

Santa Clara County's Intern and Earn Project: Implications for Napa County

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When I was younger, I remember not really knowing what was out there in the world when it came to career paths. I did not know if college was for me, but I ended up enrolling into community college the week prior to classes starting. Luckily for me, I had some older cousins who steered me in the right direction. They explained some career options I could follow and saw a potential in me to succeed in a variety of fields that I could not envision.

Employment Services staff in Napa County can serve in that role for young adults, helping them see their potential and offering them a variety of

career options that they may never have considered. I chose Santa Clara County's Intern and Earn for this case study to learn about its implications for Napa County. A comparable program could help open the door and offer opportunities to youth in Napa County and could also potentially help chip away at generational poverty. Due to COVID-19, not all relevant information was able to be gathered for this case study, but this report may help guide Napa County as it explores the possible implementation of a similar program in the county.

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The Beginning

Intern and Earn is a program that was started in Santa Clara County in 2015. The director of social services was interested in pursuing the idea of having interns. While contemplating this program, she found others who shared her view on the potential success of internships within the county, and she developed a team to plan and implement an internship program. In a matter of four weeks, they had started a program.

In order to implement the new program, Santa Clara County pulled a manager and ten employment services workers to work solely on the Intern and Earn Program. Concurrently, the Department of Family and Children Services had also been contracting out a similar program to help their youth find employment. Eventually, in the second year of the program, the department integrated foster care youth into the program, and by the third year, they also had started to serve youth in CalFresh cases.

The first round of the program only included youth in CalWORKs households, since funding for the program would be coming from the CalWORKs allocation for Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE). The first year, 202 youth registered for the program and 178 were placed in internships. 90% of enrolled students completed their internships! In 2019, with an expanded pool of candidates, the county was able to place 513 interns—150 from Foster Care, 119 from CalFresh, and 244 from CalWORKs.

Fiscal Issues

Santa Clara County serves three separate populations with their Intern and Earn program, as

described above. For youth from CalWORKs cases, the program is paid for by the county's CalWORKs Expanded Subsidized Employment Allocation. For CalFresh and Foster Care program youth participants, the county utilizes general funds approved by the Board of Supervisors. Currently the cost per placement is \$3960. Each participant works for six weeks and is paid \$16.50/hour. Santa Clara County is now looking for an increase in the amount of funding and the intern rate of compensation due to the rising cost of living.

Since the cost of living in Napa County is lower than in Santa Clara, a youth program could be set at \$15/hour. At \$15 an hour, a participant working 30–40 hours for six weeks could gain total earnings of approximately \$2700–\$3600. Funding for this pilot could come from the Napa ESE allocation. Per All-County Letter (ACL) 13–81, youth can participate in the ESE program and be considered a Welfare-to-Work volunteer. Santa Clara County is now serving approximately over 500 youth in the Intern and Earn program. Napa County could begin at a smaller scale and start with serving six youth. At 30 hours a week for six weeks and with six youths placed, the cost would be \$16,200 and could come from the ESE allocation for interns in the first year.

Currently ESE funding is handled through contracts with employers. Employers are then reimbursed by the county. It would be more efficient if the county could be the employer of record. It will be important to look into this approach prior to implementation and to consider how this arrangement can be achieved in Napa County. The second question to explore would be how the fiscal department could pay interns through direct payments to a

company, such as ADP (which is the company Santa Clara County currently works with). Santa Clara County staff noted how important it was for them to be listed as the employer of record, because it has value for the youth in the program to be able to list an internship with the county on their resume and future job applications.

Internship Placements

Internship placements obtained by youth in Santa Clara were all connected to their future career interests. Positions were found in a multitude of industries, many outside of the county government itself, including dog grooming, cycle repair, dealerships, hospitals, Busch Gardens, and many more. Napa County was able to similarly partner with various resource partners so that a spectrum of opportunities were made available. One large area of interest would be having multiple internships throughout the county government so that interns would get a ‘behind the scenes look’ into a lot of different positions within the county. Some areas of potential internships could be with public health, self-sufficiency, planning, and building services, among others, with the potential for having one intern rotate weekly to more than one site. However, to begin with, it might make more sense to have one intern in each location for the full six weeks, so that they can learn all that they would need to know about one position.

Workshops and Training

Workshops and training are two very important components of the Intern and Earn Project. Santa Clara County has two types of workshops—one that goes year-round and a second that only occurs during the internship. Workshops include resume assistance and job retention skills. Napa County could fold intern trainees into currently existing workshops held in the Career Center. Current workshops on resumes, job interviewing, and job retention could be continued in Napa County. The program plan could also include additional workshops provided by an ESE Job Coach covering topics

such as social media presence and goal development for the interns.

Training can be done through the interns’ employers to help give participants a glimpse of what a job in a certain field is like, in order to help them make informed decisions about what career path they may want to take. It will be important for the county to connect with employers so they better understand their roles as mentors and employers. There should not be an expectation that the youth intern is ready to be totally left on their own without supportive supervision.

Marketing Strategy

Marketing initiatives for the Intern and Earn program in Santa Clara County run year-round. In early Spring, the county begins to send out postcards to all the youth in their programs. It also has a website that includes applications for the Intern and Earn program, as well as a yearbook of prior years’ internships so that future youth can review them.

For Napa County, a marketing plan could start in March or April. Since the county would be starting with youth from the CalWORKs program, a postcard could be sent to each household with a child who will turn 16 or 17 by the summer of the internship. There could then be a follow-up call to each family who had received a postcard to help explain the program and to see if they had any questions.

Surveys

A very important tool to utilize will be surveys for both the interns and the employers. Pre- and post-surveys should be conducted to see if the youth have found the program beneficial and what they have gained from the experience. An employer survey should also be conducted to find out what they learned from the experience.

Case Management Services

Case management workers from county Employment Services would help interns complete all necessary steps to become hireable and would also act as liaisons between the interns and their employers.

The Employment Service workers would work with the interns to develop job seeking/career exploration skills and to provide guidance.

An Important Challenge

One issue of some concern is employers knowing their capacity to hire and supervise an intern. Initially, employers may want multiple youth for their program, but it is very important that employers understand the time each individual will need for training and to really help develop each individual. Despite these challenges for employers, Santa Clara County is looking to continue expanding their program and will soon be piloting a 6-month internship for former foster care youth. Instead of just a few weeks, these youth will be exposed to additional months of on-the-job training. However, due to COVID-19, Santa Clara County will likely be modifying this new iteration of the program and lowering the number of interns recruited. County leadership had thought of suspending the program altogether but decided to continue on a lesser scale. Following updates with COVID-19 in the county and state, the county will be deciding whether and when to implement an expanded Intern and Earn program. Should COVID-19 remain an issue into next year, Napa County will have to carefully consider whether or not to implement an intern program in 2021.

State Budget

It will be very important for Napa County to keep an eye on the state budget that is signed each fiscal year. It appeared in fiscal year 2020–21 as though ESE might be defunded due to all the needs COVID-19 has brought onto the state, but the program was not defunded and is currently still running through July 2021. This fact is important for Napa County to keep in mind for any inauguration year, since the program will not be requesting assistance from general funds. Another key issue Napa will need to look further into is that if the county loses funding from the state for ESE, the county would need to be able to pull

funding from another source to make sure the program continues. One advantage for Napa County is that it has WIOA program in-house, which could be an area of additional funding for interns who can possibly be co-enrolled.

Recommendations

Napa County should wait at least another year before implementing a program like Intern and Earn. A timeline for implementation should involve planning in Fall 2021 with marketing and engagement the following spring and possible implementation in the summer of 2022.

The county should also consider being the employer of record but will need to look into that issue further to understand why some counties, such as Santa Clara County and San Bernardino County, chose to go this route. If Napa County decides to implement an intern program, it would be wise to begin with only six candidates. This will help the county determine the scope of assistance that will be needed to help interns graduate from their internships successfully. Once the program is implemented, county staff will determine the success rate and also what growth areas might be possible. Analyzing the survey data from interns and employers will help guide this evaluation process.

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