



Executive Summary

Externships are a proven way for organizations to tackle significant challenges by harnessing emerging leaders' skills while offering substantive professional development opportunities. We set out to enable the State of Missouri to apply this program continuously, benefitting our state.

Inspired by Governor Parson's statement that Missouri has "the best of the best working on our team in state government," our capstone team saw the limitless potential of cross-agency externships. What excited us was uncovering how externships could empower Missouri's talented public servants to discover novel solutions, promote excellence within government, and improve the lives of Missourians.

With this in mind, we set out to structure a sustainable process for identifying projects, outline a website for connecting externs with projects, and provide them with the leadership tools needed to succeed.

From our research, we created an externship definition that underlies our recommendations. An externship is *an experiential learning opportunity for emerging leaders to gain knowledge of state government resources while assisting with multi-agency project management.*

Other federal and private sector externship programs offer long-term job shadowing placements and focus primarily on professional development. Based on the work of previous Missouri Leadership Academy (MLA) capstone teams, we believe that externships could offer valuable professional development via high-impact projects rather than job shadowing. We see the critical components of externships as leading a project, addressing a need in state government, and collaborating across agencies.

In reviewing previous capstones and interviewing executive leadership, it became clear that project-focused externships were well-defined. Still, the missing component was a system for proposing new projects and connecting them with skilled team members. To address this, our recommendation has three components.



Externs and Projects: To promote externship opportunities, proposing a new project must be flexible and straightforward. Each department will be able to customize the method of identifying projects. We recommend projects be efforts not currently in progress that can be completed in one to three hours a week over four to twelve months. Additionally, externs should initially be MLA graduates as they have proven time-management skills and leadership experience.



An Externship Website: To ensure MLA graduates can find externships and agencies can share project proposals, we recommend creating a job-board style website. Using two simple forms, potential externs can disclose their skills and experience in a shared location where agencies also outline their projects. A topic area list, used on both forms, will allow relevant connections to happen automatically.



A Project Framework: To guide the extern's partnership with the project agencies, we recommend offering a framework outlining the entire externship process and critical project management resources. Built on Leadership Academy materials, Six Sigma, and the work of previous capstones, our team has created the initial framework, which will be housed on the externship website.

Taken together, these three components will encourage MLA graduates to share their skills and provide them with the tools to succeed as they tackle some of the state's most pressing challenges.