

Vermont Department of Labor – Returnship Program

Purpose: To promote labor force retention by allowing workers to explore new and different types of work that better suits their needs.

Description: A “Returnship” is an internship-like program for experienced workers seeking to re-enter the workforce after an extended period, particularly in a new line of work. As an on-the-job learning experience, the individual may receive financial remuneration from the employer, academic credit from an accredited institution, or a stipend from an employer or third-party.

Individuals participating in a Returnship might be:

- Parents returning to work after having kids
- Caregivers who left the workforce to care for a family member
- Retiring military serviceman, looking for a civilian career
- Mature workers whose current jobs are no longer desirable
- People who have taken an extended career break (retirement) and wish to return to work
- Individual who is physically unable to continue in his previous line of work
- Someone who has met a mandatory retirement age but is not yet ready to retire
- Ex-offenders
- Individuals in recovery from substance abuse, etc.

Elements of the Program:

1. **Assessment:** help the participant identify their transferrable skills, job goals, and training needs.
2. **Case Management:** help participants create a plan for success that involves workforce engagement; connect participant with supportive services; referrals to job openings if participant opts not to pursue a Returnship.
3. **Record Keeping:** collect participant information, tracks activities & records outcomes; maintains inventory of available Returnship Opportunities.
4. **Workshops:** participants identify realistic job goals; determine their best course toward employment; help participants learn the vocabulary and concepts of contemporary workplace; provide an orientation to specific work environments; explain nontraditional work options such as part-time, flex-time, job sharing, seasonal; explain labor market information to help individuals access new opportunities; etc.
5. **Employer Assistance:** work with employers to develop opportunities for returnships that attract high caliber talent (Examples: flexibility, training, recognition, mentoring opportunities, technology & software skills updates, etc.).
6. **Planning:** work with employer and participant to develop a “Returnship Plan” that facilitates a successful assignment, taking into consideration the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Outcomes: 100% of program participants (defined as anyone who receives a service) will either:

- Participate in a returnship with an employer; and/or
- Receive direct job referrals relevant to their job goals; and/or
- Be referred to other training options, services or programs that meet their needs

Measuring Results: Outcomes that we intend to track include:

- % of participants who engage in employment within 12 months of enrolling in the program
- % of returnships that result in a hire
- % of participants who report increased self-confidence / ability in regards to the job search process
- Jobs-related outcomes (types of jobs obtained, earnings, retention)
- Feedback from employers & participants about the effectiveness of returnships as a recruiting tool

Funding: 100k to the Next Generation Fund for Workforce Employment & Training Grant. Funding will cover program costs like administration of assessments, case management, career counseling, participant file maintenance, outcomes tracking. VDOL will use existing funds in WETF and federal funds to support: training costs (workshops, consulting with employers; marketing & outreach (making people aware of services & how to apply; reaching out to companies so they can benefit from our partnership). There will be no cost to participants or employers to engage in a Returnship.