Workforce Preparation Components

Youth programs that emphasize positive youth development already provide support and opportunities for youth as they transition through key phases in life, such as the school-to-work transition. Youth programs can build on this by combining a positive youth development philosophy with an intentional focus on workforce preparation.

The workforce preparation components described are all part of a larger foundation of positive youth development. It should be recognized that in addition to components of workforce preparation programming, an intentional foundation of best practices in positive youth development is critical.

High quality 4-H experiences incorporate the Eight Key Elements of Positive Youth Development.

- Positive Relationship with a Caring Adult
- A Safe Environment – Emotional & Physical
- Welcoming Environment
- Engagement in Learning
- Opportunity for Self-Determination
- Opportunity for Mastery
- Opportunity to Value & Practice Service
- Opportunity to See Oneself As an Active Participant in the Future

An important example is the presence of adults who engage youth as valued partners. How young people understand what it means and what it takes to be a productive citizen, as well as the belief in themselves, depends largely on the adult role models and connections they have. A 4-H caring adult volunteer serves as a guide, mentor, and role model. The 4-H caring adult helps set appropriate boundaries and expectations.

Using the experiential learning model to design learning activities that are active, engaging, and include reflection is also an important part of positive youth development. Life skill development is an outcome of involvement in the 4-H program, including all the 4-H program delivery methods. Youth are developing applied skills such as communication, teamwork, and decision-making as well as subject matter/technical skills through their 4-H experience.
Components of Workforce Preparation

Career Awareness & Exploration - Starting at an early age (pre-school), youth benefit from learning about careers and processing what they learn with adults. Younger youth are involved in learning through play and guided experiences. Older youth are involved in more in-depth exploration.

- **Strategies**: Examples include experiential learning activities for preschoolers and in all 4-H delivery methods such as family activities, role playing, speakers, field trips, career days, project interest area exploration, and some programs using specific curricula like *Teen Leadership on the Job*, *Wild Over Work*, *Real Money Real World*, and *Mini Society*.

Skill Development – Building on a strong foundation of life skill development, youth build applied skills needed for the world of work such as communication, teamwork, and understanding systems, as well as learning entrepreneurial skills, how to prepare a resume, interview for a job, and manage resources.

- **Strategies**: Examples include 4-H Club experiences in public speaking and working on committees, participating in programs like the 4-H & Junior Achievement Partner Program, *Mini Society*, *Buzz on Biz* and *Real Money Real World*, or other experiential activities focused on workforce preparation skills, resume, interview, application, and career planning.

Work-Based Learning – Teens are involved in practical opportunities that integrate work and learning experiences. These are real-life experiences that are structured, supervised, and evaluated. They may be paid or unpaid experiences.

- **Strategies**: Examples of work-based learning include camp counseling, summer employment experiences, CARTEENS, 4-H Ambassadors, and Junior Fair Board membership.

Post-Secondary Internships – Adults apply knowledge and experiences in a career field through formal academic or technical training combined with professional work experience in an internship setting. Quality experiences, led by skilled mentors or supervisors make the work experience a learning experience. Internships may be for college credit, and they may be paid or unpaid.

- **Strategies**: Work experiences for adults include roles on the OSU campus, in local Extension offices, or at 4-H camps as student workers, interns, and program assistants.

Adult Development and Leadership – Adults as lifelong learners improve their own skills for the workplace and learn to better support youth in workforce preparation (as volunteers, parents, educators, mentors, and supervisors).

- **Strategies**: Training for adults in personal development, parenting, club leadership, youth/adult partnerships, youth development, experiential learning, or other areas improves their own skills for career success and is critical for successfully supporting youth in workforce preparation.
Career Awareness & Exploration

How many occupations can you list and describe? Career exploration exposes young people to occupations they did not even know existed and helps them to explore occupations and learn about the job descriptions and requirements.

What is Career Awareness and Exploration?
Career awareness and exploration involves learning about personal interests or disinterests, skills required for particular jobs, and what someone would do in that job. This is a process, not a one-time effort embarked upon after graduation.

Cumulative experiences and the resulting knowledge help drive a more informed decision making process and better match of skills with career. It is desirable if this process begins at an early age and continues across the age spectrum.

Starting at an early age (pre-school), youth benefit from learning about careers and processing what they learn with adults. Younger youth are involved in learning through play and guided experiences. Older youth can focus on more in-depth exploration with opportunities to become increasingly experiential and hands-on. Even as adults, this component of workforce preparation is important when thinking about career changes or being a parent who serves as a career advisor.

Why is Career Awareness and Exploration Important?
While some traditional careers remain stable, many jobs in the knowledge economy are changing at a rapid pace. Even if the title remains the same, the expectations and duties evolve every few years. Workers in the 21st century are expected to adapt and evolve, either changing their skills or their career.

A challenge for youth is that they cannot choose to pursue a career if they do not know it exists. Friends and family typically serve as the primary role models, making connections to available careers. This is helpful, but also has limitations. The ability to conduct online searches and access to multimedia have created new avenues to explore available careers and guide youth's aspirations.

Making the connection to the similarities of seemingly unrelated careers helps open new opportunities. Increasingly, skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and communication are being viewed as more valuable than specific technical skills, especially for service sector careers.
Including workforce preparation in youth programming can take many forms. Programming strategies for career awareness and exploration include:

### Pre-school
- Explore work (chores) that youth are presently able to perform at home and in school. Compare jobs between youth of different ages to find that everyone can do something and that all jobs have a value. Relating new concepts to previous knowledge or experiences helps youth be more successful in learning the new concepts or applying previous knowledge in a new experience.
- Take a field trip to a workplace. Remember young children have short attention spans for speeches but will have lots of questions if the environment is interesting.
- Visits by parents and other adult workers who wear their workplace clothing or uniform and explain what they do in their job.
- Work as play – learning experiences around “created” work environment such as a construction site, post office, and health clinic. Considerations include: role models of diversity and gender, newsletters suggesting family activities, dramatic play “family days” around work environments; and relating play activities to skills and competencies.

### Elementary school
Begin having conversations about areas that interest the youth and what they are good at, making connections to careers whenever possible.
- Reading books or doing online research is another way to learn about different careers.
- Participating in vehicle days with exhibits of vehicles/machinery used in various occupations is a fun way to learn about different jobs. The operators of each vehicle or machine explain the use and demonstrate what the equipment can do.
- Participating in organized field trips in the community to explore different careers can be a fun way to expose youth to different jobs. Discuss the benefit of having someone perform this work in the community. A culminating activity could include setting up a community in which each youth plays out their “job” while visitors come to their town.
- Explore a career each month. Set a goal of learning about a particular career each month. Identify a time when the discussion will happen and have each club or family member talk about what they know or want to learn more about. Follow up on any action items. Extra value exists for including regular dialogue into daily activities (e.g., driving in the community or watching television) about those careers.

### Middle school
Students can make visits to various workplaces. Learners experience how to use some of the equipment and their application to the job. The more hands-on the better for this age group. Look for unusual careers. After identifying skills or interests of the youth, look for unusual careers that are complementary. Consider doing a “crazy career hunt” with everyone bringing back information on the craziest career they could find. More elaboration of above activities such as deeper research through reading books and more extensive field trips. Entrepreneurship begins by organizing groups to find ways to make money and focus on aspects of experience in basic skills and competencies.

### Key Ingredients for Success
Recommendations to consider when developing a career awareness and exploration program include:
- Children are ready for workforce preparation experiences at early ages, but the experiences must be developmentally appropriate and should have proper adult support and oversight for both physical and emotional safety.
- Provide exposure to a wide variety of career options.
Skill Development

Youth today are entering a fast paced and knowledge intensive workplace and facing systems that are rapidly changing and requiring constant innovation in their workforce to stay competitive and productive. Through intentional programmatic efforts, youth development professionals can create authentic learning experiences that complement the formal education system and facilitate the development of skills necessary for success in the 21st century.

What is Skill Development?
Building on a strong foundation of life skill development, youth build applied skills needed for the world of work such as communication, teamwork, and understanding systems, as well as learning entrepreneurial skills, how to prepare a resume, interview for a job, and manage resources.

Typically this is a gradual process and one that is imbedded within the core philosophies and program structure of the 4-H program. With enhanced processing by caring adults, youth learn that the skills they gain regarding projects, offices, and clubs also translates to skills valuable in the workplace as well.

Why is Skill Development Important?
We know that the skills necessary for success in a 21st century workforce correlate with those gleaned from positive youth development programs (Kazis & Kopp, 1997; Levin, 1994) and that these skills not only help prepare young people for the world of work but also for life in general. Furthermore, out-of-school time programs like 4-H are recognized as an ideal place for development of workforce preparation skills (Cochran & Ferrari, 2009; Schwarz & Stolow, 2006).

Youth today are entering a fast paced and knowledge intensive workplace and facing systems that are rapidly changing and requiring constant innovation to stay competitive and productive. At the same time, U.S. employers are finding that new entrants into the workforce are ill-prepared (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006).

Organizations are looking for employees with skills for success in the 21st century knowledge economy, thus creating an opportunity for programs that focus on these skills, especially blending applied skills with technical knowledge. These workers will demonstrate their success by knowing not only how to do the job but also will be effective in working with and through systems and will have the dedication to lifelong learning to positively impact change and innovation.
Skills for Success

Thinking Skills
• Critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and innovation

Communication
• The ability to communicate effectively using the variety of methods and tools available in today’s environment

Teamwork and Leadership
• The interpersonal skills to work effectively in a team and to provide leadership through collaboration, motivation, and leveraging the strengths of others

Lifelong Learning and Self-Direction
• Continually improving one’s capabilities by taking responsibility to set goals, improve skills, and show initiative

Technology Adoption and Application
• A firm foundation of technology skills including concepts and operations, selecting appropriate tools, and solving problems with appropriate technology

Professionalism and Ethics
• Demonstrate personal accountability and effective work habits: punctuality, working productively with others, and time and workload management

While having these 21st century skills is vitally important in this new economy, youth will also be required to navigate a pre-employment process that has become increasingly complex and competitive. The importance of workforce readiness skills like writing impactful resumes, completing applications, and delivering convincing interviews will be necessary skills to be considered for most positions and career fields.

Key Ingredients for Success

Recommendations to consider when developing a work-readiness and skill development program include:

• **Speak the language.** Adult leaders should learn about the changing nature of work and current language employers and educators are using to describe skills for success in the knowledge economy. By including 21st century skills language frequently in the program, youth will learn and make the connections more easily between the skills they are developing and how they are applied in the real world.

• **Identify the applied skills learned** and used in each activity ahead of time, making sure to vary them regularly. By connecting both the subject matter and technical skills and the applied skills a broader awareness and understanding of skill will be learned.

• **Practice, practice, practice.** It is great to talk, but much more impactful to do. Include plenty of opportunities to practice the skills and make sure to save time at the end for processing ways to improve the next time.

• **Use your resources.** The world of work is all around and a simple invitation to have someone talk about their job can be insightful to youth and flattering to the speaker. Who knows better the skills needed than someone currently doing the job?

• **Go through the process.** Make sure to include applications and interviews in as many programs as possible. It might take a little more time, but the lessons learned might be just as important as the opportunity at hand.
Programming Strategies for Skill Development

Creating a specific program targeting a particular 21\textsuperscript{st} century skill or integrating the concepts and language into an existing program are examples of ways to program for skill development. Consider whether a member-directed or leader-directed curriculum or approach is the most effective for your situation, feeling free to blend if it is appropriate. A key component is to include processing around these skills through discussion during and at the end of activities to get the most out of the experience.

Specific programming strategies for skill development include:

\textbf{21\textsuperscript{st} Century Skills:}  
(thinking skills; communication, teamwork and leadership; lifelong learning and self-direction; technology adoption and application; and professionalism and ethics)

\textbf{Public speaking} opportunities help to improve self-confidence and communication skills. This could be a formal speech or simply reporting back to the group on a task or activity.

\textbf{Teaching or leading}. Having a teaching or leading role on committees, boards, etc. changes the responsibility and engagement of the learner. Encourage youth to step up to lead or teach often.

\textbf{Applying technology} to projects, club activities, and committee. Ask youth to offer technological solutions to make things work more effectively.

\textbf{Seeking initiative}. Challenge youth to ask their teacher, parent, boss, or club leader regularly what they can do to help out or take care of things that need to be done.

\textbf{Ask questions}. Avoid the temptation of providing information and getting through things quickly. Asking questions promotes thinking skills. Have youth ask questions also.

\textbf{Workforce Readiness:}  
(resume, application, interview)

\textbf{Resume writing}. Have youth write a resume including project and work experiences and have an employer, educator, or parent review it.

\textbf{Record keeping}. Remind youth that program records are not only a good way to develop and practice skills, but can also be a way to document those skills throughout the pre-employment process.

\textbf{Consider the message} sent via technology. As youth get ready to apply for a job they need to assess their technology tools and the message that they send. Social networking sites are popular with youth and employers are increasingly viewing these sites to learn more about potential applicants. Youth should also consider if the message on their cell phone would be considered professional.

\textbf{Take an application scavenger hunt}. Pick up or view multiple applications online to determine what kinds of things are required for most applications and what the process includes. Invite a Human Resource professional to speak about the employment process and tips that they suggest to enhance success in the process.

\textbf{Interview practice}. Interviewing can be an intimidating process, especially the first few times. Encourage youth to apply for jobs, trips, offices, reminding them that turning down an offer is always an option. The practice is invaluable. Add value by having youth interview each other.
Work-Based Learning

There is great concern about a lack of connection between skills young adults have and those needed for success in the, and many jobs available to teens do not provide them with opportunities to enhance their development and help them build the necessary workforce skills. However, the use of work-based learning programs can help overcome these issues by giving youth real work experiences coupled with support that can help them learn about themselves and understand the expectations of the world of work.

What is Work-Based Learning?
Work-based learning programs involve teens in practical experiences that integrate work and learning. Work-based learning programs are real-life experiences that are structured, supervised, and evaluated. Successful programs use the experiential learning model – doing real work, reflecting on these experiences, and generalizing to future life situations.

The work experiences may be paid or unpaid, but are clearly viewed by both participants and employers as real work – that is, youth are actively engaged in producing goods or services. The focus of work-based learning is not simply on working for the sake of a having a job, but on an experience that takes the developmental needs of youth participants into account.

Why is Work-Based Learning Important?
Many of the skills needed for workforce success develop over time and must be learned through active participation. That is, youth are afforded the opportunity to learn interpersonal skills, cooperation, and teamwork by actually having to work as a team with others in the workplace.

Because of their relative inexperience, the potential for youth to contribute to the workplace is often underestimated. However, studies show that work experiences can have a positive impact on both the young people and the businesses or organizations that host teens as employees in work-based learning programs.

Successful work-based learning programs empower young people to be an active participant in their future by taking control of their own learning and experiences. Given the concerns expressed about the need for young people to develop workforce skills, work-based learning is a good model for engaging teens in meaningful service to the public and developing workplace skills and competencies that they can apply now and in the future.

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Key Ingredients for Success

To be most effective, work-based learning experiences need to be preceded by work readiness activities. This foundation may be provided through other experiences, or may need to be incorporated into a work-based learning program.

Recommendations to consider when developing a work-based learning program include the following:

- **Ground work-based learning programs in a positive youth development philosophy.** The key features of positive youth development must provide the foundation for work-based learning programs in order to meet adolescents’ needs in developmentally appropriate ways.

- **Establish partnerships for worksite placements.** Successful workforce preparation initiatives require strong community partnerships—a collaboration of all stakeholders. Look for opportunities to partner with other agencies. Partnering with these programs and serving as a worksite could be a potential source for paying youth for their work.

- **Make good matches between youth and employers.** Youth programs must gather enough information to understand the worksites, the work environment, job duties, and the individuals involved. They need to ensure a balance between sufficient challenge and sufficient support, considering the type of support the young people need and how frequently they need it.

- **Provide opportunities for skill building and career awareness.** Since many of the skills needed for workforce success develop over time and must be learned through active participation, work-based learning programs are ideal places to teach those skills. Focus on the applied skills that will transfer from job to job.

- **Provide authentic experiences with high expectations.** Work-based learning programs must provide real experience, not busywork. Employers and program staff should hold participants to high expectations and provide honest evaluations. If the goal is improvement, then mistakes are part of the process.

- **Consider opportunities for increasing responsibility and reward.** The practice of paying a salary or providing incentives can be an important part of an authentic experience. The financial rewards may motivate teens to stay connected at a time when many lose interest or drop out because outside work conflicts with their participation.

- **Provide orientation and training for adult staff and teens.** Orientation and training provides clear expectations and builds skills for both youth and adults.

- **Monitor and support participants and employers throughout the process.** Periodic site visits or phone calls can encourage communication between program and worksites. Regular sessions with youth participants build reflection and problem solving into the work experience. Regular checkpoints allow for mid-course corrections rather than waiting until the program ends.

- **Understand legal issues and comply with state and federal laws.** Work-based learning program staff needs to be aware of child labor laws, distinctions between employee (paid) and non-employee (unpaid) status, requirements for work permits and insurance, and what minors can and cannot do in the workplace. See [http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/4109](http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/4109)

- **Evaluate and provide feedback.** Evaluation and feedback make the work experience a continuous learning experience. The use of written reflections in journals, participation in performance appraisals, and facilitated group discussions help to make the work experience a learning experience.
Including workforce preparation in youth programming can take many forms. Two broad strategies include *value added* and *growing your own*.

**Value added**
Many existing 4-H programs have the potential to be designed and implemented as work-based learning. Examples include camp counseling, CARTEENS (a teen-led vehicular safety program), 4-H Ambassadors, and Junior Fair Board. Service-learning and volunteering use the community as a context for helping youth develop and apply critical skills that are important in the workplace and in life generally, and can therefore be part of a comprehensive approach to workforce preparation. While many of these existing 4-H programs are already high quality experiences, by viewing them through a workforce lens they can serve two purposes: the initial goals of the program and work-based learning objectives.

**Growing your own**
Growing your own is a natural progression from participant to teen leader to teen employee to adult staff member. From a youth development perspective, it is a means to provide young people with increasingly challenging roles and responsibilities that can facilitate their development of important workforce skills and dispositions. From a practical standpoint, the concept makes sense as a way to address current staffing needs. It also makes sense as a way to develop future employees who have a commitment to the mission and goals of our Extension organizations.

Specific programming strategies for work-based learning include:

- **Start early** - youth age 12 to 15 can be highly motivated and have fewer competing interests for their time. They will require more supervision, but it can be worth the investment.
- **Be deliberate and intentional** - plan for your program to be a work-based learning program and communicate that clearly.
- **Set the stage** - provide understandable and specific expectations to adults and teens at the very beginning of the program.
- **Provide training for adults on their roles** - adults need to understand the goals of the program and understand how to facilitate learning experiences for teens.
- **Afford teens real work experiences** - teens need to feel like what they are doing matters and is worthy of their time and effort.
- **Build reflection into the process** - the use of the experiential learning model for work activities and experiences deepens the learning and helps to apply lessons learned to future situations. Look for ways to structure this into the work experience naturally as opposed to "special reflection time" that always relies on a facilitator.
- **Use authentic assessments and evaluations** - performance appraisals, self-reflection, journals, and solicited feedback all work easily into the process when a program is viewed through the work-based learning lens.
- **Remain realistic** - start small in your scope and depth of the program. Build on successes in future efforts. Add a few features in subsequent programs. Focus on the quality of the experience not the quantity of participants.
- **Communicate results to stakeholders** in a way that shows how young people are developing skills necessary for success in the 21st century.
Post-Secondary Internships

Post-secondary internships allow students to apply knowledge and experiences in a career field through formal academic or technical training combined with professional work experience in an internship setting. Students can gain experience working with new audiences and a variety of delivery methods, as well as to perform work that is meaningful.

What are Post-Secondary Internships?

An internship is a form of experiential learning: a structured learning experience in a real-life situation. Internships provide adults the opportunity to apply knowledge and experiences gained through formal academic or technical training through a professional work experience in their chosen career field. Interns must obtain relevant experiences led by skilled mentors or supervisors in a professional setting to make the internship valuable. It is also important for interns to receive training, supervision, and mentorship.

A quality experience will assist interns as they begin to explore careers in their area of interest. Internships may be for college credit, and they may be paid or unpaid. In Extension organizations, internships may take a variety of forms but all can serve to introduce the spectrum of educational program development and delivery. Interns can observe and gain experience practicing a variety of delivery methods under the tutelage of a seasoned professional.

Why are Post-Secondary Internships Important?

Post-secondary internships are important for both the interns and the participating organizations, providing a win-win opportunity. For participants, an internship provides an opportunity to make the learning experience more relevant by connecting classroom learning to hands-on experiences.

This connection often helps participants make critical decisions regarding their career. In general, those who complete internships are better prepared to enter the job market, acquire their first job more quickly, receive better compensation, and report greater job satisfaction.

There is great potential for internship programs to become a way for students to gain experience working with new audiences and a variety of delivery methods, as well as to perform work that is meaningful to the organization. This type of program also embodies the concept of “growing your own,” that is, a continuum of opportunities for young people to move from program participant to employee.
For organizations, an internship provides an opportunity to form relationships with potential employees, provide exposure to the organization, and have important work accomplished. A list of benefits for potential interns and for Extension as an organization is provided below.

For the **potential intern**, specific benefits include:

- Take advantage of an opportunity to become independent learners by establishing individual learning goals.
- Enhance interviewing skills.
- Build a stronger resume by providing valuable work-related experience.
- Develop stronger communication and teamwork skills.
- Help determine if this is the right career choice.
- Test a variety of skills and interests while adding to the current knowledge base.
- Establish a network of professional contacts.
- Outline the prerequisites necessary in their field of interest.
- Reveal how the organization functions.
- Practice the professional behavior necessary to become successful.
- Ease the transition between college and the professional world.
- Be a part of the professional team atmosphere associated with educational program development and delivery.
- Gain familiarity with the county Extension office procedures, responsibilities, and staff.
- Develop skills in time management, prioritizing, and acceptance of responsibilities.
- Work with a diverse (age, gender, economic class, ethnic) audience at the community level.
- Participate in a high performing system where staff and community volunteers work closely together to achieve common goals.
- Participate in a network that provides a variety of experiences, mentoring, feedback, and clear communications throughout the internship.

For the **organization and/or potential host**, specific benefits include:

- Gain new perspectives and fresh ideas.
- Infuse the workplace with knowledge and enthusiasm.
- Provide an opportunity to increase workplace diversity.
- Provide an opportunity for current employees to develop supervisory skills.
- Develop stronger relationships between the academic world and the professional arena.
- Allow you to assess the capacities of a potential employee.
- Recruit and train potential future employees.
- Increase pool of qualified candidates and reduce recruiting costs.
- Increase communication among the 88 counties in Ohio.
- Improve the rapport among youth in the community.
- Address the needs of a special project.
- Accomplish a significant quantity of work that would have gone undone.

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**Growing your own**

Growing your own is a natural progression from participant to teen leader to teen employee to adult staff member. From a practical standpoint, the concept makes sense as way to address current staffing needs in Extension. However, it also makes sense as a way to develop future employees who have a commitment to the mission and goals of the organization. From a youth development perspective, it is a way to provide young people with increasingly challenging roles and responsibilities that can facilitate their development of important workforce skills and dispositions. Thus, employing individuals through the internship program should intentionally practice a “growing your own” philosophy. This concept could be a particularly powerful tool for increasing staff diversity if used with our current urban programs, which are generating a pool of talented youth with exposure to Extension.
Key Ingredients for Success

Recommendations to consider when developing a post-secondary internship include:

- The intern should enter the internship with personal, professional, and academic goals (where appropriate) that are discussed with the supervisor.
- The work assignment should be relevant to the intern’s goals while also providing a variety of work experiences, a better understanding of the relationship between parts of the organization, and broader knowledge of the organization.
- Selection and orientation are crucial; the more and better you do up front the better the experience for all. Having a contract with expectations agreed upon up front is important. Understand their interests and look for experiences that will provide them growth and exposure.
- Provide some type of orientation to the office and the organization. For many interns, this will be their first experience in an office and they will need to learn about professionalism as well as specific policies and procedures.
- Set up a regular time to meet, the more autonomous the work, the more frequent the check in. Have a detailed position description. Network with local higher education institutions. Ask questions more than doing the talking.
- Provide an opportunity for distinct projects within the internship experience that the intern can claim as their own body of work. Identify projects (phases) that meet the scope of the internship or that can be sustained beyond the internship – no one likes busy work that does not get used or has no meaning.
- Provide professional opportunities, either as observers or participants in county and state level meetings. This allows for a more complete understanding of the organizational paradigm of Extension at the county, state, and national level.
- As a mentor, ensure that you have a strong commitment to providing a meaningful experience. Be realistic about your own time commitments prior to accepting a post-secondary intern.
- Allow the intern choice in what they choose to take on at the beginning of the internship and then build on their comfort level and increase the level of responsibility.
- Stress the importance of communication throughout all work assignments.
- Review the learning contract with the intern every two weeks; “check in” to ensure that the process is meeting expectations on both sides.

Programming Strategies for Post-Secondary Internships

Post-secondary work experiences for interns may include roles on the OSU campus, in county Extension offices, or at 4-H camps as student workers, interns, and program assistants. Candidates for internships may come from a variety of sources. These sources may range from Ohio State University students enrolled in Agricultural Science to students enrolled at other academic institutions in a variety of disciplines including, but not limited to, education, social work or humanities.

Potential interns should develop, with an Extension educator, a learning contract at the beginning of the internship process. This contract should indicate what learning goals would be achieved by the intern from the experience, and would include benchmarks and completion criteria agreed upon for learning points by both the educator and the intern.

The learning contract should be re-visited every two weeks over the course of the internship to review the intern’s progress and to ensure that the overall goals are being met by both parties. Formalized reflection should also be required and built into the learning experience. At the end of the internship, students must summarize the learning experience as negotiated by the intern and mentor. Additional requirements may also be mandated by the educational institution sponsoring the intern.