

Nevada County Internship Program

Executive Summary for the Challenge Award

Overview: Our Internship Program is like no other. We are inclusive, provide career opportunities, change lives, and positively enhance County operations at no additional cost.

Challenge: Launch a non-traditional solution with no upfront funding for training and skill-based development of a talent pipeline for the County of Nevada through unique and innovative internship opportunities while partnering with local government, business, and educational agencies. Our goal: An easily understood and intuitive process where candidates can apply, gain knowledge through an interactive internship experience with concise training and skills expansion while enhancing County services. We accomplish this by using metrics and job delineation on established timelines, associated learning plans, and assistance in tracking the internship to completion. We leverage relationships with local businesses, colleges, and agencies to synergistically identify career opportunities for candidates within and outside our County. The result has been to launch the [Nevada County ACHIEVE MORE Internship Program](#).

Solution: We threw-out the rulebook and implemented a County-wide internship program. The uniqueness of the program is in its architecture and management. Utilizing available funding from federal, state and local sources, interns were recruited to create and then run the program! No source speaks louder to potential intern recruits than an intern him or herself. The Department of Defense's SkillBride program, Veterans' Affairs programs, Army PaYS program, CalWORKS, Handshake (online college recruiting portal), and local colleges, were tapped to obtain the very interns who created the program. At no cost to the County. None. Not only were the intern-architects obtained through these sources, but relationships built with these sources. The flood gates have been opened for greater mining for interns!

Innovation: The difference, our program is beyond the normal internship experience, with full 'buy-in' from leadership at all levels to include entry-level employees. Through deliberate planning, consistent optimization of methods blazes the trail for the future talent for the county. The process, recruitment, application, background, interview, to potential hire follows a predictable and repeatable workflow with results 21-28 days on average for placement. The metric-tracked training plans, constant communication with interns afford an expansive learning experience, with quick pivot capabilities to attain individualized success. Our Internship Coordinator (IC) team personally touches each Intern weekly gathering information, answering questions to personalize and ensure a successful experience. Invention of the "ACHIEVE MORE" branding and our focus drives the creativity, unique perspective, personal growth, mentorship, critical thinking skills, and talent pool development through our caring attitude intimately connecting talent to future jobs in County of Nevada government offices, local businesses and even candidates' desires for placement to other counties.

Results: Our Program creates internship opportunities while offering non-supervisory County staff the soft skill development of mentoring an intern. In May 2019, our first intern (a Veteran) was hired, as of August 2021, we have 8 active and over 47 interns who have graduated the program. Of those 47, 31 have received full-time equivalent positions throughout the community. The interns have collectively worked more than 22,600 hours and contributed over \$431K in salaries funded by our partners. Utilizing grant dollars from the Alliance For Workforce Development, six interns worked over 2100 hours at a savings of \$47,000. CalWORKs saw promise in our program using it for 32% of their total enrolled applicants to partner with us for internships, for a total of 117 weeks, yielding 9,200 hours, each averaging 25 hours a week at more than \$118k. Moreover, our Veteran programs saw eleven veterans working over 8,280 hours, saving the County \$186k in salary. The Internship Program was called to action to support COVID critical tasks and was able to fill 4 positions within 4 hours though HR's normal time to hire can be over 100 days. This provided critical nexus to assist in the pandemic and setup of a COVID testing center the Grass Valley Veterans Hall, enabling economic recovery across the County.

We truly care about the outcome of our interns' experiences. As an example, A retiring military officer interned with us for 5 ½ months, was exposed to County operations and got to be known by the County. He ended up transitioning to fulfill a fulltime critical staffing need as an Office of Emergency Management Program Manager. A college student, throughout her 3-month internship, changed her career plans to Human Resources based on her positive Internship experience. Interns have edited over 175 of the 350 job postings in our library, using a product called Textio, which resulted in posts attracting talent across an ethnically diverse candidate pool. Postings initially rated 20-45 out of a scale of 100, now average range from 90-100.

Replicability: Ease of replication across California Counties of the Internship Program is made possible through template sharing. The Internship Program uses unique non-traditional programs and schools to provide opportunities for talent and skill development without corresponding funding from the County. Human Resources Director has shared our program and resources with the Counties of Contra Costa, Fresno, Yuba, Sutter and Tulare, City of Napa, CSU Monterey Bay to name just a few and shared the program at the spring CPPAC conference (All 58 county HR directors in CA).

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Achieve More PowerPoint can be viewed here: [“Achieve More”](#) this may take a few minutes to load.

**Nevada County Responds to the COVID Crisis:
Emergency Sheltering and Social Services Support**

OVERVIEW: Nevada County recognized the immediate need to support our community and our Public Health Department as our entire County grappled with the increasing COVID-19 cases.

CHALLENGE: Public Health needed to be able to refer high-risk, resource deficient COVID positive customers to a case manager during their periods of isolation. Given the well-known mental health challenges associated with COVID-19, increased anxiety and depression, housing challenges, employment insecurity, and a lack of natural supports, many COVID positive and potentially exposed people were not maintaining isolation or quarantine and were exposing the community to infection by going to work, pharmacies, or other errands and by staying with family or roommates despite the need to isolate.

SOLUTION: Nevada County assembled a collaborative team from several departments to troubleshoot COVID emergency housing needs, public health support, social services support, and COVID friendly transportation resources.

INNOVATION: Nevada County actively worked and secured eight travel trailers from Southern California to accommodate the anticipated COVID emergency shelter needs. Once here, all eight travel trailers needed to be leveled and hooked up to sewer, water, and electrical. Multiple shopping trips were made to set-up each travel trailer with needed supplies. Social services staff met every customer at an available travel trailer to unlock it and provide the customer with an operational tour on how each appliance worked. Every day, including weekends, individual groceries, medications, and personal needs items were purchased and delivered for each customer while in isolation. Social services staff worked with customers to resolve any financial assistance needs while providing a much-needed emotional lifeline. When the travel trailers weren't available, the Team pivoted quickly to secure local motel rooms. Social services and probation worked in collaboration to provide needed COVID secure transports. This Team works

collaboratively to solve COVID challenges, responds timely to urgent needs 7 days a week, and consistently develops coordinated backup plans for program coverage. This Team is still actively engaged in supporting COVID positive community members throughout the length of their quarantine or isolation and connecting them with ongoing supports that are identified during the assessment. These ongoing supports have included connection to sustainable benefits (unemployment, CalFresh, MediCal, etc), rental assistance, housing support, childcare resources, ongoing mental health supports, and ongoing medical care.

RESULTS: To date, we have served 267 high-risk, minimally resourced customers who have been impacted by COVID-19. We have spent \$56,575.15 for tangible support services for our customers. Our customers have been incredibly appreciative of the support we have been able to provide. Public Health and our local health care providers and hospitals are able to refer patients to us to be discharged safely and supported. This has kept our entire community safer in addition to improving the lives of the patients and their families.

REPLICABILITY: COVID-19 has challenged our entire agency to look at how we provide services and what is possible with a little ingenuity, hard work, and collaboration. This experience, although challenging, has strengthened relationships across departments, improved team morale, and increased collaboration with our community partners. This model could be used by other Counties and easily modified to fit specific County needs. Funding has been primarily COVID specific allocations, but we are also able to leverage social services dollars through effective time study reports to applicable programs and by utilizing other department revenue sources when appropriate (probation funding, MediCal billing, etc).

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Nevada County Budget Improvement Program

Overview: This program decentralizes expertise and knowledge from the County Executive Office to those closest budget activities, creating efficiencies and department ownership of their budgets.

Challenge: The Nevada County budget process kicks off at the end of January, with departmental budget submissions due to the County Executive Office (CEO) at the end of February for quality review of more than 120 unique budgets before presentation to a Board of Supervisors' Budget Subcommittee, which is responsible for reviewing all budgets and recommending adoption to the full Board.

Each year a bottleneck is created by the timing requirements surrounding the development, review, submission, and adoption of budget documents; and within that process, the detailed review of budgets to ensure high standards for accuracy, reasonableness, and alignment with Board of Supervisors' and departmental strategic priorities.

Budget submissions include a budget story and themes portrayed by narrative summaries of program services, accomplishments and performance measures, and key programmatic charts and graphs, all supported by revenues and expenses for the prior year and projections for the current year and the new budget year. Prior to this project, departmental staff charged with developing budgets had partial and inconsistent guidance to develop meaningful numbers for budgets, and department heads had widely varying ways of connecting their budget story narratives with performance measures and objectives, leaving questions about how the budgets fit into overall county priorities. There were no widely accessible, consistent guidelines and tools for crafting best practice budgets; initial budgets were of substandard quality; a lot of the work of fine-tuning and creating good budgets defaulted to the CEO.

Solution: The Budget Improvement Program included developing common best practice tools for budget development and making those available countywide, combined with a training program to put knowledge – and more importantly, ownership of the entire budget submission package – in the hands of departments. The process began with a survey of all levels of staff involved in the budget process to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current process and generate ideas for improvement.

The next step was to create a team of core fiscal/budget staff to use the survey results to create a set of common tools and training for all levels of county staff to address identified shortcomings. Tools developed included:

- Standardized modeling tools for revenue and expense projections that resulted in reasonable and meaningful numbers that reflected and supported department priorities

- Fund balance projection reports to reasonably and consistently evaluate available resources for one-time and sustained uses as portrayed in budget narratives and priorities
- A questionnaire document for the description of program highlights and fiscal changes so that any reader would be able to understand the budget story and explain significant changes to the budget
- A standardized review checklist with detailed review criteria for all documents and projections created through the budget development process, leading to high quality results

Finally, survey data was used to develop a training program to consistently communicate best practices, share the new tools, build departmental ownership of their budgets, and ultimately eliminate many of the inefficiencies between budget development, budget review, and finalization. The training was broken into three audience-targeted modules:

- Department Heads and Program Managers – Telling an effective Budget Story
- Fundamentals of Budget Preparation
- Advanced Budgeting - Tools, Reports, and Data Validation

Innovation: This project demonstrates creativity, uniqueness and an innovative spirit in improving the budget process and usefulness of budgets by creating new reporting tools and training materials to move county budget development towards a more aligned process and expand budgeting capacity throughout the county enterprise.

Results: This project vastly improved initial departmental budget submissions, reduced the follow-up and review required by the CEO, and resulted in alignment of staff to arrive at high quality budgets. Most importantly, the entire budget package is more meaningful and useful to departments, consistently tying together appropriations requests with strategic objectives and departmental priorities in a more clear and consistent manner.

Replicability: This program can be replicated by other California Counties by clearly identifying best practice budgeting techniques and desired outcomes, collaborating with department staff at all levels to determining gaps in departmental knowledge and training, and then developing a set of tools and training materials that can be used to bridge the gap, with a process that is embraced countywide. We recommend this as a best practice in creating a more efficient budgeting process, improving alignment between departments and executive level review staff, and expanding capacity and expertise in the area of budgeting throughout the county enterprise.

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Overview: The Rapid Response Team is a community-based service that utilizes a strength-based approach to supporting families in accessing supports and achieving individualized goals.

Challenge: Several years ago Nevada County Child Welfare Services embarked on an internal audit of Departmental practices such as the types services provided, gaps between referrals for services and when services were implemented, the effects of extremely high caseloads on service delivery, recidivism and current Federal outcomes. Through this process we discovered that due to existing barriers (difficulties in obtaining releases of information, geography, real time delays due to extremely high caseloads between referring a family to services and implementation, lack of timely follow up due to high caseloads, and lack of services for non-MediCal families) it was clear there was an opportunity for improvement. This realization was the birth of the Rapid Response Team, a collaborative partnership between Nevada County Child Welfare Services and Victor Community Support Services.

Solution and Innovation: The Rapid Response Team (RRT) works in tandem with Nevada County Child Welfare Services in a three-pronged approach: First, a member of the RRT participates daily in Review Evaluate Decide (RED) Team with the Nevada County Child Welfare Emergency Response Unit to assess all referrals that come to the Department to determine the appropriate response and if a referral should be made to the RRT. Second, when a referral is assigned, social workers and members of the RRT respond together to initiate service from the very first contact. This collaboration eliminates the time gap that the Department had recognized as a needed improvement to engage families, promote safety, decrease recidivism and mitigate higher levels of intervention. Third, whenever a client is placed outside the county and initiating services takes time, the RRT can provide immediate support until more permanent services are implemented. This approach meets the immediate needs of the family and prevents the possibility of a higher level of intervention.

Some of the services offered through Rapid Response include but are not limited to:

- Immediate and long-term safety planning.
- Linkage to necessary community services and supports such as mental health and SUD treatment.
- Coordination with schools and other existing systems and natural supports.
- In-home support to address behavioral needs and/or provide coaching to caregivers.

- Child and Family Team meetings to create systems for sustained change and improvement.
- Monetary assistance to families for emergency and immediate needs such as paying electricity bills and garbage, rental assistance, car repairs, food, gas, etc.

Results: The Rapid Response Team went live in August 2020. Since then the following outcomes have been achieved:

- 59 referrals have been made to the Rapid Response Team
- 21 families have successfully completed their case plan goals
- The Rapid Response Team has provided an additional 400 contacts with families separate from tandem visits with Child Welfare.
- The most important results and success of the Rapid Response Team, thus far, has been that 8 children have remained home with their families that without Rapid Response Team intervention and support, would have been placed in a higher level of care.

Replicability: Nevada County Child Welfare Services was able to fund the Rapid Response Team in partnership with Victor Community Support Services by utilizing 2011 realignment dollars along with funds that were made available due to the Nevada County Youth Center closing its doors. Other counties could replicate this program by evaluating their realignment dollars, conduct county asset mapping and partnering with local service providers. MediCal billing can be leveraged for eligible activities and individuals, and by partnering with our local wraparound provider, we are able to provide more services and link families with longer term services more seamlessly.

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