

# The Benefits of Internships for Wastewater Systems

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# Goals for this webinar

- ✓ Why starting an internship is important
- ✓ Potential interns
- ✓ How to start the process
- ✓ A few funding ideas
- ✓ Questions



# My Water Story

*“I did not choose this profession. It chose me.”*



# Over 20 years experience

- ✓ McAnnich Corporation Laborer
- ✓ Correll Contractor Pipe Layer
- ✓ City of Des Moines WRA Pump Station Technician
- ✓ City of Ida Grove Wastewater Superintendent
- ✓ Iowa Great Lakes Sanitary District Wastewater Operator
- ✓ USW Utility Group City of Winterset Project Manager
- ✓ UIC Point Hope Alaska
- ✓ City of Iowa Falls Water/Sewer Superintendent
- ✓ Environmental Finance Center Wichita State University



# Professional Achievements

- ✓ Licensed by the Iowa DNR
  - Grade 4 Wastewater Treatment
  - Grade 4 Wastewater Collections
  - Grade 4 Drinking Water Treatment
  - Grade 4 Drinking Water Distribution
- ✓ Reciprocity in Alaska
- ✓ Speaking to Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates (iJAG) Students all over Iowa
- ✓ Worked with Interns and conducted Job Shadows



# Workforce Reports on the Industry



- **The Silver Tsunami**
- **2024 AWWA Report**
- **2022 Texas Report**
- **2018 New England Report**

# Why Starting an Internship Program is Important



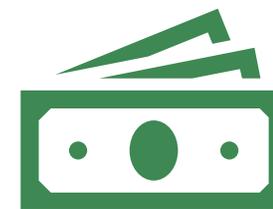
Operators are needed



Healthy environment



Community resiliency



Smart financial decision



Connecting generations



Career pathways



New technology

# Benefits of hosting an Intern

Reduced  
Turnover

Cost savings  
Quicker transitions  
Efficient use of time

Job Skills  
Development

Basic operator skills  
Work habits  
Prioritize safety

Relationships

with community  
with staff  
with field

# FUTURE WATER LEADERS | Intern Host

“

“Treat an internship as both an **investment** and an **opportunity**. Take the time to explain the "why" behind your work and give the intern a mix of hands-on tasks and learning experiences. Not only does this help them **build real-world skills**, but it also brings **fresh energy** and **perspective** to your utility, making the program **rewarding for everyone involved.**”

- Mallory Zabinski, Chief Operator, Village of Marcellus, NY

”

# What is an Intern?

- ✓ Part-time help
- ✓ Minimal to low cost staff support
- ✓ Gain experience and education
- ✓ Defined role responsibilities
- ✓ Set length of time



# Who Could be an Intern?

- ✓ Students
- ✓ Re-entry Programs
- ✓ Veterans
- ✓ Workforce Development Programs
- ✓ And Your Community!





# High School Students

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG)

School to Work Programs

Careers in Technical Education (CTE)

School Counselors



# College/University Students

Academic Advisors

Groups and Organizations

Targeted Classes



# Department of Corrections

Work Release

Recently Released

Probation Programs

Re-entry Programs



**NEW SKILLS**

**TRAINING**

# **Workforce Development**

Job skills training

Job placement

Library programs

Community education classes



# Veterans

Transferrable skills

Direct experience

Formal training & licenses

Reintegration programs

Veteran's organizations

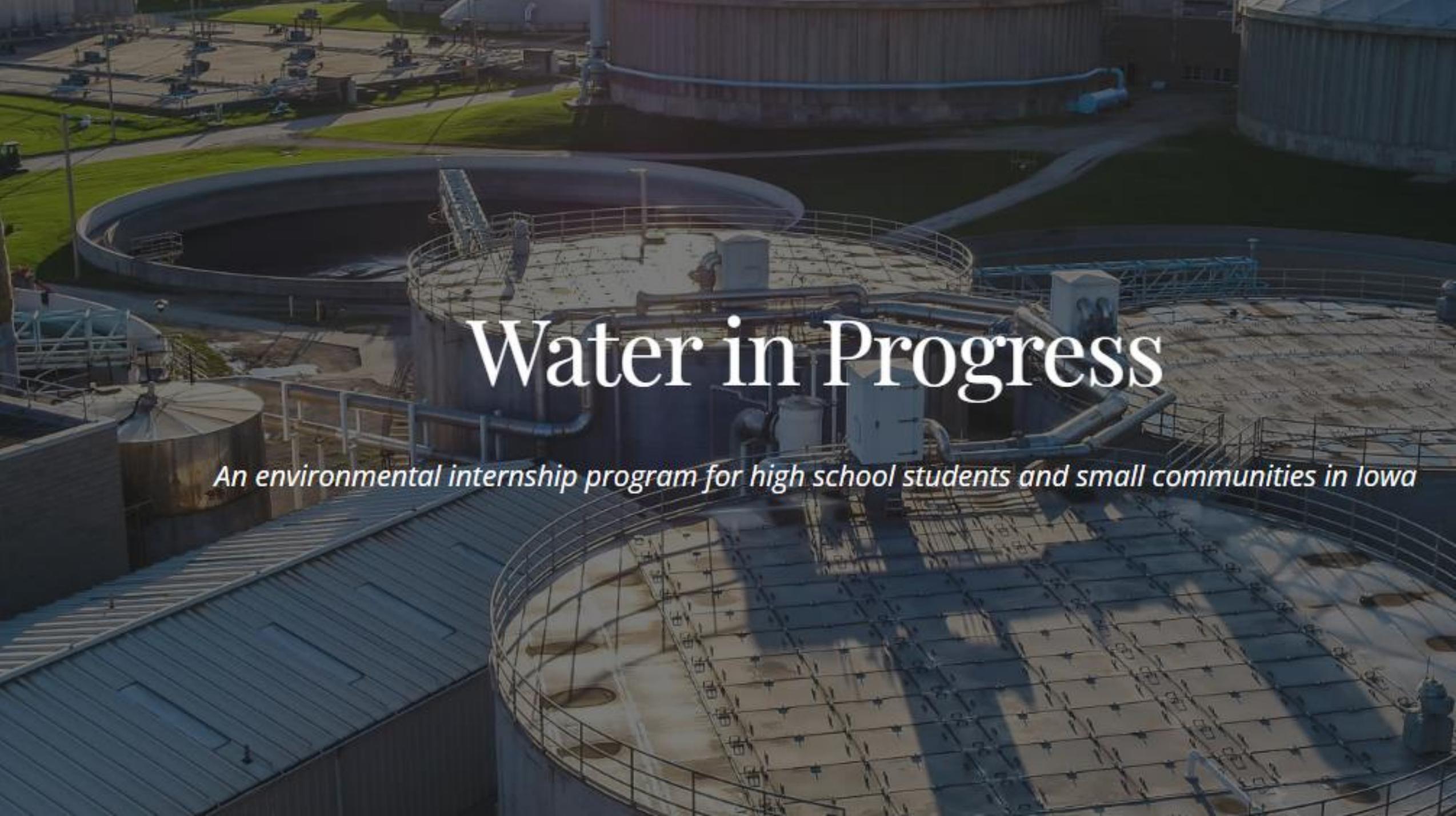


# Your Community

Connection to home

Intrinsic value of serving community

Public health



# Water in Progress

*An environmental internship program for high school students and small communities in Iowa*

# How to Start



# Work in Water Program

- Classroom presentations
- Field Trips
- Internships



[wichita.edu/workinwater](http://wichita.edu/workinwater)



# Resources for Utilities

- Templates
- Suggested Internship Guidelines
- Internship Sample Schedule
- Editable Flyers for Students, Utilities, and Guidance Counselors
- Links to Websites
- Video Testimonials of Internship hosts and their Interns

[efcnetwork.org](http://efcnetwork.org)



# Recruit Decision Makers

- Is everyone onboard?
- Is there appropriate work for an intern?
- Who will train on which tasks?
- Age requirement?
- How long will the intern serve?
- How are we going to fund this?





Show off your job!

# Have an Informational Meeting



The Goal



Layout your  
Timeline

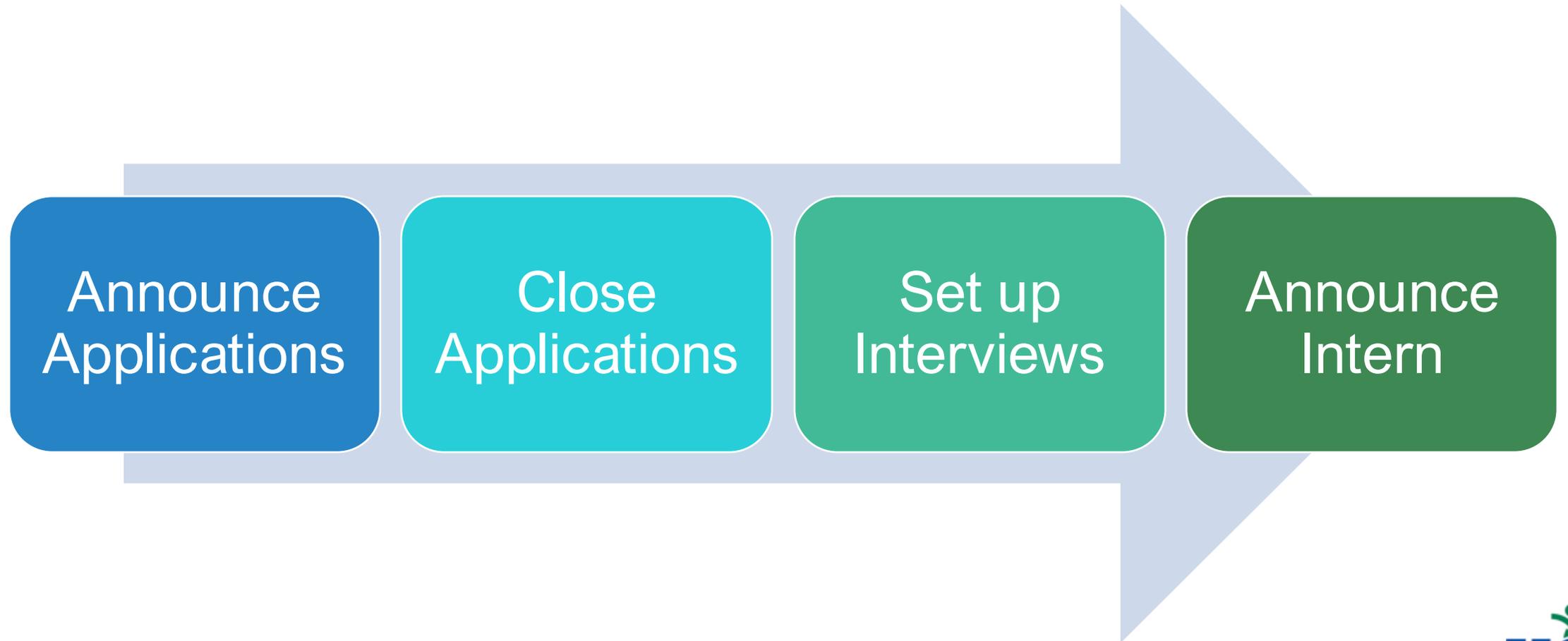


Deliver the  
Details



Open it up for  
questions

# Applications and Interview Process





**CELEBRATE!**

# Training & Safety Orientation

## Sample Internship Schedule

*This schedule can be adapted to fit any length of internship program.*

### **Week 1 – Orientation**

- Organization Structure – Mentor, Supervisors, Administration, and Governing Body
- Organization Standard Policies & Procedures (phone, email, internet, etc.)
- Safety Training

### **Week 1-4 – Water Treatment and Distribution**

- System Tour
- Source Water, Treatment, Storage, Distribution

### **Week 5-8 – Wastewater Treatment and Collections**

- System Tour

### **Week 9 – Management / Administration**

- Utility Management ABC – Accounting, Billing, Customer Service
- City Council Meeting

# Keep them safe and busy!

- ✓ Meter reading
- ✓ Sludge judging
- ✓ Hydrant flushing
- ✓ Updating SOPs and O&M manuals
- ✓ Weed eating and Mowing
- ✓ Pump, motor or equipment oil changes and maintenance
- ✓ Social Media and Communications



# Keeping Appearances Neat



## **EFC's Work in Water Program**

Interns actively participate in maintenance and increasing the longevity of equipment

# Keeping Appearances Neat



## EFC's Work in Water Program

Interns understand the importance of knowing the condition of a utility's assets.

# Funding Your Intern

- ✓ The “experience plan”
- ✓ The “sponsorship plan”
- ✓ Have excess funds?
- ✓ A “succession planning” surcharge.
- ✓ A Rates/Finance Assessment



# Succession Planning Surcharge





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WICHITA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

**ENVIRONMENTAL  
FINANCE CENTER**

# Thank you

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