

NON-PROFIT BOARD INTERNSHIP PROGRAM (NPBI)

Community Service-Learning + Career Centre

2025-2026



The Non-Profit Board Internship program (NPBI) was launched in 2006 with support from the Alberta Government Board Development Program.

NPBI provides undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Alberta the opportunity to learn the variety of practices and skills involved in serving on the boards of community-based non-profit organizations.

NPBI GUIDEBOOK



Photos by: Cole Pearson

Contents

1. What is NPBI?
2. Expectations + Roles
3. 2025-26 Important Dates
4. Developing an Effective Mentoring Relationship
5. Menu of Mentoring Activities
6. Board Project
7. About the Non-Profit Sector
8. Learning Objectives
9. Learning Objectives Agreement
10. NPBI Communication Agreement

Treaty Acknowledgement

The University of Alberta respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/ Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community

WHAT IS NPBI?

The Non-Profit Board Internship Program (NPBI) consists of **three** mutually supportive activities with an estimated total commitment time of **50-60 hours**. These activities are:

- **A series of online workshops/in-person events:** 4 workshops delivered in collaboration with the Government of Alberta Community Development Unit and provide training and discussion of key aspects of non-profit boards. The in-person events include the program launch, the intern check-in and the graduation event (**15 hours in workshops and events**)
- **A board placement:** Guided by volunteer mentors from each host board, the board placement affords interns the opportunity to attend and participate at board meetings using their newly acquired skills (**20 hours in board meetings**)
- **A project to support board governance:** To qualify for a NPBI Certificate, interns contribute a final project to their board – which they design and complete under the guidance of their mentors (**20 hours on board project**)



The internship also meets the non-credit opportunity requirement for the Certificate in Community Engagement and Service-Learning.

EXPECTATIONS AND ROLES

The relationship between the board mentor and the student intern is critical for success of the program.

INTERNS ARE EXPECTED TO:

- Attend and participate in board meetings; ask questions and apply workshop learnings.
- Practice the skills of observation, time management, personal organization, effective communication, and consideration for others at all board meetings.
- Be proactive about brainstorming possible projects for the board that will fulfill a need.
- Produce a final project for the board that will enhance board governance. The final project will be presented at graduation.
- Attend and participate in all of the workshops to ensure a basic foundation of knowledge and experience.

***PLEASE NOTE:** If a participant misses more than 2 online workshops regardless of reason or advance notice, without making up for it, they will not be eligible to receive the NPBI certificate. If a workshop is missed, interns must complete a make-up assignment based on the missed content. The make-up assignment has a deadline for completion and will be emailed to missing participants after the session.

MENTORS ARE EXPECTED TO:

- Provide the intern with an orientation and information about the organization (e.g. website, manuals).
- Introduce the intern to fellow board members and the organization's staff and help integrate the Intern onto the board.
- Be available to answer any questions the Intern may have.
- Discuss goals and expectations, and how the two of you will communicate and work together.
- Assist the intern in understanding their role on the board and with any tasks or projects assigned.
- Identify and model expected behaviours of an effective board member.
- Provide constructive feedback to the intern on an on-going basis.
- Be clear with the intern as to what is considered confidential and what is not.
- Attend and participate in 3 in-person events hosted by the NPBI program



BOARDS ARE EXPECTED TO:

- Provide opportunities for the intern to fulfill the program's time commitment requirement (September to April). Activities the Intern may undertake to meet this commitment can include attending board meetings, serving on a committee, and working on a special project.
- Provide a meaningful, supportive learning experience for the intern.
- Appoint the intern's mentor, and an alternate in the event that the mentor is unable to meet her or his commitment.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY!

- Choose a communication mode that works best for BOTH intern and mentor (eg. Monthly or Semi-monthly check-ins by phone or email; short coffee meetings before or after board meetings and workshops – to prepare & debrief, etc.)
- Discuss your goals and expectations for the internship.
- If any contact information changes or any circumstances affecting ability to carry out your role in the relationship, please inform both your partner (mentor or intern) and the program coordinators immediately.
- Be accessible and be aware that you each have many demands on your time.
- Be honest, open, and direct in all communication.
- Remember that good communication also includes active listening.

***Mentors:** If available, you may want to offer the intern a virtual tour of your organization or an on-line volunteer orientation. The intern may be able to get a greater sense of the day-to-day work of the organization and how board decisions influence operations.

***Interns:** You may want to keep a journal of your learnings/experiences throughout the internship. There will be a mid-point reflection in January.

2025-2026 IMPORTANT DATES

Saturday, September 13, 2025 | 9 AM - 1 PM | U of A North Campus (In-Person) | Interns & Mentors

Orientation: Gain a better understanding of the NPBI program and establish an understanding of mutually set goals and expectations.

Friday, October 17, 2025 | 3 - 4:50 PM | Zoom | Interns Only

Board Roles and Responsibilities: We will start with governance and what it means to the board. Then we will take you through how governance touches the entire organization, the structure of the organization, and the volunteers and staff that work in the organization. You will also have many opportunities to speak directly with others and share your experiences, test your knowledge, and ask your questions from the presenters.

Friday, November 21, 2025 | 3 - 4:50 PM | Zoom | Interns Only

Organizational Purpose and Planning: How is planning connected to the board's Roles and Responsibilities? How are an organization's vision, mission and values connected to organizational plans? What is included in the plan? We will introduce you why planning is needed, what it includes and give you some ideas on how to get started.

Monday, January 12, 2026 | 3 - 4:50 PM | U of A North Campus (In-Person) | Interns Only

Intern Check-in: Interns reflect on their initial application essay and identify what goals they have achieved or have yet to achieve. Project discussion & collaboration with group.

Week of January 12, 2026 | TBD by a poll | U of A North Campus (In-Person) | Mentors Only

Mentor Check-In: Career Centre and CSL will check in and offer tips or advice on making the match as effective as possible for the remainder of the program.

Monday, February 9, 2026 | 3 - 4:50 PM | Zoom | Interns Only

Building a Strong Team & Effective Relationships: Join us for this interactive webinar where you and your fellow participants will deal with a specific board situation, address the root causes and create solutions. We will provide information that will help you understand why these situations arise, how to deal with them and ideas for addressing the root causes before they happen.

Monday, March 9, 2026 | 3 - 4:50 PM | Zoom | Interns Only

Financial Responsibilities: What are the board's financial responsibilities? How can the board fulfill these responsibilities? What is Financial Management and what does it include? To put it simply, the board has to know what is going on, and ask questions if they don't! Join us for more details and a few activities that will introduce your financial responsibilities.

Wednesday, April 8, 2026 | 4 - 5:30 PM | Edmonton City Hall (In-Person) | Interns & Mentors

Program Graduation: Showcase final projects, hear from guest speakers and celebrate the success the program brings to the non-profit sector each year. Invite family, friends and supporters to share in the success.

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP



CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Adapted from The Mentor's Guide, Zachary (2000)

TO-DO LIST	STRATEGIES	CONSIDERATIONS
Reflect on mentoring	Have you ever been in a mentoring relationship? What did you learn? What did you wish happened? Why is this important?	Be vulnerable about your own mentoring experiences by including failures and successes.
Get to know each other	Obtain copy of each other's LinkedIn profile or resume in advance of meeting. Probe with introductory questions. Make notes after meeting of their highly valuable qualities and characteristics.	Be authentic by being loyal to your identity and values. Celebrate commonalities and differences. Share background stories, aspirations and goals.
Confidentiality and limitations	What are the boundaries of this relationship? What information is confidential? What are we able to contribute to this relationship?	Set limitations and boundaries for the mentoring relationship. Consider what will happen if these boundaries are crossed.
Identify goals	What are your long-term big goals? What are your short-term worthwhile goals? Where do you see yourself in the future?	These can be broad starting goals. Clarity may be lacking but can be guided and made realistic by deconstructing into SMART goals.
Roles and responsibilities	What do you expect out of this relationship and why? Review the roles of mentor and mentee. What does this mean in your relationship?	Discuss what your responsibility assumptions are and if they are realistic for your relationship. Document these expectations but allow for adjustments and flexibility.
Relationship expectations	Ask: What do you want to know from me? What do you think we need to make this relationship work? What do you need right now-today? What kinds of special learning or opportunities for improvement do you feel I should provide or help you get?	Discuss your effort, enthusiasm, time you would like to devote to working with each other. Explore priorities for learning (ex. must have, nice to have, long-term, short-term strategies).
Desired outcomes	What does success at the end of this time frame look like to you? How will you be different at the end of the program? What will you be able to do or know?	For the mentor, what areas of expertise do you have relevant to the mentee's goals? Or who in your network can you call on who has relevant expertise?
Authentic tasks and learning criteria	What will you do to achieve your goals? What assistance can be provided? What learning opportunities are available?	Discuss learning styles and how this may affect the relationship. Discuss activities to enhance learning and incorporate network connections. See: Menu of Mentoring Activities
Accountability and feedback	How are you going to hold each other accountable? What performance criteria can you set? How will feedback be given?	Be respectful of time. Discuss availability, communication methods and how feedback can be given comfortably. Set boundaries.

MENU OF MENTORING ACTIVITIES

The following are some activities that mentors and interns can do together to enhance their mentoring relationship. Activities should be selected and adapted based on your learning goals.

Board Member Stages: Mentors can discuss the different roles an Intern might experience throughout their involvement on a board from observer to contributor to committee chair to board chair.

Organizational Challenges: Discuss the challenges your organization experiences and how the board goes about handling these challenges. This could help development ideas for project outcomes.

Career History: Mentors can discuss their career path, and how their involvement in the non-profit sector compliments their career. Sharing tips on transitioning from school to work will be helpful in identifying transferrable skills from one role to another.

Intern Presentation: The intern can prepare a presentation on a relevant topic and present it to their mentor and the board at a later date. The mentor can evaluate the intern on the content and delivery of the presentation and give them constructive feedback on how to improve.

Progress Reports: Interns can share a sample of their project as it takes shape and get evaluated on it by their mentor prior to the project being due. This can help interns recognize their areas for improvement. Mentors could also share some of their own work or work done in their field to discuss its merits, strengths and weaknesses. This is a good chance for mentors to clearly communicate expectations.

Reading Resources: A mentor can suggest an influential book, periodical, or journal article to the Intern. The mentor and intern could then discuss the literature and its application towards the intern's goals.

Volunteer Orientation: The intern may wish to participate in a full volunteer orientation to get to know the organization from a volunteer's point of view. If no volunteer orientation exists, perhaps the intern can interview volunteers or volunteer coordinators to find out what information is essential to the volunteer experience.

Learning Journal: It's suggested that interns keep a learning journal to track progress and concerns. This is an invaluable tool the interns can use to document their thoughts and feelings about their goals, learning objectives, their progress in reaching those goals and their discussions with their mentors during their meetings. Here are a couple of prompts:

- The most important work we did today was...
- To apply what I've learned, I will...
- The questions or challenges that exist for me are...

BOARD PROJECT

PURPOSE

- Apply the knowledge and experience interns have gained through the internship.
- Develop and deepen your intellectual and practical skills in a community setting.
- Contribute something tangible and lasting to their host boards (and to the NPBI Program).



EXAMPLES OF PAST PROJECTS

- **Provincial Advocacy Guide:** A resource to help members communicate priorities to their MLA
- **Welcome Letter for Board of Directors and Board Orientation Checklist**
- **Public Relations Toolkit:** Elevator pitch and guidelines for promoting the organization to community and potential donors
- **Online Board Satisfaction Survey:** Including board satisfaction, chair evaluation, self-reflection and exit interview.
- **Volunteer Recruitment:** Establishment of a framework to recruit, engage & retain volunteers within a non-profit organization
- **Toolkit for Board Members to Become Effective Ambassadors Through Storytelling**
- **Anonymous feedback system:** An initiative that enables stakeholders to share opinions without it being linked to them
- **Digital Literacy:** Guide to improve the digital literacy of board members by increasing facility with social media and other digital platforms
- **Social Media Strategy:** A comprehensive update of the organization's social media strategy to ensure alignment with the organization's goals.
- **Board Mentor Program:** Program for existing board mentors to mentor new board members, including responsibilities, mentor/mentee tasks, 5-month schedule, and alignment with strategic plan.
- **Strategic Planning:** Contributing to the development of a new strategic plan by creating road maps, timelines, and actionable items
- **Executive Director Evaluation Tool:** Developed goals and process for evaluating the Executive Director's performance.
- **Board Orientation Manual Updates:** Create new documents to acquaint new board members with the organization's fund development culture
- **Board of Directors:** A new webpage that describes the roles and interests of the board of directors.
- **Teaching Package:** Set of presentations that supplement the organization's outreach activities
- **Membership Development:** Infographic and recommendations for increasing the organization's membership development, including welcome packages, orientation, tracking, and renewals
- **Board Evaluation:** Created a board evaluation tool to identify organization's strengths and challenges and enhance board effectiveness.
- **Enhancing Diversity and Impact:** Research report on ethical, diversity, social and governance considerations for the organization, including best practices and recommendations

BEST PRACTICES IN PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

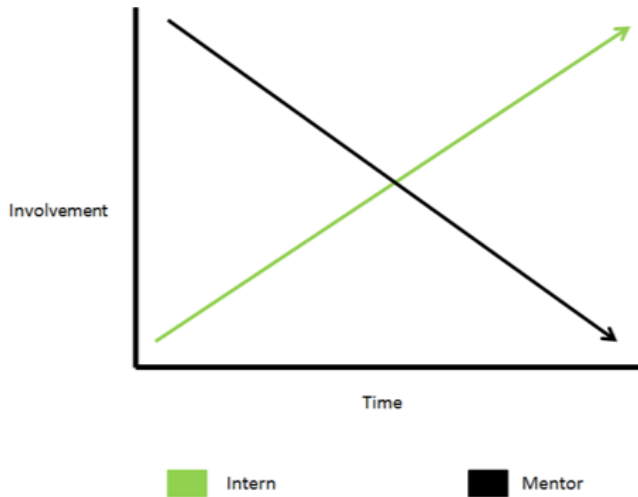
Interns should **NOT** choose a project for their board; the mentor should **NOT** choose a project for their intern. Project identification should be a **collaborative** process.



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

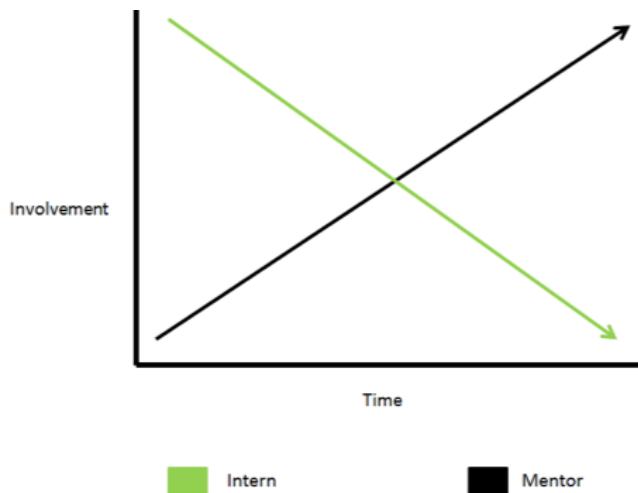
- Projects should be 20 hours of work which may include research, creation, edits and final version. If you identify a project requiring more time, consider breaking it down into smaller parts that can be accomplished over a few years with various interns.
- Projects **must** be completed by the April graduation
- **When choosing a project:**
 - Get input from the board and choose one that will enhance the board and board members' roles and will have long-term sustainability for the board;
 - Explore how the project connects back to the board's mission and vision; consider the learning opportunities for interns, (Are they enrolled in any courses that may compliment the project or organization?);
 - Share your ideas with the NPBI program coordinators for feedback before beginning.
- **To complete the project:**
 - Make sure the project is finite and has a clear beginning and end with agreed upon outcomes;
 - Create an action plan with incremental goals and timelines and schedule check-in meetings between mentor and intern;
 - Mentors should provide on-going guidance, feedback and constructive criticism;
 - Interns should ask for assistance and feedback and communicate challenges as they arise.

USUAL PROJECT PLANNING:



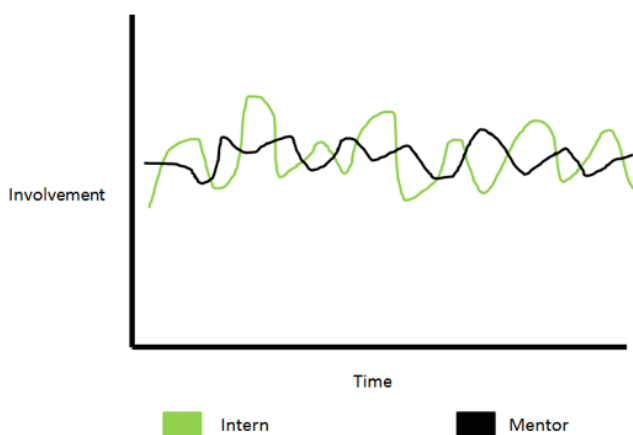
Typically paid staff are heavily involved in the planning process for project development and volunteers are brought in during the execution phase. For example, you might have a research project you want written where all of the information has been gathered and the volunteer has been asked to write it.

CONSULTANT-BASED PROJECT PLANNING:



Alternatively, mentors might look to interns for ideas that can help the organization, much like you would a consultant. However, with this approach the intern doesn't have context or history of the organization. They do not yet understand the day-to-day challenges or the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and therefore aren't yet in place to offer assistance.

RETHINKING PARTICIPATION IN PROJECT PLANNING:



Interns are at various stages of their learning. As they progress through the program they develop the skills needed to be an effective board member. Involve your intern at every point of the internship and talk to them about what they are learning and how they see this helping your organization. By attending board meetings and seeing how the organization functions interns will be in a better position to see how they can assist.

Once a project is selected it is important to check in frequently with one another to offer support and identify the resources you might need or know of. Some interns may not be aware of the resources that can assist them.

ABOUT THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR

WHAT IS THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR?

Non-profit and voluntary organizations are organizations “whose work depends on: serving a public benefit; volunteers for at least its governance; some financial support from individuals; and limited direct influence by governments, even though they may receive support from government sources.”¹

WHY DOES IT EXIST?

Social structure is sometimes described as a three-legged stool held up by government, the private sector, and the non-profit sector. The non-profit sector plays a large role in maintaining, building, and protecting community by providing valuable services and programs. Historically, non-profit organizations have been catalysts for change, introducing multiple perspectives in society, and working for the empowerment of society's most marginalized people. They play a significant role in democracy, providing a means of expression, and activism for many people who are, for one reason or another, excluded from conventional means of political expression.

Depending on the economic and political system, the state (embodied by the government) provides some social programs and basic services. However, the growing local and global trends towards a market-driven economy and a reduced government role in direct welfare provision are placing higher demands on the non-profit sector to improve social welfare and other quality of services.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

Funding:

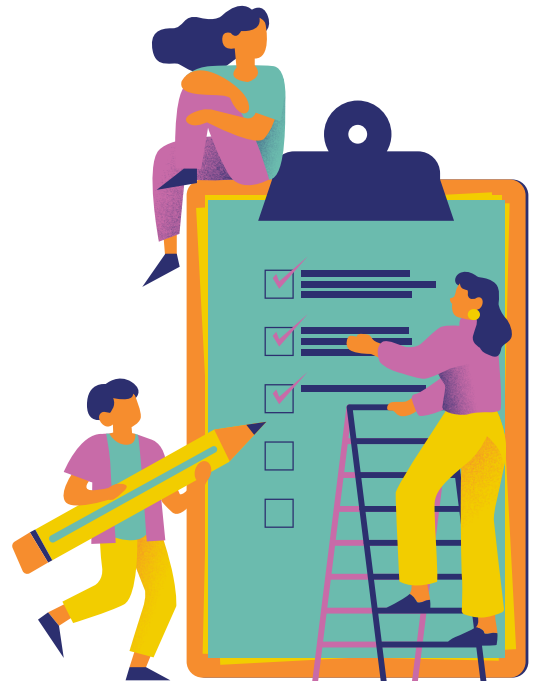
- **Dependency on external agencies for operational and project funding.** Funding from the government (which accounts for approximately one-third of funding in the non-profit sector) is often short-term and project-specific, and does not contribute to the administrative costs of running the organization. Dependency on external short-term funding prevents non-profits from being able to implement any long-term organizational plans, and contributes to many of the staff changes and shortages that you'll notice when working with non-profits.

Human Resources

- **Increasing competition for workers in the province.** The non-profit sector must compete with the public sector and industry for entry-level and front-line positions as well as qualified applicants. The non-profit sector struggles to offer competitive pay (due to lack of organizational funding), and personal development opportunities.
- **Stressful working conditions.** Due to shortages in staff numbers, staff end up working an increasing amount of overtime. Overtime is particularly high for supervisors and senior staff and compensation does not fully reflect this. Staff often take on multiple roles within the organization causing burnout, decreased morale, higher turnover and lower quality of service for clients.
- **Difficulty recruiting volunteers.** The pool of volunteers in Alberta can shrink as people choose to enter or re-enter the labour force to take advantage of high wages.

TRENDS IN ALBERTA'S NON-PROFIT SECTOR

- Alberta has the highest per capita number of non-profits in the country. There are more than **26,000** non-profit and voluntary organizations in Alberta, over **8000** of which are located in Edmonton and Area.
- Non-profit organizations employ over **450,000** Albertans. More than half (69%) of all non-profit and voluntary organizations in Alberta have no paid personnel. The majority of organizations with paid staff employ one to four people. Fifty-seven per cent of employees are full-time and 43% are part time. Overall, the non-profit workforce is predominantly female – about three quarters of paid staff are women.
- The non-profit and voluntary sector generates at least **\$10 billion** of activity in Alberta's economy. Presently, non-profits in Alberta receive nearly 50 per cent of their funding from outside sources, which includes government, corporations, and private donations.



RESOURCES

(Mentors may also suggest resource materials specific to their organization)

Non-Profit Board Development

Board Development Program: alberta.ca/supports-and-services-for-non-profits

Board Source: boardsource.org

Voluntary/Non-Profit Sector Online Resources (Edmonton & Alberta)

Alberta Board Member Essentials Program (ABME): ecvo.ca/what-we-do/course-listing/abme/

Alberta's Non-Profit & Voluntary Sector: alberta.ca/albertas-non-profit-and-voluntary-sector

Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (ECVO): ecvo.ca

Volunteer Alberta: volunteeralberta.ab.ca

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning objectives are goals you set for personal development, with a focus on the learning that characterizes internships, cooperative education and work experience programs. Learning objectives simply refer to what you hope to gain as a result of participating in your internship.

Why should I write learning objectives?

- Learning objectives help to make your internship more intentional.
- Learning objectives help you to monitor your progress.
- Learning objectives help you stay focused. With a clear goal in mind, you will be able to remind yourself of what you want to achieve and identify an action plan to help achieve your objectives.

DEVELOP SMART LEARNING OBJECTIVES

SMART goals are based on an acronym that describes an observable behaviour or action and allows people to gauge their own success. Use an action verb to begin writing the learning objective.



S – specific (significant, stretching)

M – measurable (meaningful, motivational)

A – action-oriented (attainable, agreed upon, achievable, acceptable)

R – realistic (relevant, reasonable, rewarding, results-oriented)

T – time-bound (timely, tangible)

CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR OBJECTIVES

When developing your objectives, consider the following:

- The organization's and board's mission and goals.
- Possible obstacles to achieving your goals.
- How do your objectives relate to your potential board project?

Instructions:

- Consider what goals you want to achieve during your internship. Discuss these goals with your mentor. Examples:
 - Over the course of the internship, I want to work on my public speaking skills.
 - Over the course of the internship, I want to learn about how to effectively run meetings. I want to be able to effectively facilitate meetings.
- For each goal, consider the SMART model. Identify the specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely components of the goal. These elements help you break down the goal to make it more manageable.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AGREEMENT

Together we have discussed and agree on the following goals we will work toward together to create a meaningful mentoring relationship for both of us. Our SMART goals are outlined below (**try to define three**):

LEARNING OBJECTIVE				
<u>S</u>PECIFIC	<u>M</u>EASURABLE	<u>A</u>CHIEVABLE	<u>R</u>ELEVANT	<u>T</u>IMELY
What are the specific components of this learning objective?	How will I measure that the objective is being achieved? How will I recognize the objective has been achieved?	What actions will I take to achieve the objective? List specific tasks and activities that will help you achieve the objective.	How does the objective relate to your internship? How will the objective help you to progress in your career goals?	When is my targeted deadline to achieve the objective?
BARRIERS & CHALLENGES (List what barriers may prevent you from achieving the objective)				
INVESTMENT (Time, resources, etc.)				

NON-PROFIT BOARD INTERNSHIP COMMUNICATION AGREEMENT



	MENTOR	MENTEE (INTERN)
Name		
Phone		
Email		
Preferred contact method		

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. We, mentor and intern, recognize the importance of goals to orient learning objectives. We have agreed upon the following goals and learning objectives we will work towards and revise as necessary. List the goals identified above.

-
-
-

2. Together we have discussed and agreed upon the responsibilities each of us will assume and have established our primary roles. We will allow for appropriate flexibility and adaptability if circumstances change or goals shift.

As a mentor, my role and responsibilities are...

As a mentee, my role and responsibilities are...

3. Together, we have discussed and agreed upon the following general communication schedule by using preferred method(s) of contact stated above. If problems should arise, we will take appropriate measures to adjust the schedule or method as needed. Either party, mentor or intern, may initiate a meeting.

Examples:

- Type (in-person meetings, phone calls, emails, texts)
- Frequency
- Location
- When

4. If we experience issues in our intern/mentor relationship, we will address them based on the following escalation process: (1) one-on-one discussion, (2) consultation with the NPBI coordinators. We will address issues with one another professionally and respectfully.

The formal mentoring relationship will continue as part of the NPBI Program until April. Any ongoing contact that continues beyond the formal mentoring period is entirely at our discretion. If we experience issues in our mentoring relationship, we will address them with one another respectfully; if necessary, we may decide to seek outside assistance, from CSL and Career Centre.

	MENTOR	MENTEE (INTERN)
Signature		
Date		

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Non-Profit Board Internship Program
npbi@ualberta.ca
Community Service-Learning (CSL) | Career Centre (CC)
University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB

Helen Zhang (CSL) | Madeleine Jensen-Fontaine (CC)
780-492-9557 | 780-492-4313
uab.ca/csl | uab.ca/cc

