MnTAP Intern Program SOP

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Organization Background

The Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP) is a grant-funded outreach program based in the School of Public Health, Division of Environmental Health Sciences at the University of Minnesota. Through industry-tailored, site-specific technical assistance, MnTAP seeks to help companies and organizations across a wide range of industries in the state of Minnesota. The primary objective of MnTAP's assistance is to optimize processes while saving water, energy, raw materials and preventing waste and pollution. MnTAP staff are trained to work with facilities to develop cost-effective solutions that achieve the aforementioned environmental goals. These types of solutions help MN businesses and organizations reach their sustainability goals while remaining competitive in their respective industries. The crossroad of environmental and economic value is at the core of MnTAP's mission.

"Working as a MnTAP intern provided me with an enriching summer work experience that taught me an immense amount about management, working independently, and about everything that goes into creating such an incredible program. I am very thankful for this experience." ~ MC

Project Background

MnTAP's intern program is one if its key assets, which involves the development and execution of 15–20 three–month intern projects at host facilities in Minnesota each summer. The projects provide a fantastic growth and training opportunity for students, as well as dedicated science & engineering expertise to host businesses at a tremendous value.

To maintain a successful intern program, a great deal of coordination, planning, recruiting, partnership development and more is required. As an organization committed to continuous improvement, MnTAP was interested in refining its own program management procedure, as well as developing a consolidated guide for external organizations to use that have interest in launching their own programs.
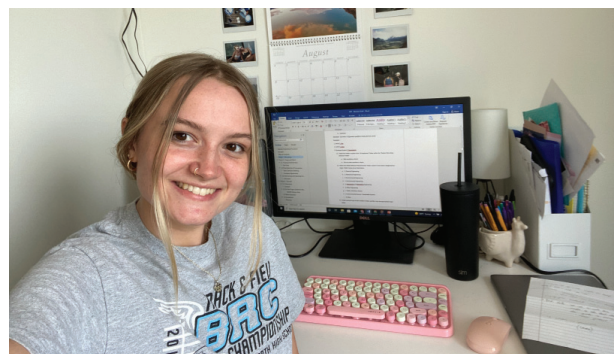
Standard Operating Procedure—Project Goals
Internal Guide Refinement

Refining the MnTAP Intern Program Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) will allow for better consistency during each phase of the program and effective replication of those phases each year. Improving on the structure and format of the SOP will help current staff better-plan for objectives, which can save time and effort for those involved. A refined SOP can help ease transitions as MnTAP staff resources changes over time.

General Guide Creation

The second objective in refining the Intern Program SOP is to produce a version that can be shared with organizations across the country who wish to launch intern programs at their own institutions. MnTAP has been fortunate to collaborate with a number of technical assistance programs in other states. Some of these partners have well-established intern programs, but there are others who are just getting started. With an external version of its SOP, MnTAP hopes to provide an example that highlights some of the key facets and objectives to running a successful P2 intern program.

Final Outputs

MnTAP-Specific Intern Program Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Guide

Past and present intern program resources were analyzed and re-organized into a comprehensive guide for use by MnTAP. The new, MnTAP-specific SOP arranges intern program management into 4 phases:

• Focused Recruiting: partners, companies and interns

• Scope, Select and Finalize Projects

• Execute program: training, site work, symposium

• Report and Showcase Results

This procedure details elements of the program that are specific to MnTAP, which pertain to funding, hiring, recruiting resources, project agreements and more. These elements are crucial in replicating the program each year and the new guide organizes them in an improved structure.

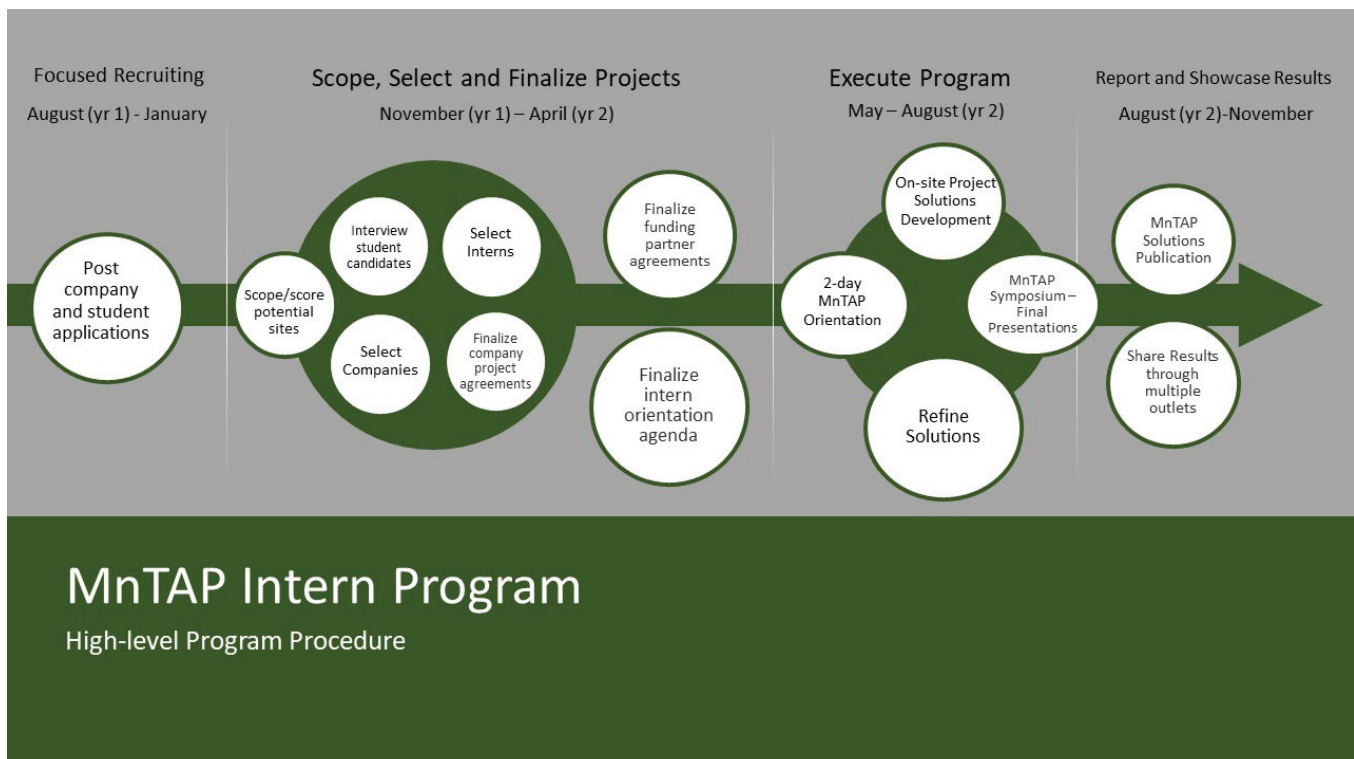The MnTAP Intern SOP guide utilizes timeline summaries for a broader look at what needs to be accomplished during each phase. In addition, the guide is structured to work with the Microsoft Word section navigation feature, allowing user to jump to the appropriate phase section without searching the entire guide.

Intern Program SOP Guide for External Organizations

In an effort to provide guidance for organizations interested in launching or improving their own intern programs, the MnTAP-specific guide was refined to highlight key activities that drive a successful intern program.

The external intern SOP guide follows the same phase structure as the internal guide. The key difference between the guides is that the external version is absent of MnTAP-specific forms, contacts and partners that would be irrelevant to external readers. Though this information has been removed, some examples have been included to accompany the phases, which provide inspiration to programs that may be starting from scratch.

Figure 1: MnTAP Intern Program Process Stages

MnTAP Advisor: Matt Domski, Intern Program Manager