job opportunities or referrals. Write recommendation letters and offer to be a reference for high-performing interns. Keeping in touch with former interns can lead to great hires down the road.

Conclusion

By understanding and fulfilling these responsibilities, organizations can create an internship program that benefits both the interns and the organization. Hosting a well-structured, supportive internship will help develop future talent and improve the overall work environment. **Review your current program** to ensure it aligns with these best practices and consider offering compensation to attract the best talent and create a more inclusive program. Creating a positive and productive internship experience is an investment in the future of your organization, as well as the broader sports industry.