

TIPS FOR CREATING SUCCESSFUL INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN PUBLIC HEALTH

**Academic Affairs Team
Office of Strategic Partnerships
Washington State Department of Health**



Internships Support Learning Opportunities for Student Professional Development in Public Health

At WA DOH, internship programming aligns with our agency [Transformational Plan](#) and workforce development goals. In developing internships in your own organization, there may be similar opportunities for alignment with organizational goals.

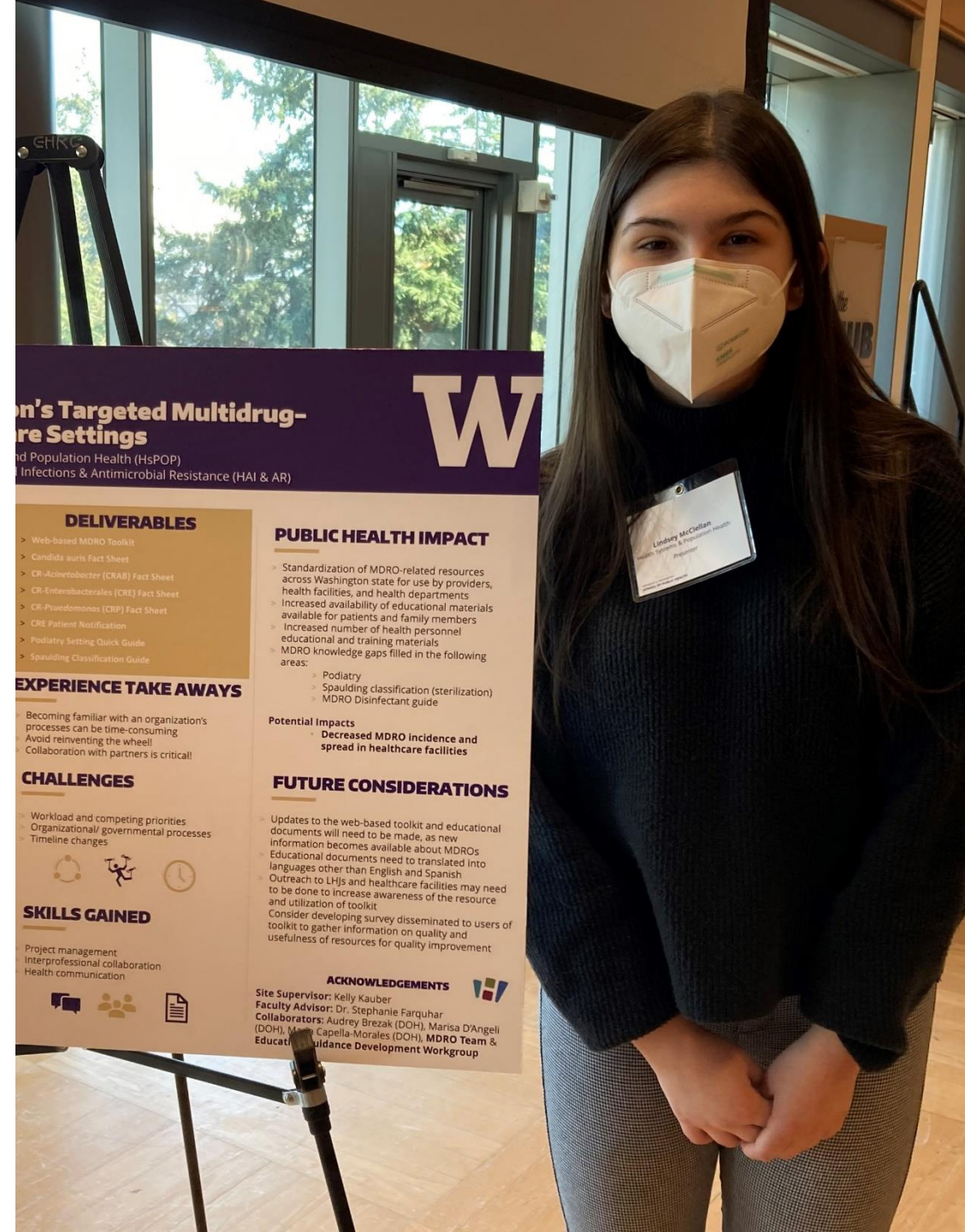


Generating Project Ideas for Interns

Interns in public health may work on a variety of different types of projects and activities, such as:

- Literature reviews and research projects
- Needs assessments
- Strategic planning
- Policy and program evaluation
- Data analysis
- Quality and/or process improvement projects
- Event planning and coordination
- Community engagement efforts
- Health promotion and prevention campaigns
- Communications projects (social marketing, social media campaigns, blogs, newsletters, podcasts, etc.)
- Much more! Project ideas are infinite!

Please note that the type and scope of projects appropriate for students will vary depending on the discipline and academic level of study (associate degree to the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels).



Diverse Experiences Among Potential Interns

Interns may bring a wide variety of academic, professional, and lived experiences. When developing an intern position, consider:

Post-secondary students:

- If you are seeking post-secondary students, consider whether they must be enrolled in a college or university, from the associate degree level to the undergraduate or graduate degree levels, to be eligible for your program.

Academic disciplines:

- Consider whether the internship project you're developing would be appropriate for a student pursuing studies in public health or any other fields. In addition to public health specific roles, interns at public health agencies may also support activities in IT, finance, HR, legal, policy, and other areas.

Professional experience:

- For some interns, this may present their very first opportunity to gain professional experience. For others, it may build upon prior work experience.

Lived experience:

- Many employers strive to recruit students from diverse backgrounds who bring unique perspectives and contributions from their own lived experience.



Connecting the Intern Experience to Essential Public Health Services

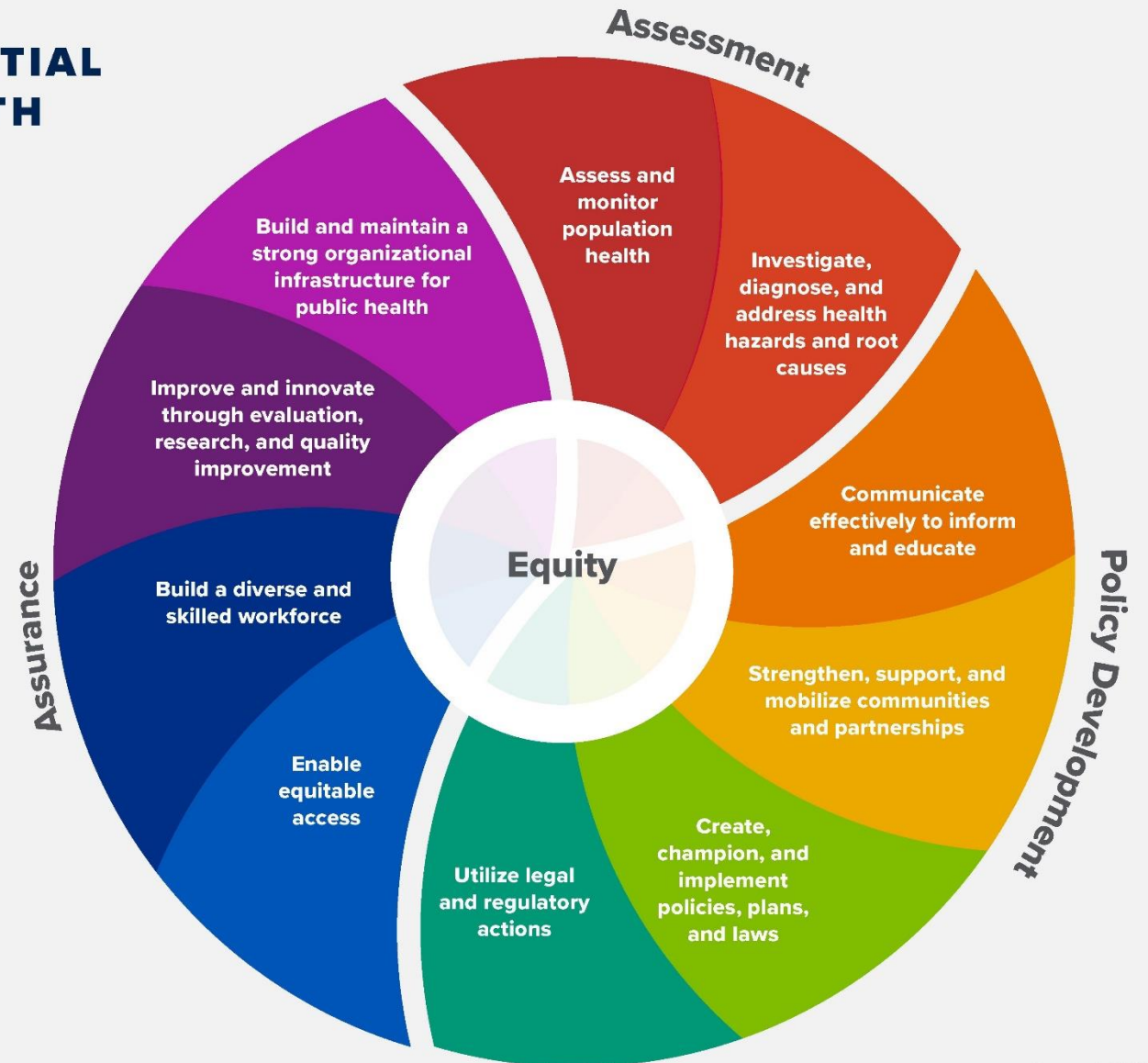
When recruiting an intern in public health, and crafting a project description, consider how the intern may learn about or develop skills connected to one or more of the [10 Essential Public Health Services](#).*

*The 10 Essential Health Services framework was developed by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) with the de Beaumont Foundation.

THE 10 ESSENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

To protect and promote the health of all people in all communities

The 10 Essential Public Health Services provide a framework for public health to protect and promote the health of all people in all communities. To achieve optimal health for all, the Essential Public Health Services actively promote policies, systems, and services that enable good health and seek to remove obstacles and systemic and structural barriers, such as poverty, racism, gender discrimination, and other forms of oppression, that have resulted in health inequities. Everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to achieve good health and well-being.



Connecting to Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals

The Public Health Foundation, in partnership with The Council on Linkages Between Academia & Public Health Practice, has curated a set of core competencies for public health professionals. This framework is helpful for workforce development and may be beneficial when considering areas for supporting an intern's skill development.

Domain areas:

- Data Analytics and Assessment Skills
- Policy Development and Program Planning Skills
- Communication Skills
- Health Equity Skills
- Community Partnership Skills
- Public Health Sciences Skills
- Management and Finance Skills
- Leadership and Systems Thinking Skills

Resource link: [2021 Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals \(phf.org\)](https://www.phf.org/2021-Core-Competencies-for-Public-Health-Professionals)



Tips for creating a strong internship experience

Some tips when preparing for an intern on your team:

- **Create clear and adaptable projects:** This is important so that your intern has clear guidance and direction, to minimize confusion and to set appropriate expectations. Interns will have an easier time completing their tasks if their projects are clear. Adaptable projects also allow flexibility, pending the skillsets and interests of your selected intern.
- **Provide mentorship and helpful supervisory support:** Mentoring and supervising an intern is important to ensure interns have guidance to support their success during an internship experience. It's also helpful for the interns to know who they should go to with questions and for direction.
- **Be work-focused:** The purpose of an internship is to develop professional experience. Try to ensure that the project(s) you develop and assign to an intern can help them develop skills that support their professional development. That can include general professional skills such as time management, organizational and communication skills, as well as skills specific to many topical or program areas within public health.



When creating a public health student internship opportunity, you may wish to consider:

- Who will be the intern **supervisor**? Ideally there will be a primary supervisor and sometimes an additional supervisor, if the primary supervisor may be on-leave for any portion of the intern's experience.
- Craft a clear **project description** (often 1-2 pages) that outlines both the anticipated scope of work and how the intern will be supported and mentored.
- Outline expectations regarding **total number of anticipated hours** over the duration of the internship, and/or anticipated number of hours per week. Consider the **academic calendar** when planning.
- Whether the position is **paid or unpaid**. If any compensation is provided, state whether it's an hourly wage, or a stipend, or other type of benefit.
- Identify what **experience level** is appropriate for your internship position:
 - Education level (associate, undergraduate, master's, or doctoral degree level)
 - Specific area of study (in public health and/or related disciplines, or other disciplinary fields)



Project Descriptions: What to include

Tips for internship project descriptions

- Craft a project description scoped appropriately for a student intern, considering:
 - ✓ Eligibility requirements, if any, pertaining to level of study (associate, undergraduate and/or graduate degree) and field of study (public health and/or any other academic disciplines)
 - ✓ Hours per week over a specified period of time (and/or state the total number of anticipated hours over the duration of the internship experience)
 - ✓ If an hourly wage, stipend, and/or any other compensation or benefits will be provided, clearly state that.
 - ✓ Whether the position is in-person, remote, or hybrid.
- Indicate how the project scope incorporates and aligns with:
 - ✓ One or more of the 10 Essential Public Health Services
 - ✓ Any of the Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals
- Demonstrate how the project will create a high-quality learning experience for an intern and benefit your organization
- Clearly plan for who the supervisory point(s) of contact will be, with capacity to support the intern throughout the internship experience



Considerations for an Intern Supervisor

- ❑ Create an **inclusive and welcoming environment** that fosters a sense of belonging. Integrate the intern into your **team** as much as possible.
- ❑ **Offer guidance, advice, and assistance** for the intern's project work and oversee their project activities.
- ❑ Support and encourage the intern in their **professional development goals**.
- ❑ **Commit to spending sufficient time to onboard and support the intern**, to promote and ensure a success experience.
- ❑ Create opportunities for the intern to **present or share any project deliverables**, to practice presentation skills and to celebrate any accomplishments.
- ❑ As needed, clearly delegate any of these responsibilities to any other identified team members, to support an intern during their time with your organization.



Developing Connections with Academic Institutions & Posting Internship Opportunities

Students may learn about internship opportunities with your agency or organization in many ways.

Organizational relationships and partnerships with academic institutions:

- Relationships with faculty for research or other partnership engagement can support connections to their students.
- Presenting or serving as a guest speaker in classes can provide an opportunity to highlight opportunities in your organization.
- Engaging with career development professionals at college and university student career centers can provide an avenue for tailored outreach about how best to recruit their students for opportunities at your organization.

Job posting boards:

- Students in Washington State use many different job boards to search for internship and job opportunities. The [Washington Public Health Academic Learning Collaborative \(WA PHALCO\) Resource Hub](#) includes a curated listing of job boards.
- Many students search on the job boards hosted by their college or university career center. In Washington State, most colleges and universities post opportunities on the online career management systems Handshake or Symplicity. If you are seeking students from a particular college or university, you may wish to consult with their Career Center for guidance.

Career & internship fairs:

- Many academic institutions host career and internship fairs, either in-person or virtually. There are often fairs specifically tailored for students interested in public health or health careers. Sending an organizational representative to a public health career fair, when possible, can allow for direct connections with students interested in internship or job opportunities.

Questions? Contact Us!

Questions about engaging the higher education community for partnership with the Washington State Department of Health?

Or have any questions about the material shared in this presentation?

Please reach out!

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