



Minnesota GreenStep Cities

GreenStep Cities Intern Manual

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Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
1. Why have a GreenStep Cities intern?	3
2. Participating entities and required functions	4
a. New GreenStep City	
b. City lead	
c. Student intern	
d. GreenStep lead	
e. Mentor/supervisor	
f. School Liaison (optional)	
3. 12 week Curriculum	6
Appendices	17
A: About GreenStep Cities	
B: Guidelines to describe GreenStep Cities	
C: Draft agenda for civic leader meeting	
D: Sample intern application	
E: Pathways to reward interns for their work	

Section 1. Why have a GreenStep Cities intern?

Minnesota GreenStep Cities is a voluntary challenge, assistance and recognition program to help cities achieve their sustainability and quality-of-life goals. The program offers many free benefits to cities, including its signature 28 best practices, ongoing technical assistance from experts in the field, and opportunities for recognition and awards.

A city joins the GreenStep program by passing a city council resolution. Next, an online record of the city's sustainability practices is completed. Ideally, this on-line entry is overseen and championed by a specific individual within city government, but realistically, city staff are not always able to take on such a project due to timing and workload. In some GreenStep cities a community volunteer steps in to work with city staff on the on-line entry.

Recognizing the great potential of students from colleges, trade schools and universities to also step in and work with city staff, the GreenStep City program has created this GreenStep City intern guide as another option. **A GreenStep City intern can serve as the city's champion to complete the initial online recordkeeping, kick start a plan for future activities, and familiarize city staff with the program.**

The purpose of this manual is to provide an internship framework, based on a 2014-2015 GreenStep City intern pilot, so that cities and university/college students can independently replicate this program.

Section 2. Participating entities and required functions

A GreenStep City can host a GreenStep intern by ensuring the following functions are assigned. These functions may be assigned to separate individuals or a combination of functions may be assigned to one individual as appropriate.

a. New GreenStep City

- The City must have completed Step 1 (passed a city council resolution to join GreenStep Cities).
- The City should have started its initial review of the best practices, but they do *not* need to have completed their detailed online recording as that is one of the potential intern roles.

b. Student Intern

- A student from a post-secondary private or public college, university, community or technical school
- The student must be committed to an intensive 12-week internship period during which he or she will create a city's online GreenStep profile (their record of the city's completed best practice actions) and map out next steps for sustainability practices.
- This is a great way for a student to gain work experience, professional references, and make an impact on sustainability practices at a local level.
- An intern should have strong communication and organization skills and have a personal commitment to service and leadership.

c. City Lead

- The City Lead is the intern's "go-to" person for assistance with navigating city systems and identifying appropriate documents and individuals to assist the intern.
- The City Lead may be a city staff person but may also be a civic leader, active community member or other individual with significant knowledge of the city's policies and practices.

d. GreenStep Lead

- The GreenStep Lead must have a good sense of the GreenStep Cities program and its process, tools, and partners.
- This person may be a GreenStep contact in the same city or another city, or a GreenStep best practice advisor or staff person, or other individual with significant knowledge of the GreenStep Cities program.

e. Mentor/Supervisor

- The mentor is the intern's "go-to" person for assistance with professional development and internship program questions. The mentor will provide ongoing guidance for the intern on weekly tasks and focus areas and assist with troubleshooting when necessary. The mentor provides the intern with the support they need to conduct their work.

- The mentor must be either the City Lead, the GreenStep Lead, or the School Liaison.
- The mentor is charged with having regular check-in dialogues (at least weekly) with the intern to provide overall accountability for the internship work, ensure weekly tasks are completed, assist the intern in processing the week's activities and preparing for the subsequent week.
- The mentor is responsible for writing a Letter of Recommendation for the intern at the conclusion of the internship.

f. School Liaison (optional)

- The school liaison's role is to serve as a connector between the student and his/her school.
- The school liaison may be an instructor, professor or career center staff/volunteer who is responsible for placing interns or coordinating service learning hours.
- The school liaison may help to recruit student interns and help interns navigate the payroll and/or class credit pathways (as applicable).

Section 3. Curriculum: 12 weeks

A GreenStep City internship is set up to run for 12 weeks, with an intern working about 10 hours per week. The internship could run during a summer or during the school year.

The 12 week intern program and intern work activities are as follows.

Week	Focus/Activities
1	Orientation to city and GreenStep Cities program; develop individual learning goals
2	Connecting with the City Lead
3-4	Research the city's activities and conduct fact finding to identify which best practice actions have been completed and are underway; prepare for online entry of best practice action reports
5-6	Online entry of best practice action reports ; ID how close to Step 2, or Step 3; schedule meeting with civic leaders
7-8	Convene meeting with civic leaders, strategize about future best practice actions
9	Ensure online action report entry is complete
10	Present completed online entries and recommendations to city officials for next actions to be completed
11	Assess the success of your individual learning goals and city results
12	Prepare materials for a formal hand-off to the City Lead (copy the Mentor). This will include a project summary report, including a review of the completed online inventory and how to update it moving forward, a list of contacts developed during the internships, a reflection on lessons learned for the city to consider moving forward, and recommendations for next steps.

The intern will also have two weekly tasks:

- **Check-in dialogue** with the mentor, to assist with processing, troubleshooting, and planning
- **Reflection journal**, to enhance personal and professional development, identify discussion points for the check-in dialogues, and garner information for the final report

The intern work plan is included here as a series of weekly worksheets, all on the coming pages.

Intern Workplan

Week(s):

1

Goal(s):

ONBOARDING

Objectives:

Become familiar with the GreenStep Cities program.

Begin to learn about the host city.

Develop personal learning goals for your internship.

Summary of tasks to be completed by the intern:

Review GreenStep Cities website: program information, best practices, and best practice actions.

Document questions that arise during this review.

Schedule and conduct a 30 minute GreenStep orientation with Philipp Muessig, GreenStep Cities program coordinator (ask your questions!)

Review 12 weeks of Intern Workplan

Clarify any arrangements you may have with your academic institution (class deliverables, reporting intern hours) or with your payroll office (if you are being paid)

Talk or meet with your City Lead, GreenStep Lead, and Mentor to introduce yourself

Log on to the city's online profile to get an initial sense of the layout

Resources needed:

The GreenStep Lead is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to GreenStep Cities.
The City Lead is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to the city.

GreenStep Cities website (<http://www.MnGreenStep.org>)

GreenStep Cities program information (in Appendix of the Intern Manual)

GreenStep Cities (<http://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/steps.cfm> and click [Conduct an inventory of completed, planned and desired best practices](#) and Organizing Steps Guide

City log-in password (get this from Philipp Muessig during your orientation)

Weekly Journal/Reflection Questions:

1. Why do Minnesota cities join the Green Step Cities program? What's in it for them?
2. How do MN cities plan for success in the 21st century?
3. What are potential savings cities can realize through the GreenStep program?? In what ways do these savings act as an economic multiplier for the local economy?
4. List all the people that you communicate with or meet and explain how they help with city planning processes.

Before you move on:

1. You should understand the sequence of the recognition aspect of the program, the three Green Steps 1, 2, 3. Your journal should include your reflections on the sequence of the three steps so you can refer to it when you describe the sequence to your city contact next week.
2. We will revisit the first three reflection questions during the course of the internship, and your reflections will evolve as your understanding increases. If you feel like you need help, ask your mentor.

Intern Workplan

Week(s):

2

Goal(s):

CONNECTING WITH YOUR CITY

Objectives:

Meet in-person or on the phone with your City Lead

Complete Background Information for the city's on-line profile, if not done already by the City Lead

Identify and learn about any relevant city group (GreenStep coordinating body)

Summary of tasks to be completed by the intern:

1. Review (complete if need) basic city information
2. Discuss the GreenStep recognition levels and what's required for them with your City Lead
3. If necessary, complete review GreenStep Cities website: best practices and best practice actions.

Resources needed:

The GreenStep Lead is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to GreenStep Cities.
The City Lead is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to the city.

City website

City's GreenStep participation resolution (posted on their on-line city profile)

City "Steps" webpage (<http://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/steps.cfm>)

Review which [category](#) your city fits into and review GreenStep recognition process and needs.

Access to GreenStep admin webpages – either from PPT from Philipp Muessig or your City Lead – and log-on to city's GreenStep administrative web page and, under View Documents, download appropriate Assessment Worksheet for your city

Weekly Journal/Reflection Questions:

1. Why do Minnesota cities join the Green Step Cities program? What's in it for them?
2. How do MN cities plan for success in the 21st century?
3. What are potential savings cities can realize through the GreenStep program? In what ways do these savings act as an economic multiplier for the local economy?
4. List all the people that you communicate with or meet and explain how they help with city planning processes.

Before you move on:

1. You should have met with your City Lead to discuss the sequence of the three Green Steps 1, 2, 3.
2. You should understand how to use the city's GreenStep administrative web pages

Intern Workplan

Week(s):

3-4

Goal(s):

RESEARCH CITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO COMPLETE INVENTORY

Objectives:

Use information from existing city documents to complete a brief inventory of city accomplishments that identify, for each GreenStep Best Practice Action, whether it is completed, underway, not relevant, or whether you have no information on it

Begin investigating proposed future actions in the city

Develop an initial list of 8 to 12 civic and community leaders who can serve on a GreenStep committee, if one is not already active/identified

Summary of tasks to be completed by the intern:

1. Work with your City Lead to collect relevant city documents and identify online reference materials.
2. Review the city's information and conduct fact-finding.
3. Use the best practice spreadsheet as a checklist to inventory which actions are: Completed, In process, Planned, & Who the responsible person / entity is; also identify in the spreadsheet best practice actions for which you have no information.
4. While you are reviewing city documents, be mindful of information that tells you about the city's past or future. Note these items so you can refer to them in upcoming weeks.
5. Work with your City Lead and others to draft a list of 8 to 12 civic and community leaders who can serve on a GreenStep committee, if one is not already active/identified

Resources needed:

The GreenStep Lead is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to GreenStep Cities.
The City Lead is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to the city.

City documents, to include: comprehensive plan, city code, capital improvement program reports, annual reports, project descriptions, strategic plans, website, and any other suitable source identified by the city contact.

City log-in for GreenStep website

GreenStep best practice inventory spreadsheet

Weekly Journal/Reflection Questions:

1. Why do Minnesota cities join the Green Step Cities program? What's in it for them?
2. How do MN cities plan for success in the 21st century?
3. What are potential savings cities can realize through the GreenStep program? In what ways do these savings act as an economic multiplier for the local economy?
4. List all the people that you communicate with or meet and explain how they help with city planning processes.

(continued)

Before you move on:

1. You should have a list of 8 to 12 civic and community leaders who can serve on a GreenStep committee, if one is not already active/identified

Optional:

1. To better understand the community's history and story, it might be wise to interview a few folks recommended by the city contact to get a sense for the community's struggles in the past, how they were overcome or not, and how the city is initiating new efforts.

Intern Workplan

Week(s):

5-6

Goal(s):

COMPLETE ON-LINE CITY PROFILE

Objectives:

Use city's GreenStep administrative web pages to enter best practice action reports

Summary of tasks to be completed by the intern:

1. Work with your City Lead to decide if you should enter action reports and keep them public, or whether to keep them in draft form until the City Lead reviews them (and then you would go back to each action to make it public)
2. For each GreenStep action completed or underway, enter and save a short action report; which must include 2-5 or so sentences of implementation details and who to contact for more information. Ideally you will find some outcome metric to also report and will note any key partners, post one relevant web page, and perhaps upload one relevant PDF

Contact Philipp Muessig when it is unclear under which Best Practice Action a specific city accomplishment should be listed
3. Work with your City Lead to schedule a 90 minute meeting during week 7 or 8 for the 8 to 12 civic leaders.

Resources needed:

The mentor is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to GreenStep Cities.
The city contact is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to the city.

GreenStep Cities best practices (<http://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPractices.cfm>)

12-slide PPT for how to enter action reports

Online city log-in password from Philipp Muessig

Philipp Muessig: philipp.muessig@state.mn.us

Weekly Journal/Reflection Questions:

1. Based on what you now know about the city's past, present, and future, and what you've learned, which best practices and best practice actions could the city brag about more?
2. Based on what you now know about the city's past, present, and future, and what you've learned, identify a collection of best practice actions that make sense as next steps for the city.

Before you move on:

Complete, or largely complete, city's on-line profile that reports completed/inprocess GreenStep best practice actions

Intern Workplan

Week(s):

7-8

Goal(s):

CONVENE CITY LEADERS FOR THE ON-GOING GREENSTEP EFFORT

Objectives:

Convene meeting of 8-12 civic leaders who are committed to an ongoing effort of assistance to the city as it implements, in collaboration with other city stakeholders, new GreenStep actions

Summary of tasks to be completed by the intern:

1. Prepare for, conduct, and do follow-up for civic leader meeting to discuss GSC, your completed/mostly complete city profile of action, and to identify priorities for taking future GreenStep actions.
2. Work with your City Lead to help you set up a meeting with city officials during Week 10 to brief them on your work.

Resources needed:

The mentor is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to GreenStep Cities.
The city contact is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to the city.

Agenda for civic leader meeting (a draft agenda is located in Appendix C)

GreenStep Organizing Guide at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/view-document.html?gid=17014>

Weekly Journal/Reflection Questions:

1. What are you nervous about presenting to the community?
2. What are you most excited about presenting to the community?
3. What best practices do you think will challenge the city? Are there any that seem like slam dunks?
4. Is there a best practice you think the city could greatly benefit from but is unlikely to undertake due to other priorities, lack of funding, or limited technical support?

Before you move on:

Write up and share notes from the civic leader meeting with City Lead.

Intern Workplan

Week(s):

9

Goal(s):

FINALIZE ONLINE CITY PROFILE

Objectives:

Complete the online profile of completed best practices and make action reports public

Finalize the recommendations for next steps

Prepare for meeting with city officials next week

Summary of tasks to be completed by the intern:

1. Contact the city staff/others identified by your City Lead to obtain the missing information for the best practice action reports
2. Finish the online profile so your city reports on the GreenStep website all completed GreenStep actions.
3. Review the online profile with your City Lead and make the action reports public in preparation for the presentation to city officials next week.

Resources needed:

The mentor is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to GreenStep Cities.
The city contact is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to the city.

Online city log-inpassword from Philipp Muessig

All past notes on city best practices and actions including the assessment spreadsheet.

Weekly Journal/Reflection Questions:

1. How did the meeting with civic leaders go? What would you do again next time? What would you not do again next time?
2. Did you learn about any other actions the city could be doing or in planning to do from civic leaders?
3. Are there actions that the city could claim but for one small item? If so, document those and identify the the small item that would need to be completed.

Before you move on:

Be sure online profile of completed best practices and actions is complete.

Intern Workplan

Week(s):

10

Goal(s):

PRESENT FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS TO CITY OFFICIALS

Objectives:

Bring city officials up to speed on your work by briefing them about the city's completed best practice actions, your recommendations for future best practice actions, and the role the "GreenStep Committee" can play.

Summary of tasks to be completed by the intern:

Prepare for, conduct, and do follow up for meeting with city officials to brief them on GreenStep work and what you have achieved during your internship.

Be prepared to provide an overview (review) of the GreenStep Cities program along with reviewing the best practice inventory.

Resources needed:

The GreenStep Lead is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to GreenStep Cities.
The City Lead is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to the city.

Print outs of online completed best practice actions – or the inventory spreadsheet updated to reflect all on-line entries - and your recommendations for future actions to share with city officials.

Weekly Journal/Reflection Questions:

Did your meeting with city officials go as you expected? Were there any surprises? Disappointments?

Before you move on:

Summarize the meeting with city officials including any necessary updates about the best practices.

Intern Workplan

Week(s):

11

Goal(s):

ASSESSMENT

Objectives:

Reflect on your experience and prepare for your handoff of information to the City.

Summary of tasks to be completed by the intern:

Develop a 1 to 2 page summary/reflection of your internship, including lessons learned and suggestions for improvement, to be shared with your City Lead, GreenStep Lead, Mentor, and any School Liaison

Resources needed:

The GreenStep Lead is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to GreenStep Cities.
The City Lead is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to the city.

Time to reflect on your experience.

Weekly Journal/Reflection Questions:

1. If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?
2. What were the highlights of your internship experience?
3. What were the low-lights of your internship experience?

By the end of this week:

Complete summary/reflection.

Intern Workplan

Week(s):

12

Goal(s):

WRAP UP

Objectives:

Bring your work with the city to a close and ensure a smooth transfer of information so your efforts will continue with a GreenStep committee, or a city leader or two, or under the guidance of an existing city staff or city commission.

Summary of tasks to be completed by the intern:

Gather the following materials and hand them off to the City Lead:

- Summary/reflection of your internship
- Recommendations for priority actions the city could take in the next year or two
- Notes from civic leader meeting
- Notes from the meeting with city leaders
- City log-on information and any tips for using the city's GreenStep admin web pages
- Any online or paper files
- Contact info you have for civic leaders and others

Ensure your expense reports and timesheets are completed.

Resources needed:

The mentor is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to GreenStep Cities.
The city contact is responsible for ensuring the intern has access to resources related to the city.

Ability to download, copy, document any and all resources to handoff.

Weekly Journal/Reflection Questions:

Any final thoughts or tidbits to share?

By the end of this week:

You will receive a letter of recommendation from either your City Lead or your Mentor.

Appendix A: About GreenStep Cities

Minnesota GreenStep Cities is a voluntary challenge, assistance and recognition program to help cities achieve their sustainability and quality-of-life goals. This free continuous improvement program, managed by a public-private partnership, is based upon 29 best practices. Each best practice can be implemented by completing one or more actions at a 1, 2 or 3-star level, from a list of four to eight actions. These actions are tailored to all Minnesota cities, focus on cost savings and energy use reduction, and encourage civic innovation.

Read about the benefits of being a GreenStep City:

<http://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/benefits.cfm>

Learn about the 29 best practices: <http://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPractices.cfm>

Relevant Terms

- GreenStep City – a city participating in this voluntary challenge and assistance program. See a full listing of cities here: <http://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/allCities.cfm>
- Category A, B, C city: cities joining the program answer 11 questions to determine which city category they fit. A cities are generally larger cities or cities in metropolitan areas. C cities are generally very small cities with few city staff and limited infrastructure outside of metropolitan areas. B cities fall somewhere in-between. Many smaller cities that serve as regional hubs will be Category B cities. To download the 11-question spreadsheet visit: <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/view-document.html?gid=17010>.
- Step 1 – first level recognition in the GreenStep City Program. This recognition is earned when a city council signs an official resolution to join the program.
- Step 2 – second level recognition in the GreenStep City Program. This recognition is earned when a city completes half the total best practices needed for its city category: 4, 6, and 8 best practices for Category C, B and A cities, respectively.
- Step 3 – third level recognition in the GreenStep City Program. This recognition is earned when a city completes the total number of best practices, including those
- 5 best practice categories – the five topical areas under which the best practices are categorized. These include: Building and Lighting, Land Use, Transportation, Environmental Management, and Economic and Community Development.
- Best practice – these are the 29 basic building blocks of the GreenStep program. An overview of each best practice can be found here: <http://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPractices.cfm>.
- Best practice action – these are the “to-do” items under each of the 29 best practices. Cities take one or more actions to complete a best practice and are spelled out on each best practices page.
- Star rating – each base practice action a city reports receives a star rating (either one, two or three stars) for its level of difficulty. One can explore the star ratings for each

best practice action by clicking into each specific action and exploring the Star Rating tab.

- Online reporting – when a city joins the program they will receive log-in information to record their best practices in the online GreenStep database. This will allow the city to report its completed actions and for these actions to be shared with other participating cities.
- Best practice checklist/inventory (175 item excel spreadsheet) – this sheet can be used to help a city (or someone working with a city) determine, track and plan which best practice actions a city has done, is contemplating and / or might be something the city would consider. Can be downloaded here:

<http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/view-document.html?gid=17016>

Appendix B: Guidelines for how to (and how not to) describe the program:

- It is a free, voluntary challenge, assistance and recognition program coordinated by the State of MN and formally overseen by two state agencies and six non-profit organizations. Cities proceed at their own pace and are formally recognized by the League of MN Cities, one of the 8 GreenStep Partners organizations, for implementing sustainability best practices.
- Recognition at different levels - Steps - is based upon completing a mix of actions (taking credit for past actions, recording new actions). A city can choose which best practices to do and which actions to take based on what works best for its needs. A few of the best practices (and their actions) are set as minimum standards which must be completed to move to Step 3 recognition.
- GreenStep Cities is not and will not become a regulatory program. It is not a funding program, nor a certification program.
- It is a framework for citizen commissions, city staff and city councils intended to make it easier for a city to take more sustainable actions that best fit that city.
- Best practice actions focus on cost savings and energy-use reduction, and encourage civic innovation over a range of environmental sustainability areas.
- Increasingly the GreenStep website will be a peer-learning network where a city can contact another city that has taken an action it also wants to take. Hence the value of cities joining the program and entering action reports for other cities to see.

Appendix C: Sample agenda for civic leader meeting

GreenStep Cities

Civic Leader Meeting (hosted by Intern and City Lead)

Draft Agenda

- I. Welcome and Introductions
 - City Lead welcomes everyone, provides thumbnail overview of the city's involvement with GSC and Intern
 - Members of planning team [that planned this meeting] introduce themselves
 - Intern introduces him/herself and the benefits of participation in the GreenStep Cities program

- II. Members learn about which best practice actions the city has already completed

- III. Review city projects planned or underway, brainstorm options for actions the city might take in the future to benefit people, the economy, environment)

- IV. Leaders and team focus on the highest priorities for community

- V. Intern and City Lead offer thanks and share hopes for continued participation of members on a GreenStep (steering) committee or subcommittee of an existing committee/group, should one not exist.

Appendix D: Sample Intern Application

GreenStep Internship Application

This paid internship requires 12 weeks of service.

1. Name _____ phone _____
email _____
2. Major _____ Minor _____
Service/leadership _____
3. What special skills and understanding could you bring to this assistance to two cities in our region?
4. The GreenStep program took three years to build with the collaboration of six state organizations. It is designed to increase the learning by civic leaders about the Best Practices in Minnesota cities and their planning for the future. This planning and these Best Practices in economic and community development, transportation, land use, environmental management and buildings & lighting can increase the efficiency of the city's infrastructure. These sustainable savings together with the improved vision, teamwork and civic fabric can help us build more sustainable and resilient Minnesota communities. **Why are you interested in this GreenStep internship at UMD? How does the internship align with your skills and hopes? How could this internship weave together a number of your skills and passions as you work to lead local communities?**
5. If you have connections with any of these interested communities, which and what are they?
6. Do you have reliable personal transportation for this internship? YES NO
7. Do you have any special concerns that could affect your success with this service?

Appendix E: Pathways to reward interns for their work

GreenStep interns must track their time for purposes of program reporting as well as internship credit. Timesheets may need to be submitted.

a. Financial Compensation

The program is designed as a 12 week internship during which an intern works approximately 10 hours per week for a total of 120 hours. An intern may be paid from the following sources of funds:

- **Grant or other designated funds:** some cities may have funds available to provide an intern stipend.
- **Federal work study:** Some students may be eligible for work study funding through their campus.
- **Funds through City:** A city may have funds available to support an intern. In this case, the intern would receive payments through the city's payroll system
- **Funds through school:** Some schools have funds available to support student internship work. A student must pursue this through their school.

b. Class credit or service learning credits

If funds to support the intern program are not available, or if a student prefers, in some cases, an internship may be completed in exchange for class credit. This arrangement will vary from school to school. Some schools require an internship, or a student may arrange to conduct an internship as an independent study with a professor.

Whichever of the above pathways is utilized, all related arrangements should be made ***prior to the start of the internship*** so that all parties begin the program with a shared understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and reward.

c. Letter of recommendation

Upon completion of the internship, the intern will receive a letter of recommendation from the City Lead and/or the Mentor. This letter should highlight the intern's contributions and can be used for future job or school applications.