

**Earn & Learn Summer Youth Internship Program (SYIP) 2020 Recommendations  
Community and Economic Development Committee**

On January 21, 2020, the Common Council adopted File No. 191439, a resolution directing the Department of City Development (DCD) to present a plan for increasing participation and creating successful outcomes for the Earn and Learn program. The sponsor, Ald. Milele Coggs, noted that she would like DCD to focus on attracting applicants to the program, strengthening the program to better align the interests and passions of interns, and being more intentional with matching interns to department assignments.

DCD is responsible for one of the Earn and Learn programs, the Summer Youth Internship Program (SYIP). Because it is the only Earn and Learn program under the department’s control, the observations and recommendations of this plan are limited to SYIP.

2019 was the 15th year DCD operated SYIP. A comparison of the last three years of SYIP in the below chart shows that 2019 had the fewest number of applicants, with the total number of applicants for 2019 being less than half of the number that applied in 2018. The lower number of applications meant fewer applicants interviewed, which proved to severely limit the candidate pool. 149 candidates reported to the interviews in 2019 to interview for 130 available positions. Due to the low number of interviewees, the Program Coordinator was not able to be as selective as in past years. At each step, applicants dropped out of the hiring process. 127 interns actually worked in 2019, which included some SYIP participants from previous years who were called to work when new participants did not report as expected.

SYIP Numbers 2017-2019

	2017	2018	2019
Applicants	691	770	391
Invited to Interview	566	618	335
Ineligible Applicants	125	152	56
Interviewees	253	317	149
No Shows to Interview	321	301	183
Interns Worked	144	134	127
Interns Completed Program	135	126	104

At the end of 2019’s eight week program, the number of interns who did not complete the program nearly tripled from 2018 and 2017. There was a higher number of disciplinary issues in 2019, including written warnings and a termination. These concerns can be attributed to the lower number of applicants and inability to be selective.

DCD has formulated five recommendations to address the rapidly changing labor market for youth employment and to address the goals of File No. 191439.

## **Increase Wages for SYIP**

- There are many opportunities for youth employment, and specifically summer employment. To be competitive in this market, it is important to increase the pay for SYIP.
  - SYIP participated in the Milwaukee Public Schools Student Job Fair in both 2018 and 2019. At this fair, there were at least 60 employers present each year. However, as confirmed by the MPS internship coordinator, both Earn and Learn programs (SYIP and Employ Milwaukee's Community Work Experience) were the lowest paying opportunities present both years.
- The lower number of SYIP applications can be attributed to the program's low rate of pay, combined with higher paying opportunities in other organizations.
- Since its inception, SYIP has largely depended on a stable allocation of Community Development Block Grant funds to pay operating expenses.
- DCD recommended to increase the SYIP pay rate to be able to compete with other opportunities. This recommendation is supported by Mayor Barrett.
  - An amendment to the 2020 budget was adopted to use City funds to supplement CDBG funds allocated to SYIP. This allows a significant increase in the wage rate for SYIP interns. With these additional resources, the hourly wage of interns will be increased from \$8.75 in 2019 to the City's Service Contract living wage \$11.52 for 2020. The new pay rate is a competitive salary that will be instrumental in attracting interns to SYIP.

## **Reduce the number of interns / Require Departments to supply more information when applying for interns / Increase team leader positions**

- It is recommended to reduce the number of intern positions to 110, to provide more valuable work assignments and allow more focus on individualized youth development.
- Traditionally, the number of SYIP positions has been based on the amount of funding available, and departments have been solicited to request interns for the summer. Departments have generally been granted the number of interns requested. It is now recommended that departments apply to receive SYIP interns.
  - With the recommendation that there be fewer interns, DCD will be more selective in granting requests for interns, which would ideally strengthen the experience for the interns.
  - Departments that present requests demonstrating they are prepared to provide the intern with a meaningful and rewarding work experience would be favored.
- SYIP team leaders serve as liaisons between the department supervisors and their assigned interns. It is recommended to increase the number of team leaders to allow more time for one-on-one youth development.

## **Match Intern Interests with Department Needs**

- With fewer positions available and a higher wage, it is expected that interest in SYIP would increase. However, it is also important to have applicants invested in the opportunity. Beginning with the 2020 SYIP application period, applicants are now required to submit a cover letter to express their interest in the position and aid in the selection process.
  - The cover letter submitted should introduce the applicant and provide information on their background and career goals. Applicants are also asked to explain why they are

- interested in SYIP, and how their education and any previous work experience make them a good fit for the internship.
- As in past years, those candidates who report to the SYIP interviews will be asked to complete an interest form, where they indicate their career interests and preference for assignments.
  - The information gained from both the cover letter and interest form will be useful in determining the best assignment fit for the intern.
- Departments applying to host SYIP interns must complete a position request form that provides details on the assignment offered, including supervisor, hours, location, and duties. This year, additional questions have been added to gather the information necessary to match the assignment and intern.
    - Departments must provide a realistic description of the duties the intern will be expected to perform, desired qualifications, and any required knowledge, skills, and abilities. The request also asks the department how the internship will be valuable to both the intern and department, and how the department plans to make a welcoming environment for the intern. Lastly, the request asks what career interests the intern selected for the department should have.
    - The department's request will be used to evaluate and select appropriate interns, based on the SYIP applicant's cover letter, interest form, and interview responses.

### **Joint Supervisor/Team Leader Orientation**

- It is recommended to have a supervisor orientation to provide supervisors with more education about SYIP. The goal of this orientation would be to assist those supervisors selected to host interns in understanding their roles and expectations and answer any questions they may have.
- Feedback from 2019 revealed that some supervisors were not aware of their required responsibilities for hosting SYIP interns. It will be important for supervisors to understand that the interns may not come to their work location as polished professional employees; this may be an intern's first job, and having an intern will require mentorship, patience, and understanding. Since a supervisor orientation has not been held in some years, this will be beneficial to host again.
- It is also recommended that the SYIP team leaders be present at the supervisor orientation so the supervisors can learn the role of the team leaders, and become familiar with the specific team leader who will be assigned to their interns and visiting their work sites.
- A stronger relationship between team leader and supervisor will allow them to be partners in the soft skill and professional development of the interns. With fewer interns, both team leaders and supervisors will be able to work on a more individualized basis with the interns if needed.

### **Expose Interns to 2020 Democratic National Convention**

- Discussion is underway with DPW regarding assigning interns to work on downtown "clean and green" activities during the Democratic National Convention.
- We will likely schedule an education session about the convention for interns.
- We hope to schedule interns to tour the Fiserv Forum to view convention set-up.