



PROMOTING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT THROUGH INTERNSHIPS:

A Guide to Best Practices

SEPTEMBER 2013

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BEST PRACTICES

Section 1: The Importance of Internships

This guide has been written to share best practices in providing internships to youth, based on the global experience of partners and programs supported by the International Youth Foundation (IYF). Internships are a critical part of any employability training program—they introduce youth to the world of work, allow youth to translate classroom learning into practical experience, and whenever possible lead to long-term employment for those youth.

This document brings together recommendations and lessons learned for each phase of an internship program: planning and design, placement, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. It stresses the “win-win” nature of internships—with benefits for both employers and youth—and outlines strategies for engaging these groups in programming. Finally, a variety of case studies from recent IYF programs are included to provide context-specific illustrations of the concepts discussed.

The intended audience of this guide is staff at youth-serving institutions (YSIs) that plan to provide and/or support internship programs. For the purposes of this guide, YSIs are organizations whose primary mission is to equip youth for the working world. Some function within civil society or the non-profit sector, others are linked to corporate social responsibility goals within the private sector, and still others are established public or private educational institutions. Though available resources and funding may vary from one organization to another, each aims to train and place youth in healthy working environments that are both stable and secure.

What is an internship?

Internships are an extension or a complement to classroom training that aims to expose young trainees to the world of work and provide hands-on professional experience. This is often the first and most important job placement strategy for YSIs. Internships provide youth an opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills (both hard and soft) in an actual work environment and to adapt to new situations that may come up in a workplace.

Internships are usually the result of an agreement between three parties—the youth trainee, the YSI providing training, and the employer. The term employer includes a broad category of potential internship-hosting organizations. Although the private sector has been the main source of openings for internships, in some cases YSIs have worked with government agencies or non-profit social sector organizations in order for young people to carry out their internships there.

Placements should be relevant to the interests, career aspirations, and training of the youth (for example, youth in a hospitality-industry vocational training program should be placed in internships in hotels and restaurants, not auto-repair shops). Whenever possible, internships should lead to full-time, permanent employment opportunities for youth trainees—whether with the employer who provided the internship or with another employer in the same industry or sector. As a result, placements should be in industries and areas where there is significant labor market demand for entry-level employees.¹

In IYF’s experience, internships are crucial to improve young people’s chances of successful employment. (They may even be compulsory for all youth employability programs in certain countries.) Internship programs should be designed to comply

¹ This can be determined by conducting a labor-market assessment (see Resources section for additional documents on this topic). IYF recommends a labor-market assessment at the outset of all youth employability training projects as a best practice to ensure that training corresponds to the actual needs of employers in the local area.

with local labor laws and include formalized agreements with internship providers (employers), supported by a training plan agreed upon by the employer and the YSI, and a stipend if needed (and paid by the employer wherever possible).

A “win-win” proposition

Having an internship offers youth valuable work experience and helps enhance their professional skills, while allowing prospective employers to see the contribution a young person can make to their organization’s success. As a result, well designed internship programs can be a mutually beneficial proposition for all three parties involved—youth, employers, and the YSI.

For youth, some of the key benefits of participating in an internship include the opportunity to:

- **Gain valuable career-related experience in a real world environment:** Internships enable youth trainees to gain valuable experience by taking on real responsibilities in a company or organization. It helps bridge the gap between classroom teaching and an actual work environment.
- **Increase confidence in newly acquired skills and abilities:** Classroom training can help in acquiring certain skills, but a work environment provides an opportunity to put them into practice. Successfully doing so can boost the confidence of trainees.
- **Evaluate and try out a career path:** Internships are an opportunity for youth to determine whether they wish to seek employment in the particular industry where they are completing their internship. If so, it helps them determine next steps necessary to find employment in this field.
- **Expand knowledge of career options in specific industries:** Youth can learn about different career paths within a specific industry and explore which field of specialization they may choose based on experience gained during internships.
- **Cultivate important professional contacts for future employment:** Internships are a stepping stone into the professional world and enable trainees to network and build contacts within the company and the industry where they would like to work. This may help them to secure employment in future.
- **Build and strengthen CVs:** An internship provides a valuable opportunity for youth to put tangible professional experience on their CV and hence increase their chances of employment in a competitive job market.

For employers, some of the key benefits of offering internship placements to youth include the opportunity to:

- **Evaluate youth for potential full-time employment:** Internships provide a low-risk opportunity for employers to evaluate youth as potential employees before committing to a permanent contract. This can help them to find high-quality candidates for future employment and fill any job vacancies quickly.
- **Gain access to quality candidates:** Because interns have completed a training program, they are often more qualified for entry-level positions than employers might otherwise be able to recruit. The YSI’s training program acts as a sort of “quality control” for employers, providing a trusted supply of high-quality candidates.
- **Save time and reduce the cost of selection and hiring:** As a result of access to this pool of well-trained interns, employers can save time, energy, and money in the employee recruitment process and do not need to use external recruitment companies to find candidates.
- **Increase capacity and productivity on short-term assignments:** As short-term additional labor within a company or organization, interns can be placed on specific projects to increase the capacity of the staff when needed.

- **Capture new energy and bring innovative ideas to the workplace:** The interns can bring in new and useful ideas and contribute to the growth of a company or organization. A young person can infuse energy and vigor at work and challenge traditional ways of operation in a constructive manner.
- **Increase cost-effectiveness:** Interns can often do the same work as a regular employee at a much lower cost to the employer. Thus adding interns to the workforce can prove cost-effective for an employer.
- **Serve as corporate social responsibility:** Hiring interns, particularly disadvantaged youth who may not have other opportunities to gain their first experience in the labor market, is an important way for companies to contribute to society and gain recognition as a positive actor in the local community.

For YSIs, some of the key benefits of providing job training and internship placements to youth include the opportunity to:

- **Increase relevance and quality of training programs:** Classroom training has more relevance and meaning when it is complemented by a hands-on practical experience. The presence of an internship component makes it easier for YSIs to recruit interested youth participants, and for trainers to keep the course interesting and engaging.
- **Increase connections with employers:** Internships help to grow YSIs' networks, particularly among employers in the public and private sectors. Networking with employers enables YSIs to secure internships and jobs for future trainees, and may bring other benefits such as employers' in-kind support for other programming, participation in job fairs and career days, etc.
- **Provide visibility and opportunity for expansion:** In many cases, providing successful internships to trainees enables YSIs to increase their credibility and popularity among youth and other key stakeholders, becoming premier training organizations in their countries. This not only generates demand for programming but also sources of funding.
- **Receive feedback on training:** Internships can test the effectiveness of YSIs' training programs. Feedback on the relevance of training can come not only from the employers but from the interns themselves. This may help to improve the training programs and make them more effective in the future.

When properly designed and executed, the benefits of internship programs to all parties involved are clear. It is precisely this “win-win” proposition that YSIs can use to market their programs—both to recruit a large number of employers willing to place youth in internships and even hire them permanently afterwards, and as a result to ensure a high level of committed youth participation in training and internship/job placement programs.

“My experience with this program was very good. When I started my internship we were treated with fairness – they didn’t care that we were women and they taught us as if we were their colleagues. I believe that none of us imagined that so many things would happen to us... More than once we made mistakes, but with an internship one learns. It was thanks to the contractor technicians who taught us we were able to show that we were their equals. I met great people who will always be in my memory; I want to thank them for helping me in this stage of my life.”

— Daniela Cortés, participant in the entra21 program (Chile)

Section 2: Planning to Provide Internships

Before designing and implementing an internship program, there are several considerations that YSIs must take into account to ensure the program will be successful.

Internal Planning

For YSIs that are incorporating an internship component into their programming for the first time, there are several internal organizational factors that should be considered before training and internship placement begin.

The first issue is ensuring adequate staffing to oversee the program. Providing internships requires specialized support at every step in the process—from identification of employers to offer internships, coordination with YSI training staff to match youth with placements, follow-up support and troubleshooting during the internship, and evaluation of both employers and youth at the conclusion of the internship period. In addition to typical project coordination/management staff, it is often necessary for YSIs to have one or more staff members (depending on the size of the program and the number of youth to be placed) who focus specifically on internship placement and support. IYF's partner in South Africa under the *EquipYouth* program, St. Anthony's Education Centre, ultimately created a job and internship placement unit within their organization to have staff who are fully devoted to placing and following up with youth. They found that this change greatly improved the performance of their internship program.

The second issue is ensuring that the costs of an internship program are adequately budgeted for. The largest costs will likely be the specialized staff discussed above, but other aspects of the program—outreach to employers and youth, creating an internship placement database, developing internship contracts and other tools, etc.—may have cost implications as well. Finally, although many internships are unpaid, providing a stipend may in some cases be necessary to ensure youth attendance and participation (see Section 4). In many cases, a minimal stipend should at least cover the costs for youth to travel to and from their internship location. Whenever possible, stipends should be partially or fully paid by the employer, but in some cases this will fall upon the YSI and must be adequately budgeted for.

Legal and policy considerations

Because internships occupy a gray area between volunteering and employment, it is essential for YSIs to research the legal, tax, and insurance regulations governing the status of interns in their jurisdiction. Although in some countries the concept of internships (perhaps also known as apprenticeships or traineeships) may be well established and accepted, in other countries the idea may still be completely unknown. In the latter case, YSIs will need to work hard to establish an enabling environment or “culture” of internships before the idea is accepted.

Similarly, some countries have laws about how internships can be implemented, whereas in other countries interns may not be recognized as a separate category. For example, in Latin America, countries including Peru, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and Paraguay all have laws regulating internships, with legislation enforcing internship durations of anywhere from two months to two years. On the other hand, in other countries where there is no legislation governing the status of interns, employers may view unpaid interns as nothing more than “free labor” to be exploited to the greatest extent possible. In this case, it is up to YSIs to ensure that internships are in compliance with local labor laws, governed by a written contract or agreement, and mutually beneficial to both parties (i.e., a learning experience for youth as well as a productivity gain for the employer).

In addition, YSIs should research any tax implications of internships, both for trainees and for employers, and inform these parties of their obligations (particularly youth, who may not be aware of how and when to pay taxes). In some countries, there may be tax incentives that encourage companies to hire interns, which should be taken advantage of to the fullest extent possible. (See *Case Study: Private Sector Engagement in the Brazilian Tourism Industry* below for an example of how one YSI utilized existing tax incentives to encourage employers to host interns.)

Workplace insurance is another key issue that should be covered in the internship agreement signed by the YSI, the employer, and the intern. Ensuring that interns are covered by an insurance policy will protect trainees from unforeseen accidents at work and compensate if an unfortunate situation arises. In some cases, youth may be covered by their parents' social security or insurance, or YSIs may negotiate with government agencies to have these youths registered in state programs. When this is not the case, interns should be covered by their employers' workplace insurance policy or by a policy held by the YSI. For example, in Jordan under the *EquipYouth* program, IYF is providing workplace insurance for all internship participants, because the program's employer partners were not willing to provide coverage. This is especially important because most of the internships are in industrial trades, where risk of accidents is relatively high.

Section 3: Employer and Youth Outreach

Before an internship program can begin, YSIs must engage key stakeholders—chief among them employers who will offer internship placements and youth who will take part in the program. This section offers suggestions on successful strategies for YSIs to recruit employers and youth into their programs.

"It's important to partner with local employers and the business sector so we can get more jobs for the trainees. We need to continue to develop partnerships to expand the program. Youth are our only hope."

— Luis Morales, Special Projects Manager, Consuelo Foundation (Philippines)

Employer outreach and recruitment

The bedrock of a successful internship program is the creation of relationships with a wide variety of employers who are willing to host interns. For YSIs offering such a program for the first time, building these relationships can be challenging. But with persistence and a systematic approach, YSIs can engage a large number of employers and secure internship placements.

YSIs can engage employers through a variety of avenues, including contacts facilitated by YSIs' board of directors or advisory committee members; business associations, chambers of commerce, trade groups, and industry alliances in the local area; presentations at business events and trade shows; and networking through other stakeholders. When making contact with employers, YSI staff should have a well prepared verbal "pitch," as well as a clear and organized package of printed promotional materials highlighting the YSI's mission and the benefits for employers of participating in an internship program.

Once contact has been made, YSI staff should follow up with a more formal request to offer internship placements and an invitation for employers to learn more about the YSI's program. YSIs will need to clearly explain the concept of an internship—often unfamiliar to employers in many countries—and lay out the "win-win" argument of why hosting interns will be beneficial to the employers as well as to youth.

An orientation session for prospective employers, informing them about the training and internship program, can be held during the training cycle. YSIs may also decide to invite employers to visit their premises, sit in on a life skills or technical training session, meet face-to-face with youth trainees, or attend an event such as a graduation ceremony or roundtable discussion. Inviting employers to partake in these activities is important because it provides YSIs the opportunity to showcase their programs and provides employers the opportunity to see the benefits of partnering with the YSI and

supporting their youth trainees. (See *Annex A: Employer Partnership Checklist*, *Annex B: Intern Request Form*, and *Annex C: Cooperation Agreement* for some key documents that can assist YSIs during the employer outreach process.)

Potential engagement challenges

Employers may be resistant to hiring youth for several reasons. For instance, they may hold preconceived stereotypes that youth are untrained, unmotivated, and lack long-term commitment. Furthermore, depending on the circumstances surrounding vulnerable or at-risk youth, they may suffer from racial, cultural, gender, or socioeconomic discrimination. In Kyrgyzstan, the *Jasa.kg* program worked to dispel these stigmas by arranging youth visits to companies and inviting employers to participate in their youth training programs. This approach allowed employers and youth to engage in a dialogue and learn the importance of communicating with each another.

In some countries where internships are a required part of certain educational tracks (e.g., “end-of-study” internships for university students), YSIs may face competition from other institutions seeking placements in a limited number of internships. Developing marketing materials that set their youth beneficiaries apart from the crowd is very important in this situation. YSIs must match their trainees with companies’ needs very carefully, and should be prepared to emphasize their trainees’ practical skills and positive attitudes toward work—particularly entry-level work where more academically qualified youth will pose less of a threat.

In other countries, lack of job availability in the local labor market may pose a challenge. For instance, in the Caribbean, partners of the *Caribbean Youth Empowerment Program* (CYEP) face serious challenges engaging employers because the marketplace has limited positions for new hires. Employers often choose not to partner with an organization simply because they either cannot offer long-term employment opportunities or they do not wish to displace adult employees. While ideally internships lead to job opportunities, youth and employers can still benefit from internship arrangements even if long-term opportunities are not available.

Maintaining employer engagement

Employer commitment is strongly linked with their degree of investment in the program. For this reason, YSIs should invite employers to play an active role in the design, implementation, and continual improvement of their internship programs. One example of this best practice is the *Youth for the Future* program in Jordan, which formed an employer advisory group that meets monthly to discuss ways to bridge the gap between employers and youth. Employers expressed the need for youth to have soft skills in addition to technical skills prior to starting internships, which led to the incorporation of life skills training into the overall youth training curriculum. Some alterations to program design may be necessary in order to address specific employer needs, but YSIs must always ensure these requests are also in line with overall organizational goals and the needs of youth participants.

Employers who feel invested in programs can serve as valuable resources and champions for the continued success of youth trainees. YSIs should be creative in asking employers for continued engagement and support. Employers can share up-to-date information on hiring trends, human resource needs, and industry standards; promote the program and serve as a good reference for new employer partnerships; serve as guest speakers or instructors for training classes; and offer mentorships to help guide youth through the job search process. These additional pro bono services offered by employers can enrich YSIs’ programs and familiarize employers with YSIs’ overall operations and objectives. For example, YEA International in Singapore and BN Vocational School and China Youth Development Foundation in China—all IYF partners under the *EquipYouth* program—have invited employers to give guest lectures and attend student training events, greatly increasing youth-employer interactions and facilitating placement in internships and jobs.

YSIs should plan in advance for the time and costs involved in cultivating and maintaining these relationships over the long term. Experience shows that developing individual relationships with executives, managers, and human resources

personnel is the most successful tactic. These relationships evolve with continued follow-up and persistence on the part of YSI staff. Communicating with employers during each phase of the internship program—development, the duration of the internship, post-internship, and even follow-up after a youth is hired—directly correlates with the likelihood of an employer taking on new youth interns and employees in the future.

“Having worked directly with a number of [CYEP program] trainees who came as interns and are now on the staff of Flamboyant Hotel & Villas, I see a different attitude and comportment about them that I don’t usually find with those who have attended the highly esteemed institutions. I’ve watched some of them rise through the ranks to very high professional levels and it’s always a pleasure to work with them.”

— Ms. Shelly Belfon, Restaurant Manager, Flamboyant Hotel & Villas (Grenada)

Youth outreach and recruitment

In some cases, engaging youth can be equally time-consuming as engaging employers. Youth may be resistant to entering into a program for many reasons, such as lack of self-confidence or cultural stigmas associated with particular job training programs. For instance in Jordan, the *Youth for the Future* program’s primary challenge is engaging youth. The prevailing reason lies with cultural norms that hold some vocational or technical avenues of employment to be below the culture’s standards of success. Program staff have had to conduct significant outreach and awareness raising campaigns, stressing the benefits of vocational training and internships, in order to convince youth to participate.

However, YSIs can be highly successful when they formulate a recruitment plan and a thoughtful campaign to attract youth into their programs. By creating “youth-friendly” services—providing a safe and secure environment, keeping interactions with adults free of judgment, helping youth overcome challenges they are facing, and encouraging them to reach their aspirations and goals—YSIs can grow their youth beneficiary base quickly. Youth whose backgrounds qualify as vulnerable or at-risk due to environmental, social, mental or physical limitations may require additional services such as remedial literacy education, psychosocial support, transportation, and child care.

Finally, just as employers need to be reminded of the “win-win” nature of programs, YSIs should also explain the advantages and benefits of internships to youth (see Section 1). Some youth, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, may already be working in the informal sector to supplement their families’ income; YSI staff will need to help youth understand how receiving further skills training will help them to secure better employment. If the training and internship program offers a certification of some kind upon completion, the value of this should be stressed. The chance to gain real-world work experience, build their CVs, and network with future employers should also encourage youth to participate.

Section 4: Designing an Effective Internship Program

The next step in the process is for YSIs to identify the objectives and requirements of the internship component and to develop strategies for how the program will meet these goals. The design stage provides a detailed road map for implementation. In addition to the concrete logistical aspects of how a program will be staffed, funded, and put into practice (discussed in Section 2), there are several key design questions that must be answered to determine the shape an internship program will take. Those questions are addressed below.

How will the internship connect to training?

Within the context of a youth employability program, internships are a crucial opportunity for trainees to put into practice what they have learned during the training period. To ensure there will be relevant on-the-job learning opportunities, it is important to plan for the internships at the same time you plan for the training, as part of a holistic, youth-centered design process. Care should be taken to ensure that the internship is closely related to the training received by the trainees. It should allow them to further expand their knowledge in their chosen field, giving them practical, real-world skills that can later lead to long-term employment. Internship placements should always be in a field related to their training to make the internship experience relevant and fruitful for the trainees.

In addition to vocational or industry-specific skills training in their area of focus (“hard” skills), youth should be receiving training in “soft” skills (also called life skills) that will allow them to succeed in the workplace.² These competencies are applicable in all industries and according to feedback from employers are often what set YSI-trained youth apart from other entry-level candidates in the job market. Key soft skills that youth should acquire as a prerequisite to entering an internship include:

- Problem solving
- Managing conflicts
- Teamwork
- Making a positive first impression
- Self-confidence
- Respecting self and others
- Dealing effectively with criticism
- Stress management
- Proper hygiene and professional dress
- Workplace protocol

Feedback from trainees and employers should be consistently gathered and regularly incorporated into the program design to ensure that both training and internship placements are responding as closely as possible to the needs of all stakeholders. The sectorial focus of training programs may evolve over time to respond to the needs of the local labor market, and training programs should be constantly updated to incorporate new skills and knowledge (e.g., computer literacy) that youth may need in internships and jobs.

² An example of soft skills is IYF’s *Passport to Success*® life skills training curriculum. For more information on the PTS curriculum, please refer to the Resources section.

“I am grateful for the technical training which I received because I was able to acquire skills, knowledge and certification. [Upon completion of my internship], I was offered employment at Belair Plantation. I started off as an intern, worked my way up, and was then able to secure a position as Assistant Chef. My experience has taught me to never give up hope and to continue putting my best foot forward.”

— Abigail Fletcher, participant in the CYEP program (Grenada)

What will be the timing of the internship component?

There are two possibilities for timing of the internship component relative to training, both of which have advantages and potential disadvantages.

The first option is for internships to take place at the end of classroom training period, after all hard and soft skills training has been completed. This ensures that students have acquired all necessary skills before beginning the internship, and allows them to put all of these skills into practice. It satisfies the demands of some employers who prefer that the young person has completed all of his or her training in order to improve performance of the internship tasks.

This option is also likely to be less complicated from a scheduling perspective, and less stressful for youth in terms of managing their workload. In addition, keeping internship placement as an incentive at the end of the program may motivate students to attend training regularly and prevent drop-outs. One disadvantage of this approach, however, is that students cannot receive additional training, or have their questions answered as easily by the training staff, once they have begun their internship—there may not be as many opportunities for follow-up if the YSI sees that trainees are lacking in certain skills after they have begun their internships.

For example, IYF’s partner in China under the *EquipYouth* program, the BN Vocational School (BNVS), provides youth with one year of soft skills and technical training followed by a year-long internship. In order to overcome the challenge of providing follow-up training and support to youth during their internship period, BNVS requires youth to come to the school two or more Saturdays per month to attend additional life skills lessons that reinforce their real-world internship experience.

The second option is to alternate classroom training with the internship after the student has completed the basic prerequisites (e.g., any specific skills necessary for the internship tasks, as well as the basic workplace soft skills outlined above). YSIs can integrate internship hours into the training schedule, whether by having youth participate in the internship on certain days of the week and classroom training on the others, or by dividing the day to attend one activity in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Alternating classroom and internship sessions is useful because the young person—with monitoring and counseling from trainers and YSI staff—can resolve problems, such as teamwork conflicts, that are encountered at the internship site. On the other hand, scheduling may be challenging under this approach, particularly if transportation is an issue for youth due to time or cost. Under the *Emploi Habilité* program in Morocco, IYF provided classroom training and internship opportunities simultaneously (one day of class and five days of internship per week) and found this to be the best option for youth with low levels of prior education, as it allowed them to apply their knowledge in a very hands-on and practical way, rather than remaining in a purely theoretical classroom environment.

What will be the length of the internship?

Internship durations can vary widely across contexts, both in terms of overall length and number of hours per week. Different programs in a variety of contexts offer internships that last anywhere from one or two months up to one or two

years (in the context of a school-based vocational training program). In general, internships should be long enough to provide youth with the necessary experience and skills to build their CV and gain long-term employment, but not so long that youth lose interest or drop out to pursue other options before completing the required duration.

Internships can also be full-time or part-time depending on their integration with the overall training schedule and whether youth have other obligations on their time (school, family/child care, etc.) that must be accommodated. As discussed in Section 2, internships must conform to any laws governing their duration that may be in effect. The needs and preferences of employers should also be taken into account when determining the intensity and length of internship placements, as the ultimate goal is to increase the possibility that interns, if positively evaluated, will be hired by that employer or by others in the same industry.

Will the internship be paid?

Internships may be paid or unpaid, depending on the situation (and in conformity with any local laws on the subject). Whenever feasible, it is preferable to provide trainees with a stipend in order to encourage regular attendance and prevent drop-outs. A stipend also serves to reward youth for their work and to give them a sense of what it is like to be employed (as well as a chance to practice personal budgeting and financial management skills). Ideally, some or all of the stipend should be paid by the employer, but it may be necessary for funding to come from the YSIs' project funds. At a minimum, YSIs should encourage employers to provide reimbursement for interns' transportation, meals, and insurance costs. These costs, even if small, may otherwise create a barrier preventing many youth from participating in the program.

Stipends should be delivered on a predetermined and regular basis, for example at the end of each week. Payments may be made in cash at the internship site or at the YSI training center; in some cases, YSIs have created agreements with local banks and credit unions to deposit the stipend in a savings account.

Stipends and Compensation for Interns: Experience of the *entra21* Program in Latin America

In general, internships are unpaid. There are cases, such as Brazil and Colombia, where "learning contracts" are used, protected by labor laws in which youth receive a percentage of the legal minimum wage plus membership in the health benefits package. When the internship is not covered under any law, some employers voluntarily offer compensation for transport, food, accident insurance, and some form of stipend, which under no circumstance is to become a salary. In those projects where there is no possibility of financial compensation from the employers, project funds were used to finance stipends to cover accident insurance, transport, and/or food. This prevented absenteeism and drop-outs during the internship phase. Stipends have varied between 50 cents and 2 dollars per day. In some projects, these subsidies are applied selectively to those young people with greatest need or who have to travel the greatest distances.

In the cases where the project did not plan for the cost of accident or life insurance (Medellín, Colombia and Cordoba, Argentina), young people were selected who were covered under their parents' social security, or the implementing partner negotiated with government agencies to have these youths registered in state programs. This allows employers more flexibility in accepting young people for internships, since these costs are covered.

Excerpted from "Job Internships in entra21 Projects: Strategies, Successes, and Challenges," report written by Juan Carlos Hernández (2007)

Section 5: Placing Youth in Internships

The process of placing youth in internships requires close attention and can be labor-intensive, particularly if a large number of youth are being placed simultaneously. It is essential to set up agreements and systems at the outset between interns and employers, to ensure that expectations are met on both sides. This section outlines some key recommendations for success during this phase.

Prepare youth for internships

The first step in the placement process is to match youth with specific employers and internship opportunities. While the internship placement may be determined solely by the trainee's field of training or specialization, or by the placements that are available at that particular time, ideally the youth's interests and career aspirations can be taken into account as well. This may involve some sort of career guidance or career counseling session led by YSI staff with individual youth to uncover and explore their interests. Once the placement has been agreed upon, an internship training plan should be formulated for each trainee (see sidebar). Compiling this information in one location and in a systematic fashion enables both the YSI and the employer to keep track of each trainee's progress.

An **internship training plan** should include the following information:

- Host employer (company/organization)
- Internship supervisor and/or mentor name
- Intern's title/role and tasks to be performed
- Schedule, including number of working hours per week and overall duration
- Internship goals and learning objectives
- Space for feedback received from employer during evaluation sessions

Finally, it is important to prepare youth for a real-world work environment before they begin their internships. Trainees should be familiarized with the nature of the organization and its policies, their role within the organization, work tasks, expectations, working hours, and any basic workplace protocols. Basic soft skills related to being on time, appropriate dress, communication with supervisors and colleagues, etc. should also be refreshed as necessary. (See *Annex D: Intern Code of Conduct* for a suggested list of youth responsibilities within the internship placement.)

Create an internship “contract”

Specific internship placements are typically the result of negotiation between YSIs and employers. The number of hours per week, duration, and specific work tasks to be performed should all be agreed to and recorded in writing. Another key issue is whether a stipend (or reimbursement of travel and other expenses) will be provided and how much of this cost will be covered by the employer. It is important to be very clear when negotiating what the roles and responsibilities of each party—YSI, employer, and youth—will be.

Once this information has been agreed upon by all three parties, an internship agreement should be signed. Depending on the legal status of interns in each country, this may be a binding employment contract or a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Recording in writing the obligations of all parties is not only a first step in quality control, but gives youth practice in reading and signing a contract.

In those countries where internships do not have a defined legal structure, it may be a challenge to make the employer understand and accept the formalities required by the YSIs. Yet these formalities are of crucial importance to ensure that employers do not exploit interns or deviate from the agreed-upon work tasks; a written record of the internship agreement can be referred back to at any point should such a dispute arise.

Build a system of supervision

YSIs should supervise trainees throughout the duration of their internships, so that their experiences have as much educational value as possible. YSI staff should conduct site visits at least once a month, if possible, to observe youth at work and ensure they are performing tasks related to their training. These visits also provide opportunities for YSIs to debrief with employers to make sure that they were happy with the interns' performance and are successfully dealing with any challenges. Section 6 will address internship monitoring and evaluation in more detail.

One important consideration that should be addressed during the placement phase is the assignment of a supervisor or mentor from among the employer staff. Whenever possible, an intern should have a formal supervisor, just as they would in regular employment. In addition, another staff member at the internship site may be assigned as a mentor in order to familiarize the intern with the work environment and provide valuable advice regarding professional life, specializations within the industry, and work ethics in general. The mentorship scheme also allows the interns to establish useful contacts within their industry of choice. (See *Annex E: Employer Internship Checklist* for suggestions on how an employer should prepare to host interns.)

Section 6: Monitoring and Evaluating Internships

Once internships are underway, YSIs must continue to devote staff resources to supporting youth trainees. Gathering feedback as internships progress (monitoring) and receiving feedback at their conclusion (evaluation) is important for a number of reasons.

First, any challenges being faced by either the youth or the employer can be caught quickly and corrected, so that the internship can be a useful “win-win” experience for both the employers and the youth. For example, if the employer states that an intern is not showing up to work on time or is having problems working in teams, YSI staff can address this issue with the youth. If the intern states that the employer is not paying the stipend on time or not assigning meaningful work in accordance with the internship agreement, YSI staff can address this issue with the employer.

Second, this information can also be used to illustrate the success of the program. Both qualitative data (e.g. focus groups, interviews, and evaluation forms) and quantitative data (e.g. number of youth completing internships and subsequently finding employment) can be gathered, as will be discussed below. In addition to providing reporting data and a useful internal check for YSIs to verify the effectiveness of their programs, this information can be a powerful publicity tool. If a YSI can state that a high percentage of youth they train are placed in internships (and perhaps even permanent jobs), youth will be eager to participate in the program and employers, donors, and other stakeholders will be eager to support the YSI's work.

“My department was recruiting for a receptionist and the HR Manager provided the resume of Miss Tarissa Francis [GARD Center trainee and former intern]. The staff had been so impressed with her during the internship that two departments were fighting to recruit her. My department got her. Working with the GARD Center has been a very successful experience and a collaboration we hope to continue.”

— Ms. S. Butters, Support Supervisor, Medical Benefits Scheme (Antigua and Barbuda)

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the information gathered from the employers and youth can be used to improve the process for future cohorts of youth. Training curricula may be modified and updated based on the feedback from employers about specific technical and soft skills needed in the workplace. Specific internship placements may be discontinued or expanded based on feedback from youth. This feedback loop is very important for YSIs to continually improve the quality of their employability programs. If feedback is ignored, on the other hand, failures will be replicated and the quality and reputation of the program will decrease rapidly.

IYF's partner in India under the *EquipYouth* program, Quest Alliance, has found youth input to be extremely helpful in improving their programming. They have created an "alumni feedback system" so that youth who graduate from their training programs and enter internships and/or jobs are able to provide Quest with feedback on how their training could have been improved to better prepare them for their current positions. Quest makes adjustments to their training curricula accordingly.

Monitoring visits

YSIs should conduct site visits to monitor the progress of youth placed in internships as frequently as possible, given staffing and time constraints (at a minimum, once midway through the internship and once at its conclusion). These visits can be used to gather feedback on the interns' performance and verify that their assigned tasks are in compliance with the employers' commitments. (See *Annex F: Internship Site Visit Feedback Form* for a suggested template to be used by YSI staff during site visits.) The internship agreement signed by all three parties prior to the start of the internship (see Section 5) can be referred back to in the case of any disagreements or misunderstandings.

Attendance sheets should be regularly completed and signed by the employer to verify the interns' attendance. YSI staff should conduct spot checks of these attendance sheets during any visits to internship sites, and follow up immediately with youth if absenteeism is an issue. YSI staff should also verify that stipends are being paid on time and at the agreed-upon rate.

Qualitative evaluation

At the end of the internship, both interns and employers should provide feedback through standardized evaluation forms. Interns should assess the employer's ability to successfully host interns, the usefulness of their internship relative to their career goals, whether the training curriculum prepared them adequately for the experience. Employers should assess the intern's performance (both in terms of technical skills and workplace conduct) and provide feedback on the training curriculum based on whether the trainees were adequately prepared in terms of hard and soft skills. (See *Annex G: Final Internship Evaluation* for a suggested template to be completed by employers upon completion of the internship duration.)

Youth should be assured that their responses will not be shared directly with employers (but rather will be read only by YSI staff) so that they answer honestly and do not worry about potential consequences of negative responses.

Feedback from employers should be shared with youth in one-on-one sessions with YSI staff, so that youth can learn from their internship experience and improve any difficulty areas in the future. If there is a need for any remedial training, YSIs can help youth to enroll in additional courses.

Quantitative evaluation

Collecting numerical data is useful whenever possible, particularly when working with a large number of youth or employers that cannot all be interviewed individually due to lack of time and funding. Quantitative data allows YSIs to obtain information on a range of indicators that can help determine whether the internship program is running according to plan. In essence, quantitative data provides statistical insights that complement the anecdotal information gathered through qualitative research. Specific indicators determine whether the internship component of a program has been successful and whether the stipulated target of placing the trainees has been met. Some suggested quantitative indicators are:

- **Number of youth completing internships:** The number of youth placed in internships and completing the predetermined internship length with high attendance; this may also be expressed as a percentage of overall beneficiaries of an employability training program (e.g., a YSI might set the target of having 40% of trained youth placed in internships)
- **Number of mentorship sessions completed:** If a mentor is assigned either at work place by the employer or during the course of training by the implementing partner, the number of times a youth intern and his/her mentor meet to discuss progress on the internship and any challenges faced
- **Percentage of youth receiving positive evaluations from employers:** Youth surpassing a predetermined threshold of positive feedback based on the employer evaluation form being used
- **Number/percentage of youth with enhanced life skills after internship:** Youth showing improvement in workplace soft skills over the course of their internship, as rated by employer feedback
- **Number/percentage of youth with enhanced technical skills after internship:** Youth who report receiving additional on-the-job skills training during their internship
- **Number/percentage of youth gaining employment:** Youth who are offered long-term employment at their internship site following the completion of their internship

Section 7: Troubleshooting Challenges

This section provides some suggestions and guidance on resolving common problems that are often encountered during the implementation of internship programs.

Challenges for YSIs

- **Overcoming competition for positions:** YSIs may face competition from formal and informal education institutions that are also seeking internship positions from employers (particularly in countries where internships are formalized and/or required as a part of certain educational tracks). This may be especially difficult when disadvantaged youth trained by YSIs are forced to compete with graduates of higher education for scarce internship positions. In order to overcome this challenge, YSIs must market themselves aggressively and convince employers that their combination of technical and soft skills training makes their trainees the best prepared for the workplace. YSIs can also seek less conventional internship placements (e.g., with small business owners, or with organizations in the public sector and civil society) in order to increase the pool of employers reached.
- **Having capacity for large cohorts:** As mentioned in Section 2, YSIs' capacity to identify and negotiate a large number of internship placements at the same time must be considered from the beginning of the program design process. Those YSIs that train relatively large youth cohorts may need to extend the search period for internship placements for their trainees. In some cases, youth have had to wait up to three months or more to be placed in an internship. Depending on the local economy, YSIs may find that targeting multi-national corporations that can take on multiple interns at a time will help them to manage large cohorts. This has been the case with IYF partners in countries such as Jordan, Singapore, China, and Indonesia.
- **Negotiating terms with employers:** In those countries where internships do not have a formal legal structure, it may be challenging for employers to understand and accept the formalities required by YSIs. Some employers may think

that they are doing everyone a “favor” by accepting interns, and therefore that they have few obligations or are able to unjustifiably extend internships with the sole aim of having free labor. YSI staff must explain the concept clearly, stressing that interns are neither volunteers nor salaried employees, and explaining that an internship should be a “win-win” situation where the employer gains a fresh temporary workforce and youth gain valuable employment experience and skills. Once this has been done, the details of specific placements should be written down in an internship agreement and signed by the employer. This can be used as a monitoring tool once the internship is underway.

- **Managing expectations from youth and employers:** YSIs have the dual responsibility of managing the concerns and expectations of both the youth as well as the employers. The concept of an internship (which is neither a volunteer position nor full-time, salaried employment) may be new to either or both parties, in which case. It is the responsibility of the YSI to assure youth that they will receive adequate training and internship placements, as well as to ensure employees that they will receive responsible, well trained, work-ready interns.
- **Preventing and addressing exploitation:** Because interns work for very little or no pay, there is a tendency for employers to mistake them for “volunteers” and to force them to work longer hours. The terms of internships should be made very clear from the beginning of discussions with an employer, and should be recorded in writing in a signed internship agreement. Site visits should be used to monitor compliance with regards to work hours and tasks to be performed.
- **Preventing and addressing harassment:** Harassment at work is a serious issue and must be dealt with appropriately when it occurs. A process of regular monitoring through site visits and collection of feedback from trainees may help to determine if there are any problems in the workplace environment. Interns should be encouraged to speak up and discuss their concerns with YSI staff.
- **Developing fair and transparent systems to allocate economic support/stipends:** Depending on agreements with various employers, YSIs may offer internships with various levels of payment (no stipend, reimbursement for travel, or paid stipend). In order to prevent any misunderstandings or conflicts, a fair and transparent system should be made clear to youth ahead of time and then used by YSI staff to allocate placements among trainees. Internships should be assigned based on training specialization, career interests, and quality of performance during training. At the same time, YSI staff must be sensitive to the financial situations of their trainees and ensure that no one is being prevented from pursuing an internship due to economic constraints (e.g., high cost of transportation to the internship site).
- **Keeping up with market information:** In order to keep internship offerings up-to-date, YSIs must manage a wide array of data on the local labor market and their network of employer partners. Managing this system involves constant follow-up through email, phone calls, and site visits to obtain reliable, up-to-date information. YSI staff should be constantly reaching out to new employers in order to secure additional internship placements and to stay aligned with shifts in industries and the needs of the local labor market, especially for training programs that cover specific vocational skills.

Challenges for youth

- **Managing a busy schedule:** Young people who combine formal studies—or domestic responsibilities—with a training and internship program must reconcile their various responsibilities and schedules in order not to neglect any of their activities. YSI staff should be aware of trainees’ obligations and help them to build schedules that are reasonable and feasible in order to prevent absenteeism.
- **Demonstrating appropriate workplace behavior:** Many youth entering the professional world for the first time may lack maturity and good judgment, leading to inappropriate behavior during the internship period. In addition,

their inexperience with workplace culture and any socioeconomic differences with their coworkers may cause misunderstandings and impede good relations for teamwork. YSIs should minimize this risk through soft skills training, but it is also up to the interns themselves to behave appropriately and achieve a positive evaluation of their performance. Regular monitoring of internships is a key to identifying problems of this sort and working to resolve them quickly.

- **Managing expectations for employment:** It is normal for trainees to have high expectations of being hired for a permanent position by the same employer after completing their internship. Not being hired right away may cause frustration and disappointment. YSI staff must help manage expectations by providing trainees with a realistic picture of employment rates before they are placed, and encouraging them to continue searching for other employment and not give up on their goals.
- **Understanding internships may not be paid:** As mentioned above, some internship positions may offer financial compensation and others may not. In some cases, trainees may delay starting their internship or decline certain placements if they believe they may receive another offer that is paid. In addition, those youth who are not receiving stipends may lose motivation to continue their internships. YSIs must encourage their trainees to understand that internships entail other benefits (professional experience, networking, mentorship, CV building, etc.) that are even more important than immediate financial compensation.

Challenges for employers

- **Responding to lack of trainee attendance:** In some cases, employers may be frustrated by poor attendance by youth interns within their workplace. Employers should first report this concern to the YSI, so that the two can address the problem together. There may be numerous reasons for lack of regular attendance—transportation or scheduling may be an issue, the youth may not understand the importance of showing up consistently on time, or the youth may be uninterested by the work entailed by the internship. Each of these issues can be addressed in a different way by the YSI staff, working together with the employer.
- **Improving quality of trainee performance:** Employers may also face the challenge of trainees who are lacking certain technical skills or are not able to complete the assigned work tasks. Again, this should be reported immediately to the YSI so that the problem can be addressed. Some remedial training (whether by YSI trainers or by colleagues within the employer’s workplace) may resolve the problem. In other cases, the youth may need to be assigned a different set of work tasks that are less challenging, which entails a modification of the written internship agreement.
- **Providing adequate support and mentorship:** Employers have certain obligations towards youth completing internships within their workplace, one of the most important of which is to provide a mentor and/or supervisor. This type of relationship helps youth to benefit as much as possible from the internship experience, have their questions answered in a prompt manner, and learn more about their industry of choice and professional life in general. Employers may be tempted to skip the assignment of mentors because their employees are already overtaxed and busy, but neglecting this support network not only does a disservice to the interns but also increases the likelihood that they will be unproductive or even disruptive to the work environment.

Conclusion

YSIs implementing internship programs for the first time may encounter some or all of the challenges listed in this section and will likely choose to address them in a variety of ways. Although every operating environment is different, all internship programs have a number of important similarities. This guide pulls together the experience of IYF and its global network of partners over several years and a wide variety of countries. By sharing these best practices and lessons learned, as well as valuable case studies and examples, IYF hopes to promote high quality internship programming for YSIs around the world—ultimately leading to increased employability and improved livelihoods for youth.

Section 8: Additional Resources

Internship Programs

Job Internships in entra21 Projects: Strategies, Successes and Challenges (2007):

- Original Spanish version available here: <http://library.iyfnet.org/es/library/estudios-y-reflexiones-4-la-pasant%C3%AD-laboral-en-los-proyectos-entra21-estrategias-aciertos-y>
- English version available upon request from IYF staff

Preparing Youth for 21st Century Jobs: entra21 Across Latin America and the Caribbean (2007): <http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/YouthDevNotesEntra21Dec06.pdf>

YED Program: *Youth Employability Services in the West Bank* (2012): http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/Youth_Employability_Services_in_the_West_Bank_2011.pdf

Youth Empowerment Program: *Executive Summary* (2011): http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/MicrosoftYEP_Final_Report.pdf

Partnering with the Private Sector

Caribbean Youth Empowerment Program (CYEP) Employer Outreach Kit (2013): Available upon request from IYF staff

Alliances for Youth: What Works in CSR Partnerships (2006): http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/WW_Alliances_4_Youth_0.pdf

Education and Employment Alliance: *An Evaluation of Partnerships in Support of Youth Employability* (2010)

- Executive Summary: http://www.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/EEA_Final_Global_Evaluation_Report_Executive_Summary.pdf
- Full report: http://www.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/EEA_Final_Global_Evaluation_Report.pdf

Building Alliances for Youth: Lessons from Obra (2012): <http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/ObraGlobalReportENG.pdf>

FieldNotes: *Working with the Business Sector to Advance Employment* (2008): <http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/FieldNotes13BizSector.pdf>

What Works in Engaging Business in Youth Employment and Livelihood Strategies (2001): http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/WW_EngagingBusiness.pdf

Creating Economic Opportunities for Young People: Engaging the Private Sector– Youth Livelihoods Alliance Roundtable (2013): http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/YLA_Roundtable_Spring2013.pdf

Creating Opportunities for Youth in Hospitality (2013): <http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/Creating-Opportunities-for-Youth-in-Hospitality.pdf>

Entra21 Notes: *Training Youth for the Business Sector* (2012): http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/Entra21_notes_Walmart_ENG.pdf

Collaborating with the Private Sector: A Case Study of an entra21 Project in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil (2006): http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/entra21_LearningSeries_1.pdf

Labor Market Assessments

Ensuring Demand-Driven Youth Training Programs: How to Conduct an Effective Labor Market Assessment (2012)

- Guide: http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/Labor_Mkt_Assess.pdf
- Attachments: http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/Labor_Mkt_Assess_ATTACHMENTS.pdf

Youth:Work Program: *Promoting a Dual-Client Approach* (2009): http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/YW_FactSheet_02_DualClient_0.pdf

Life Skills

Passport to Success®: *Equipping Jordanian Youth with Essential Life Skills* (2013): http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/Passport_To_Success_Y4F.pdf

FieldNotes: *Implementing Life Skills for Employability* (2006): <http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/FieldNotes06LifeSkillsEmployability.pdf>

Youth:Work Program: *Providing Life and Employability Skills Training* (2009): http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/YW_FactSheet_01_LifeEmpSkills_0.pdf

Getting Youth in the Door: Defining Soft Skills Requirements for Entry-Level Service Sector Jobs (2013): http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/SoftSkills_Competerencies_Report_IYFpdf.pdf

Equipping Youth Who Are Harder to Hire for the Labor Market (2012): http://library.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/Entra21_Learning%2520Series_8_Eng.pdf

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: Private Sector Engagement in the Brazilian Tourism Industry

Engaging with the private sector to build credibility as a provider of well trained, highly motivated youth candidates, and to promote the importance of internships (both for job-seekers and for employers), is a best practice for YSIs around the world. This case study focuses on the Instituto de Hospitalidade (Hospitality Institute or IH in Portuguese), one of the *entra21* implementing partners in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil.³ The objective of their Tourism and Social Responsibility (TRS) project was to train low-income youth from public schools and place them in jobs in the tourism sector—creating a bridge between businesses in this sector and disadvantaged youth who had previously had no access to jobs with those businesses. Launched in 2004, the project trained over 500 youth within the first year, and far surpassed the target job placement rate of 40%, with 55% of the youth trained in the first cohort finding employment.

Internships were a key component of IH’s job training and placement process, and demonstrate the success of IH’s approach—encouraging employers to see youth interns as a part of their core business strategy, rather than as “charity” cases that could easily be pushed aside. As a result of this approach, over 70 businesses offered internship placements through the program.

IH’s ability to engage employers can be traced to several important factors. First, IH built its legitimacy within the Brazilian tourism industry by creating a “National Certification System for Professional Qualifications for the Tourism Sector” that validated qualifications for 52 occupations within the tourism sector. This made IH a prominent national actor and built confidence and credibility with businesses in that industry, making IH a go-to training provider. Second, IH has continued to maintain its position through ongoing engagement with the business community, incorporating employers’ suggestions into their tourism and soft skills training curriculum for youth. Finally, IH was able to take advantage of existing government incentives for businesses to hire disadvantaged youth as interns and employees to create opportunities for their trainees.

In order to identify internship opportunities, two full-time IH staff members are in charge of identifying restaurants, hotels, travel agencies, tour companies, etc. and potential placements, organizing site visits, and presenting the advantages of accepting youth from the TRS project as interns and eventually employees. Once an agreement has been reached, the IH training team

³ An initiative of the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) of the Inter-American Development Bank and IYF, *entra21* was created in 2001 to improve the employability of disadvantaged youth in Latin America and the Caribbean and place them in decent jobs. *entra21* is a \$29 million matching grant program supporting 35 projects in 18 countries throughout the region. The program provides young people, ages 16 to 29, with comprehensive training in information technology and life and job-seeking skills, and job placement services.

evaluates the personnel requests from these businesses and selects the four most appropriate candidates, who are then presented to the business to make a decision. IH thus simplifies the task of selecting interns for employers, providing a quality assurance based on their reputation and pre-selection of candidates.

Youth receive continuous support during their internship both from IH staff and from a mentor, who is an employee of the business assigned to orient, guide, and support the intern. Mentors receive a five-day training course from IH prior to taking on this role.

During the internship, IH staff request feedback from the mentor and the intern regarding progress and challenges. They also collect feedback from employers regarding the training youth have received, and incorporate this information to adjust their curriculum if necessary. For this reason, internships are not only critical to preparing youth for work in the tourism industry, but are also an effective way for IH to continuously gather information about the labor market.

Businesses receive requests from many other training programs seeking internships for large numbers of youth, including those who are university educated. Employers mention several reasons for accepting IH-trained youth as interns over other candidates, in particular the fact that they are already trained in skills specific to the tourism sector, in addition to their high level of motivation and enthusiasm within their internship assignments. In the words of a manager of a local Holiday Inn, “When we employ youth without training, the possibility of making mistakes is 7 out of 10. When we employ a young person from the TRS project, the possibility of guessing correctly is 8 out of 10. It is very gratifying to employ a young person from this project.”

Case Study 2:

Job Fairs in Kyrgyzstan and India

Job fairs, in which employers set up tables or booths where youth can learn about job opportunities and speak with businesses' representatives, can be a cost-effective way to bring together large numbers of youth and employers in one place. Because employers come specifically to recruit youth for open positions, job fairs can result in a large number of employment—and internship—placements.

One successful example of this approach is being carried out by Y-PEER, a partner of IYF in Kyrgyzstan under the *Jasa.kg* program.⁴ In the spring of 2013, Y-PEER held job fairs for project trainees in four regions of the country. Prior to the job fair, youth received employability training to ensure they were prepared on how to present themselves as competitive candidates to the employers they would meet.

Between 150 and 300 youth attended each job fair and had the opportunity to meet with between 10 and 20 local employers. In addition to employers' booths, the organizers set up a “vacancy desk” advertising other open jobs in the area, as well as other tables providing career guidance tests, information about workers' rights, and an awareness raising campaign about the dangers of migrating abroad to seek work (in partnership with a local NGO). Another highlight of the job fairs was the presence of prominent guest speakers from leading businesses, who gave “master classes” on topics such as job interviews, entrepreneurship, company culture, and choosing a profession. Local, national, and student-run media were present to cover the event.

One important challenge faced during the organization of these job fairs were a low response rate from businesses that were contacted to participate in the fair, demonstrating the importance of advance preparation and extensive networking with private sector partners. On the other hand, Y-PEER highlighted several practices that they found highly successful, including adapting the location and format of the job fair to fit the audience (e.g. holding fairs at a university building vs. outdoors near a park frequented by many youth, depending on the target group) and inviting well-known guest speakers from the business world, which generated significant enthusiasm from youth attendees. In total, the four job fairs reached 648 young people, with 117 receiving employment from the companies that attended the job fairs. Many others received internships from these companies as well.

⁴ A four-year, \$4.2 million civic engagement and entrepreneurship initiative, *Jasa.kg* harnesses and cultivates the dynamism and creativity of Kyrgyzstani youth to build a stable, prosperous and democratic Kyrgyzstan. Launched in 2011 by IYF, the project primarily aims to: inspire active citizenship among Kyrgyzstani youth; prepare youth for the marketplace; and create a culture of positive youth development.

Another example of this approach took place in June 2013 in India, with IYF's partner QUEST Alliance offering a "career fair" to over 800 youth trained under the *EquipYouth* program.⁵ More than 20 industry representatives provided workshops for youth (students at technological universities) on technical topics as well as soft skills needed for employment. Youth were very excited to interact with these industry experts and learn about the latest technologies in their fields of interest. Although the fair was originally intended as a practical education opportunity to connect students with companies in their fields of interest to better understand the opportunities open to them, the employers were so impressed with the students' knowledge and enthusiasm that they became interested in recruiting youth through QUEST for internships, apprenticeships, and jobs. As a result of the career fair, a number of students found internships and even employment at these companies.

As both of these examples indicate, job fairs can be a useful tool for youth to engage with employers, hone their presentation skills, and learn more about their industries of choice. Opportunities to engage with experts and guest speakers are very appealing to youth and can provide a significant draw to attend such events. YSIs should keep in mind when reaching out to businesses to participate in such events that both internship and long-term employment placements are valuable to youth, and employers should be encouraged to offer both.

⁵ In 2012, the International Youth Foundation and the Caterpillar Foundation launched *EquipYouth* to address the challenges young people face when entering the labor force or starting their own business. Implemented over three years the US\$11 million initiative will provide 8,500 young people in 12 countries worldwide with market-relevant life and technical skills training along with internships, on-the-job training, and job placement support and services, to increase their employability prospects.

Case Study 3: Overcoming Program Design Challenges in Palestine

Good program design takes into account past experience and the constraints of the operating environment in order to overcome any potential challenges and create a successful program. One example that demonstrates this is IYF’s *Youth Entrepreneurship Development* (YED) program in Palestine.⁶ Some obstacles faced by YED may be globally applicable while others are unique to the local context—but in either case, the underlying theme of anticipating challenges through thoughtful program design holds true.

Five of IYF’s Palestinian YSI partners—Leaders Organization, Palestine Polytechnic University, Palestine Information and Communications Technology Incubator (PICTI), Sharek Youth Forum, and Partners in Sustainable Development—have implemented entrepreneurship and/or employability programs with an internship component. As they designed and began implementing their programs, they faced a number of significant challenges, including saturation of the local labor market and lack of appreciation for the importance of internships on the part of both employers and youth. This case study will describe these two challenges and how have been addressed by the partner organizations.

First, IYF’s partners faced challenges in placing interns in an already highly saturated labor market in a relatively small geographic area. Although youth unemployment in Palestine is extremely high, the West Bank’s main cities are crowded with NGOs vying to serve these youth. Several competitor organizations already had major internship programs underway and, in some cases, were offering substantial financial compensation packages with which IYF’s partners could not compete. As a result of this situation, private sector employers were able to be highly selective in choosing interns and were only willing to accept university-educated youth with high grades.

To overcome these challenges, IYF’s partners moved “off the beaten path”—targeting marginalized areas outside the main cities, and facilitating internship placements with small businesses, community non-profits, and local municipal governments—while also leveraging their senior staff and board members’ contacts to network with as many potential internship hosts as possible. YED’s partners also worked to develop participants’ soft skills before they met with employers, including CV writing, interviewing, and presentation skills, in order to

⁶ YED is a four-year, \$15 million initiative supported by USAID that aims to improve employment, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement opportunities for young Palestinians. Practical and participatory capacity building is an ongoing focus of the program, aimed at preparing Palestinian youth-serving institutions to provide young people with demand-driven, sustainable, and high quality projects that support their entry into the workforce and foster tangible improvements to their local communities.

maximize their potential for a successful interview process. Finally, YSI staff made sure to match the profiles of internship candidates with the needs of specific employers so that the best possible candidates were being presented. In this way, IYF's partners could gain a reputation for providing the highest quality interns.

Second, as is the case in many programs around the world, YSIs needed to convince both employers and youth of the value and importance of internships so that the opportunity would be taken seriously. IYF's partners realized that most employers were being asked to host interns without sufficiently taking into account the needs of these employers; as a result, employers were viewing internships as a burden rather than as a potential benefit. At the same time, in some cases, youth did not understand the importance of internships for their professional development, which led to a lack of commitment and high drop-out rates.

IYF's partners overcame these challenges by meeting with both employers and youth prior to internship placements, in order to draft simple job descriptions for the interns and to explain the benefits for both parties. They also found it helpful to apply a stricter selection process for internship candidates to encourage a higher level of commitment, as well as providing a stipend to cover the cost of participation in order to ensure continued attendance. Furthermore, YSIs implemented a rigorous monitoring and follow-up system for all placed interns and their employers to make sure the experience was mutually beneficial and expectations of all parties were being met.

By incorporating these approaches into their activities, IYF's Palestinian YSI partners have ensured that their internship programs can be successful and more importantly, can stand out in the competitive local environment. As a result, the YED program has facilitated internship placements for over 550 Palestinian youth so far—with many of these youth receiving employment offers from their hosts following positive internship performance.

ANNEXES

Annex A: Employer Partnership Checklist

This list of questions can be used by YSI staff to evaluate whether a particular employer is a suitable partner to host youth in internship placements.

- Does the company/organization in question have a good reputation within its industry and provide opportunities for advancement for its employees?
- Is the employer aware that an internship is a learning process for the young person and not simply a temporary work contract at low cost?
- Is the employer willing to sign a formal internship agreement and adhere to these requirements throughout the internship duration?
- Can the employer cover part or all of the youth's costs (travel, food, etc.) and/or provide a small stipend?
- Will the young person be placed in an internship position with meaningful tasks that relate to their training and/or career interests?
- Will youth be provided with a thorough workplace orientation when they begin their internship?
- Will the employer provide a staff person who can act as a mentor to the young person and provide constructive feedback throughout the internship?
- Does the company have the personnel available to promote training in other skills that will enhance the young person's work performance and educational level?
- Is the employer willing to participate in midterm and final evaluations of the intern's performance, as well as to receive feedback on how to improve the intern's experience?
- Does the company offer some real possibility of job placement following completion of the internship?

Annex B: Internship Request Form

This document can be used by employers to propose internship placements. It may be completed with the assistance of YSI staff, depending on the level of initiative shown by the employer. This document should be used after initial contact has been made with the employer and an orientation meeting has been held to discuss the YSIs' training program and target youth population, the purpose and benefit of internships, and the employer's interest in hosting interns.

[PROGRAM NAME] INTERN REQUEST FORM
<p>Thank you for your interest in hosting interns under the [program name]. We look forward to working with you to identify and support the young talent that will contribute to your organization's success.</p> <p>Internships will last XX months and begin on [date]. Participating employers are encouraged to host a minimum of one intern in cycle one and one intern in cycle two. [YSI name] will provide support throughout the process, during intern recruitment, placement, and for the duration of the internship.</p> <p>A quick reminder that all host employers are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide orientation and identify a mentor for each intern • Develop a work plan with each intern and hold regular progress reviews • Contribute [amount] per month stipend for each intern hosted <p>Please complete the below details to help us better understand your requirements. A member of the [YSI name] team will contact you to further discuss and agree the internship positions you require.</p>
1. Name of company or organization
2. Please provide a brief summary of your company's work
3. How many interns would you be able to host?
4. Where would interns be based? Please provide the office address.

5. What would the main tasks for each intern requested be? Please list a maximum of 5 tasks per intern
6. What educational background would be required for each intern requested?
7. What key technical skills, training, or experience would be required for each intern requested?
8. Please confirm that you are able to provide a stipend for each intern
9. Please provide the details for the contact person in your company (name, title, email, and phone)

Annex C: Cooperation Agreement

This is a sample agreement with an employer who has agreed to host interns. This template should be adapted to the local context (including local labor laws or other regulations governing internships) as well as to add any necessary clauses unique to that employer. This agreement covers general cooperation between the YSI and the employer; once specific internship placements have been agreed upon, an Internship Agreement should be created each placement outlining all the details of the placement and should be signed by all three parties (YSI, employer, and intern).

COOPERATION AGREEMENT: [PROGRAM NAME] [YSI NAME] & [COMPANY NAME]

Overview of the Program

[Insert general information on YSI training/internship program here]

The program runs from [date] to [date]. During this period internships of up to XX months will be offered. The program will work closely with employers to assess their needs and identify appropriate candidates for internship positions. Interns and supervisors/mentors will develop a work plan with measurable targets and a career development plan. They will meet regularly throughout the internship to review progress, with ongoing support from [YSI name]. Internships will close with a final evaluation / debrief session, bringing together interns and employers to review achievements and ensure learning is captured to strengthen the internship model.

Purpose of this Agreement

[YSI name] and INSERT NAME OF EMPLOYER share a mutual interest in supporting the development of young people in [country]. The purpose of this partnership agreement is to establish a clear framework for cooperation between [YSI name] and INSERT NAME OF EMPLOYER in relation to the delivery of the [program name].

Timeframe

This agreement shall take effect from date of signature to INSERT DATE.

Scope

The two parties agree to cooperate as outlined below.

INSERT NAME OF COMPANY shall:

- Provide [YSI name] with the information required to recruit a young person with the required knowledge and skills for each intern role requested by INSERT NAME OF COMPANY.
- Participate in the final stage of the recruitment process for each intern.
- Identify a principal contact for [YSI name] and a supervisor for each intern.
- Provide a comprehensive orientation for each intern.
- Develop a work plan and a career development plan with each intern and hold bi-monthly meetings to assess progress.

- Participate in the program orientation, final evaluation, and other activities as required.
- Participate in two support visits coordinated by [YSI name] during the internship.
- Cover the cost of any pre-approved expenses incurred by each intern during execution of his/her duties during the internship. This will be provided directly to the intern by the employer. This payment will be receipted (signed by the employer and the intern) and a copy shared with [YSI name].
- Contribute the equivalent of [amount] per month in cash or in-kind towards the monthly stipend for each intern. This will be provided directly to the intern by the employer at the end of every month. These payments will be receipted (signed by the employer and the intern) and a copy shared with [YSI name] at the end of every month.

[YSI name] shall:

- Recruit a young person with the required knowledge and skills for each internship role requested by INSERT NAME OF COMPANY.
- Provide a solid foundation of hard and soft skills training for the young people recruited.
- Conduct an orientation meeting for the intern supervisor/mentor at INSERT NAME OF COMPANY.
- Provide ongoing support as may be required by INSERT NAME OF COMPANY to ensure successful completion of each internship placement.
- Conduct a minimum of two visits to INSERT NAME OF COMPANY during the internship to review progress and offer support to each intern and their supervisors.
- Share regular program updates with INSERT NAME OF COMPANY.
- Contribute [amount] per month towards the monthly stipend for each intern. This will be provided directly to the intern by [YSI name] at the end of every month. A record will be kept of these monthly payments by [YSI name].

Amendments and Termination

In the event that changes need to be made to this agreement, all parties will agree in writing to the proposed changes. A revised agreement will then be signed by the authorised signatories (i.e. those signing the original agreement). In the event that the principle contact person leaves the organization, or changes roles within the organization, it is the responsibility of that party to assign a new principle contact person and to inform the partner so that the agreement can be updated.

As outlined above, each party has roles and responsibilities. Once entered into and signed, this agreement will provide the assumption that all of the commitments made will be fulfilled by the relevant parties. If either party is in breach of any of the provisions of this agreement, written notice specifying the breach and required remedy should be given to the other party and a formal meeting between the two parties arranged. If, following this, the concern is not addressed within the timeframe agreed then the agreement can be terminated immediately. Either party, should they be unable to fulfil the commitments agreed to under this agreement, can terminate the agreement in whole, or in part, by giving 30 days written notice to the other party.

Agreement

The terms and conditions set out in this agreement are clearly understood and agreed to by the below.

Name Title Signature Date	Principal contact INSERT NAME OF COMPANY
Name Title Signature Date	Principal contact [YSI name]

Annex D:

Intern Code of Conduct

Following signature of an Internship Agreement, this document can be shared with the young person to outline their responsibilities within the internship placement. A YSI staff member should review the document with the young person to ensure it is fully understood and signed.

Your internship journey formally begins after you sign this document. [YSI name] and your host employer expect you to demonstrate professionalism and integrity during your participation in the program. Failure to uphold this code of conduct could result in your removal from the program.

As an intern within [program name] you agree to:

1. Undertake and complete a XX month internship placement with a pre-assigned host employer.
2. Act professionally at all times, upholding the good name and integrity of your host employer and the [program name].
3. Adhere to this code of conduct and, in addition, the rules and regulations of your host employer. This includes all health and safety regulations.
4. Participate fully in supporting your host employer to realize its vision, mission, and objectives.
5. Be punctual and timely. You should report for duty on time as agreed with your host employer.
6. Be neat and presentable at all times. You should dress in business casual attire unless directed otherwise by your host employer.
7. Develop and implement a work plan with clear objectives and timelines. This work plan should be approved by your host employer and [YSI name].
8. Attend and fully participate in all activities agreed with your supervisor/mentor. This includes regular review meetings to monitor progress against your agreed work plan.
9. Attend and fully participate in all [program name] activities coordinated by [YSI name]. This includes (but is not limited to) training and orientation, placement review meetings, and final evaluation / debrief session.
10. Complete and maintain all paperwork as required. This includes documentation relating to the stipend contribution provided to you by your host employer. All paperwork must be complete, accurate, and truthful.
11. Report any complaints, questions, or challenges to your supervisor immediately. If your concerns are not adequately addressed you should contact [YSI name].
12. Maintain in confidence any information learned about the activities and/or operations of your host employer during your placement.

13. Refrain from, except as permitted by your supervisor, being engaged in private business or professional practice that affects your internship duties.

Please keep in mind the following additional considerations:

- Unfit for Duty: If your host employer determines that you are unfit to participate for a particular work assignment due to intoxication, illness, not conforming to dress code, or for any other reason deemed appropriate, then you will be sent home until the next regularly scheduled assignment.
- If for any reason your host employer deems it necessary to send you home, he/she will inform [YSI name] by telephone or email and will provide a written statement of the situation and the reason for doing so prior to the next working day.
- You can be removed from the [program name] if your personal conduct brings disrepute to your host employer, [YSI name], and/or the program.
- Violations of any policies, procedures, rules, or code of conduct will be grounds for dismissal from the [program name]. Your host employer and the Internship Program Manager will have the final authority on any dismissals and there will not be an appeal process available.

I, (name) have read and understood the [program name] Code of Conduct, and hereby agree to abide by the regulations and standards outlined. I understand that if I fail to uphold the Code of Conduct I may be removed from the program.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Witnessed by:

Signature:

Date:

Annex E:

Employer Internship Checklist

YSI staff can offer this helpful document to employers before youth begin their internship placements to outline the YSIs' expectations for the employer and their contributions to a successful and meaningful internship experience.

Thank you for your support of the [program name]. This checklist is to help you ensure that your internship experience is a success. Good luck!

Preparation

- Appoint an experienced supervisor for the intern who can guide them through their internship and offer them support, particularly in the first few weeks.
- Prepare an orientation program that includes all the necessary elements, e.g. an introduction to your company, a tour of the office, health and safety information, staff code of conduct, and an outline of the intern's role and tasks.
- Prepare copies of any relevant documentation and forms to be ready for the intern when they arrive.
- Speak to colleagues, line managers, and other key personnel about any specific projects and work that they feel an intern could contribute to.
- Arrange dates and times for the intern to meet all the people they will be working with, plus any relevant senior staff.

Orientation and Initial Support

- Provide a comprehensive orientation program as detailed above.
- Explain the stipend payment arrangements to the intern. Agree how this contribution will be provided and recorded every month.
- Co-develop an engaging and diverse work plan with the intern. Set clear objectives and performance indicators so that progress can be easily monitored.
- Review the intern's draft career development plan. Provide input and sign off on the plan.

Supervision

- Give the intern as much responsibility and diversity of work tasks as possible.
- Put in place a suitable mechanism for training and supervising the intern as they carry out their daily tasks.
- Schedule and hold regular performance reviews (either weekly or monthly) between the intern and their supervisor to evaluate the intern's behavior and work and to receive feedback. This should include a review of both the work plan and the career development plan.
- Arrange a final evaluation meeting for the intern, in cooperation with [YSI name] staff, once their internship is close to completion.

- If there are performance challenges, discuss these with the intern to see if a solution can be identified. Contact [YSI name] if these challenges persist.

Closure

- Put together a list of relevant questions to use in the final evaluation and give them to the intern in advance of the meeting.
- Arrange an exit interview to give the intern an opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of the internship placement (to be conducted by a member of the HR team or a senior member of staff).
- Provide a reference letter for the intern, including any positive messages coming out of the final review meeting.

Annex F: Internship Site Visit Feedback Form

This form is for YSI staff to use when visiting interns at their employment site. It can be used to record feedback from both the intern and his/her supervisor or mentor.

Date of visit	
Name of host employer	
Name of mentor or supervisor spoken to	
Name of intern	
Name of staff member completing form	

Objectives of this Form:

- To manage the intern (support and mentorship)
 - To provide on-going guidance and mentorship to interns
 - To check on the progress of intern activities, assigned tasks, and career development plans
- To strengthen existing partnerships with host employers
- To solicit feedback from Interns and host employers for program learning
- To collect relevant program data regarding youth employment

Introductory Meeting with Intern Mentor

Issues to discuss	
	Purpose of visit
	Feedback on intern performance and progress against set work plans and career development plans
	Issues which the host employer wishes the staff member to address with the intern during the visit
	Suggestions for program improvement
	Feedback on partner agreements and program documents received
Notes	

What is working well with the internship program?
Notes
What is not working well with the internship program?
Notes
Looking at what is working and what is not working, what suggestions do you have for future improvement of the program overall?
Notes
How has the intern been engaged since they started working with the host employer or last visit?
Notes
What benefits or positive outcomes has your company received from engaging interns in the workplace?
Notes
What challenges you have faced while working with the intern? What issues need to be raised with the intern during this meeting to improve their future performance?
Notes
What other opportunities exist at the workplace to foster intern growth apart from what they have already been engaged in? How can the internship experience be improved going forward?
Notes

Record of Meeting with Intern

Feedback from previous meetings or discussions to be followed up on
Notes
Review of intern work plans and career development plans, and how the internship experience is matching up with these plans
Notes

Advice and support on upcoming tasks and activities
Notes
Feedback on the working relationship and support received from the mentor/supervisor and other colleagues
Notes
What issues have been raised by the intern that need to be discussed with the host employer to improve the internship experience?
Notes
Intern Name: Signature: Date:

Actions to follow up from the visit	Who will carry out this action?	When?
Signature of Staff completing checklist:		Date:

Annex G: Final Internship Evaluation

This document can be used to complete a final evaluation of a young person's performance at the end of the internship period. Alternatively (or in addition), an adapted version of the feedback from provided in Annex E can be used for the final evaluation.

Intern name:

ID No.:

Host company/organization:

Intern's position/title:

Name of supervisor/mentor:

This form shall be used for evaluating the Intern's performance during his or her stay with your company/organization. Please check off with an X the level you consider most closely matches the behavior observed for each indicator.

NA: Not Applicable, N: Never displays this behavior, S: Seldom displays this behavior, F: Frequently displays this behavior, A: Always displays this behavior

Additional questions:

State the personal traits, skills, and knowledge that made the Intern stand out during the Internship period.

In your opinion, what area(s) for improvement are important for the successful job placement of the Intern?

Suggestions regarding the training received by the intern and the program overall:

Any other information you would like to add:

Please provide us with information on the investment in hours and/or dollars that you, as the company mentor/supervisor dedicated to this internship, provided to the intern.

Time (hours) exclusively dedicated to training and advising the Intern	Bonuses and / or monetary aid offered to the Intern	Courses and / or talks offered to the Intern (hours)

Internship start date:

Internship end date:

Name and signature of the person completing this form:



The International Youth Foundation (IYF) invests in the extraordinary potential of young people. Founded in 1990, IYF builds and maintains a worldwide community of businesses, governments, and civil-society organizations committed to empowering youth to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. IYF programs are catalysts of change that help young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy choices, and improve their communities.

To learn more, visit www.iyfnet.org.