

# Guidebook For Collaborative Research Internships



Fourth Edition - April 2006





***The mission of the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre is to conduct and facilitate health promotion research that influences policy and contributes to the health and well-being of Atlantic Canadians.***

***The Coastal Communities Network (CCN) of Nova Scotia provides a forum to encourage dialogue and share information that promotes the survival and enhancement of our rural and coastal communities.***

***The goal of the Rural Communities Impacting Policy (RCIP) Project is to increase the ability of rural communities and organizations in Nova Scotia to access and use social science research in order to influence and develop policy that contributes to the health and sustainability of communities. RCIP is a 5-year research project (2001-2006), funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and co-sponsored by the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre at Dalhousie University and the Coastal Communities Network of Nova Scotia.***

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## Introduction

This guidebook has stood the test of time. Although the language and formatting has been updated and some new sections have been added to this fourth edition, the core material of the original guidebook basically remains the same.

### **Rural Communities Impacting Policy Project A Community-University Research Alliance**

Every day, rural communities in Nova Scotia are presented with social, economic and environmental challenges. Many of these challenges are best addressed at the local level by individuals or community organizations who understand the dynamics affecting their communities. Using research to address these community challenges is an effective strategy that is often used by groups wanting to change policy. That said, having the skills needed to access, analyze and use research information (or knowing where to get the skills) is important.

In 1999, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) started funding community-university research alliances that demonstrated a desire and ability to work together to address the social, economic and environmental challenges faced by communities. A collaborative research internship is one way for communities to achieve their research goals.

The objectives of the SSHRC-funded Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) program are:

- Promote new research and training in areas of importance for the social, cultural or economic development of communities;
- Promote the sharing of knowledge, resources and expertise between universities and organizations in the community;
- Strengthen community decision-making and problem-solving abilities;
- Enhance the education and employability of students by means of research internships that build their knowledge, expertise and work skills through hands-on research in real-life settings.

The Rural Communities Impacting Policy Project (RCIP) is one of the community-research alliances funded by SSHRC (2001-2006). RCIP is a partnership between the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre at Dalhousie University and the Coastal Communities Network in Nova Scotia.

The goal of RCIP is to increase the capacity of rural communities and organizations in Nova Scotia to access, use and produce social science research in order to influence and develop policy that contributes to the health and sustainability of rural communities.

Two of the RCIP objectives include:

- Increase the capacity of rural organizations in Nova Scotia to access, use and produce social science research in order to influence and develop policy that contributes to the health and sustainability of rural communities;

- Provide unique and diverse training opportunities for students to learn about rural life issues through student internships.

## **Collaborative Research Internships**

As part of its education and training component, RCIP supported collaborative research internships in rural communities in Nova Scotia between 2002 and 2005. For example, in 2002, student interns worked on research related to: Economic diversification through culture (the Stan Rogers Festival in Canso); African Nova Scotian communities; the effects of school closures on rural communities and, the barriers to women's economic self-sufficiency in rural communities.

In the RCIP experience, the collaborative approach to research (especially one involving students) has proved most effective at “making research work” once it is completed. In other words, having different stakeholders participate in the research process greatly increases the chances of research findings being understood and used in community and regional planning and decision-making processes. In the academic field, the effective use of research findings is sometimes called “knowledge translation” or “knowledge mobilization.”

## **The Guidebook**

The sections of this guidebook outline ideas for conducting a successful collaborative research internship - taken from the RCIP experience and elsewhere. The Appendices include more detailed information and resources from the RCIP Student Intern Program which could be used as a basis for developing other research internship programs.

# What is an Internship and What are the Benefits of Becoming Involved?

## What is an internship?

An intern is a 'trainee' working to gain knowledge and practical experience. In the RCIP internships, students conducted research on issues related to a rural community that were also relevant to the students' field of study.

## What are the benefits of becoming involved?

Everyone benefits! Communities, academics, governments and students can all benefit from this experience.



### For Communities



- Interns can use the knowledge they have gained through their academic experience to help individuals and organizations gather information and evidence about the challenges facing their communities.
- Academic resources are directed toward improving the health and sustainability of rural communities.

### For Academics



- Students are able to do applied research in rural communities.
- The reputation of an academic institution as a source of qualified and highly skilled workers will be heightened in rural communities.
- The relationship between rural communities and the academic institution will be improved, enabling future collaboration.
- Academic institutions can increase the awareness and appeal of their institution to prospective students.

## **For Government**



- Community-based evidence allows governments to make more informed public policy decisions.
- Partnerships and regular communication between community, government and academic institutions builds trust and reaffirms the democratic purpose of government (by the people, for the people).
- Community participation in research for policy change strengthens local knowledge & confidence.

## **For Students**

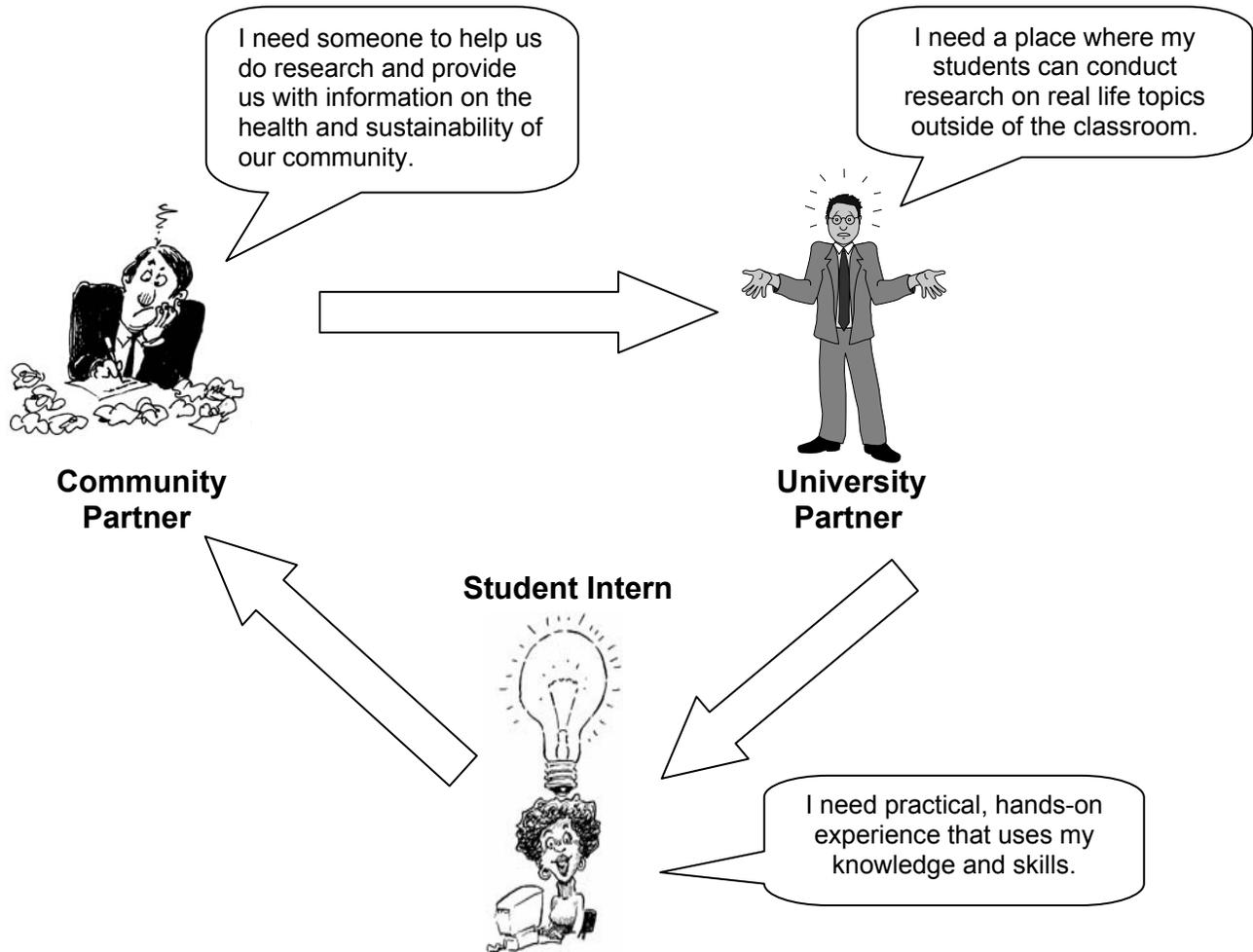


- ☞ Students can apply their knowledge and classroom skills in real-life research situations.
- ☞ The internship provides an opportunity to work in a professional environment, taking on professional roles and developing professional behavior and work habits.
- ☞ Students make community contacts and gain knowledge about the issues and challenges communities face.
- ☞ Interns are often part of working towards the development of public policy - a useful and rewarding learning experience.
- ☞ The internship may provide a springboard for future academic work or future employment.



## How Many People Does it Take to Make an Internship Work?

At minimum, it takes three people to make an internship work. They are the student, the community partner and the academic partner. Also including a government partner makes sense if the research has relevance to public policy development.



**A good internship meets the needs of everyone involved! Each member plays an important role and helps ensure the needs of other participants are being met.**

## Making an Internship Work: The Community Partner



The community partner is an individual or organization in the community that oversees the internship - often providing the intern with a workplace, research ideas and guidance. If the community partner is an organization, one person from the organization needs to act as the **Community Advisor**, offering the intern support and advice.



### What can the Community Advisor do to make sure the internship is successful?

- Work with the Academic Advisor and the intern to develop a work plan;
- Provide a communication link between the community partner and the academic partner;
- Discuss and coordinate administration issues; (e.g. scheduling, workload, report deadlines)
- Provide a safe and supportive atmosphere for the intern;
- Provide the intern with access to information, people and tools needed for the project;
- Provide feedback to the intern on their work in the community;
- Help socialize the intern to the community;
- If the community partner is an organization, the Advisor can orient the intern to the different aspects of the organization (e.g. historical developments, goals and objectives, range of services provided, operating procedures, service area, administrative structure, linkages to other services);
- Assist the intern with finding accommodation within the community.

**Can you think of more ways a Community Advisor can contribute to the success of an internship?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Making an Internship Work: The Academic Partner



The academic partner is usually a department or centre within an academic institution that provides salary and research support for the intern. One person from the department or centre needs to act as the **Academic Advisor**, offering the intern support and advice.



### What can the Academic Advisor do to ensure the internship is successful?

- Work with the Community Advisor and the intern to develop a work plan;
- Provide a communication link between the academic partner and the community partner;
- Assist and advise the intern in the research process;
- If the internship is based in a rural community, conduct at least one site visit with the Community Advisor and the intern to ensure that research objectives are being met;
- Be available for communication with the intern and community members, should the need arise;
- Ensure that all institutional requirements are met for the internship (e.g. ethics committee approval);
- Ensure that research standards are met;
- Ensure that results are communicated to the community in a timely manner.

**Can you think of more ways an Academic Advisor can contribute to the success of an internship?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Making an Internship Work: The Student Intern



**Student Intern:** A student practicing their research skills in the field. This student also has a desire to work in rural communities and learn about the issues surrounding rural health and sustainability.



**What can the Intern do to ensure that the internship is successful?**

- Work with the Academic and Community Advisors to develop and carry out a work plan;
- Be well prepared, responsible and enthusiastic;
- Ask questions and communicate frequently with Advisors;
- Assume the main responsibility for carrying out the work plan;
- Produce a report that meets the standards required by the academic and community partners;
- Dress and behave in a manner consistent with a professional role in the organization or community;
- Comply with the code of professional and ethical conduct required by the academic and community partners.

**Can you think of more ways an Intern can contribute to the success of an internship?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## COMMUNITY / ACADEMIC COLLABORATION

In community-academic research collaboration, the intern is at the interface of the community and the academic institution. Community-academic partnerships can sometimes be challenging and interns need to be aware of what collaboration means when getting started on an internship.

- Working collaboratively means working non-hierarchically
- Conflict Resolution
  - Research teams should develop mechanisms for resolving conflict before conflict occurs
- Authorship
  - Appropriate acknowledgement must be given for all contributions
  - At the outset, team members should agree on an authorship policy that is acceptable to every member
- Data Ownership and Access
  - Must respect confidentiality of research participants
  - Team members with personal or bureaucratic relationships with research participants are usually not permitted to view any data
- Dissemination
  - Research teams are responsible for disseminating their work in different ways for different kinds of audiences

**Collaborative research means a democratic system of decision-making, many rewards and reasons for team membership and a commitment to working through differences until a consensus is reached.**

Source: Muriel McQueen Ferguson Centre for Family Violence Research  
*Guidelines for the Conduct of Collaborative Research* (draft, 1996)

## Research Project Overview



The purpose of a brief (two-page) **Project Overview** is to summarize ideas about what will be done during the internship. To effectively communicate ideas it's important to remember to express yourself clearly so everyone will understand.

### Why is a Project Overview a good idea?

- **Organizes ideas**
- **Helps focus on the relevant issues**
- **Allows others to look over ideas and make suggestions**
- **Provides a starting point for discussion when developing a work plan**
- **Provides something that can be shared with other interested parties**

### What should a Project Overview contain?



1. **Background** – Description of the issue to be addressed
2. **Methods** – How to collect and analyze information on this issue
3. **Product** – What the group will have at the end of the project
4. **Contributions and Benefits** – How each partner can contribute and benefit from this project

## 1. Background

Briefly explain the issue. Give some background on the community and why the issue needs to be addressed.

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## 2. Methods

What can or should be done to address this issue?

- What main questions need to be answered?

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- How can these questions be answered? (e.g., interviews, surveys, observation, looking through records)

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- Who needs to be contacted in order to get the information needed? Whose perspectives are needed?

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### 3. Product

What will the final product of the project be? What does the group intend to do with it?

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### 4. Contributions and Benefits

What can each person bring to the project? What will each person get out of the project?

- **Community**

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- **Academic**

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- **Intern**

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- **Government (if appropriate)**

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## The Work Plan

The Intern, Community Advisor and the University Advisor will work together to create a work plan for the research project, including objectives and a timeline.

**A good work plan is one of the most important elements of a successful internship.**

### What is a Work Plan?

A work plan is a document that outlines the project tasks, who is responsible for each task and a timeline to help keep things on track. The work plan also includes a communication plan and evaluation activities to make sure everything is running smoothly.



A work plan clearly outlines objectives and tasks that need to be completed, who will be assigned particular tasks and indicators for determining the success of the internship.

The work plan must include the perspectives and objectives of the various parties to the internship. This means that each must understand what they want to achieve and agree on what is “do-able”.

Example: The community partner may want to document the role of wharves in coastal communities - ultimately in order to generate government funds for wharf maintenance. The student intern might want to help the community partner achieve this goal, and at the same time need to collect information or learn about a similar but different rural issue in order to write a thesis or term paper. By working together, project partners can help achieve combined needs.

**Although a Work Plan should have a fixed schedule and structure, it is also important to allow time to get to know a community organization and a community. The intern may benefit and learn from reading local papers, or attending staff, committee or town council meetings.**

## Why is a Work Plan a Good Idea?



- ☛ Provides clear direction to the intern, academic and community partners;
- ☛ Clarifies roles and responsibilities;
- ☛ Forms a common frame of reference for communication;
- ☛ Provides a basis for evaluation of the internship.

### COMPONENTS OF A WORK PLAN

#### 1. Link Objectives to Activities

#### 2. Research Activities

- ☛ Methodology
- ☛ Tools
- ☛ Sample/Target Population
- ☛ Data collection procedures
- ☛ Analysis
- ☛ Interpretation

#### 3. Project Management

- ☛ Partner and staff contributions
- ☛ Timeline
- ☛ Communications

#### 4. Evaluation

#### 5. Dissemination

Source: L.Langille (2002) Developing a Comprehensive Workplan, Workshop for the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation.

## What Can Be Achieved With a Comprehensive Work Plan?

- Enables the reader to visualize the implementation of the project
- Illustrates the likelihood that the goals of the project will be achieved
- Clarifies partner roles and responsibilities
- Clarifies what resources will be needed
- Provides a framework to coordinate the project
- Helps with preparation of ethics submission

Source: L.Langille (2002) Developing a Comprehensive Workplan, Workshop for the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation.

### **Communications in the Workplan**

- **Setting up a communications framework is essential for frequent contact between the intern and Advisors.**
- **Advisors must encourage weekly contact with the intern.**
- **Advisors must promote an open-door policy with the intern. This lets the intern ask questions and express concerns at any point during the internship.**
- **Advisors must arrange regular contact with one another during the internship.**

## Steps for Writing a Work Plan



Writing a work plan can be a challenging task. Use the following steps to get the group thinking about the project, how to tackle it and what the project work plan might look like.



### 1. Background: What is the issue to be addressed?

Provide a brief description of the community and/or community organization and the rationale for the project (based on the project overview).

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### 2. Project Goal(s)

The first thing to do is determine the goal of the project. All parties have individual aspirations, but it is the project goal that everyone must be working toward wholeheartedly.

In one sentence, write the goal of the project in the space below. Make the goal a specific statement about what the group wants to achieve through the internship.

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### 3. Objectives

Objectives define what will be accomplished during the internship. Objectives break down a goal(s) into short-term, measurable and specific activities or tasks.

- Each goal should be broken down into specific objectives. For example, if the **goal** of the research project is to determine the benefits of an annual cultural event, the **objectives** to reach this goal might be:
  1. Measure the economic benefits of the event;
  2. Measure the social benefits of the event;
  3. Measure the drawbacks to having the event;
  4. Report findings to the community and any other interested parties.

The goal of the project, along with its objectives and tasks should strive to meet the criteria laid out by the "**SMARTER**" acronym:

1. **Specific** - any task and its importance must be easily understood by everyone
2. **Measurable** – all objectives need to have a number of specific tasks, so that performance is measurable (e.g. number of interviews conducted)
3. **Acceptable** - all members must be comfortable with the goal, objectives and tasks
4. **Realistic** - the goal must be within the capabilities of the group
5. **Timely** - the goal and objectives need to be achievable within the timeline
6. **Economically Feasible** - the goal must fit within the funds available
7. **Rewarding** - all members must benefit from reaching the goal.

## **Objectives Worksheet**

In the space provided, specify the objectives needed to guide the group towards completion of your goal.

**Objective 1 –**

**Objective 2 -**

**Objective 3 -**

**Objective 4 -**

**Objective 5 -**

# Check & Compare



← CHECKS GO FIRST TO YOUR SELLING POINTS.

## 4. Tasks

Decide what actions need to be taken to meet the project objectives.

Example: If we follow the cultural event example from page 24, the first objective is to measure the economic benefits of the event. The tasks associated with this objective (including who will carry out the tasks and how long they will take) are listed on the next page in a sample workplan.

### Create a List of Tasks

First, brainstorm a list of tasks needed to complete the objectives. Then, figure out how long each task will take. Finally, set up a chart listing the tasks in the order they will occur.

**Appendix 1** contains blank work plans. Use them to create task lists for each of the objectives related to a research internship.

## 5. Timeline

A timeline indicates when objectives will be completed and how much time will be given to each task.



- \* A timeline can be changed as goals and objectives are met or modified.
- \* It is important to allow time for the ethics approval process, which is discussed on pages 29-30.
- \* When developing your work plan, be realistic about your timeline. Remember, it often takes longer to complete a task than you might think.

## Sample Work Plan

<b>PROJECT: BENEFITS OF CULTURAL EVENTS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES</b>			
<b>Objective 1: Measure the economic impact of holding a cultural event</b>			
<b>Tasks</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>How Long?</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Examine income statements and balance sheets of the festival committee  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contact the accountant for the festival</li> <li>▪ Determine who will pick up the information if needed</li> </ul>	Intern  Community Advisor  Community Advisor	One week  One day  One day	Accountant on vacation for one week; Contact next Tuesday
Face to face interviews with 15 business owners  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop interview questions</li> <li>▪ Pilot questions</li> <li>▪ Make changes to questions</li> <li>▪ Set up meeting times</li> <li>▪ Conduct interviews</li> <li>▪ Analyze data</li> <li>▪ Interpret and summarize results</li> </ul>	Intern  Intern and Community Advisor  Intern Intern Intern Intern Intern  Intern, Community & Academic Advisors	Two weeks  Three days  One day One day One day Four days Four days  Two days	Some seasonal business owners may not be available.
Mailed survey sent out to all businesses in the community  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop survey</li> <li>▪ Pilot Test Survey</li> <li>▪ Make changes to survey</li> <li>▪ Administer survey</li> <li>▪ Analyze data</li> <li>▪ Interpret and summarize data</li> </ul>	Intern  Intern and Community Advisor  Intern Intern Intern  Intern, Community & Academic Advisors	One week  One day One day Three weeks Four days  Two days	- Make the appointment to meet with the Chair of the Chamber of Commerce well in advance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meet with the Chair of the Chamber of Commerce</li> </ul>	Intern & Community Advisor	One day	

## Communication

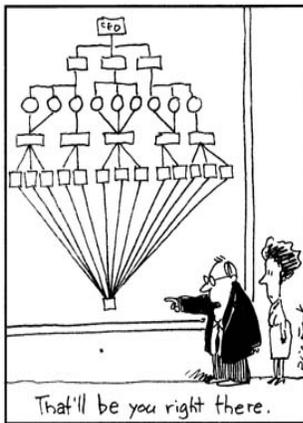
### Are you all speaking the same language?

Good communication is essential to ensure a successful internship where everyone benefits and all needs are met. But sometimes things get in the way of clear communication.

### Barriers to Effective Communication



**Language:** Think about the words and language used in different settings. Because different people may interpret what is said and how it is said in different ways, choosing how to communicate is vital. Just as it is important to dress, conduct and behave in a manner that fits certain surroundings, it is equally important to take into account how the academic and community settings differ in language and ways of communicating.



**Unequal Power:** Some members involved in an internship may have more power than others due to experience, knowledge or hierarchical standing. In particular, an intern might think that they wield little power or no power at all. An effective internship depends on all members being able to speak up and share their feelings and collaborate on ideas.

**Use the workplan to facilitate communication!**



**Different Perspectives:** The parties in the internship may come from very different cultures and backgrounds, resulting in different points of view. Everyone must work on accepting these differences and understand how different perspectives are ultimately helpful to the project. Everyone needs to work at understanding how these different points of view can be made useful.



**Lack of Communication:** Regular communication is very important. Since the intern, academic and community partners might be separated by distance, it is important to set up a communications plan that takes into account the limited possibilities of face-to-face contact.

### **Communication is Key**

- **It's important for the intern to know that the Advisors always have their doors open for communication.**
- **Interns need feedback. Let them know if they're on the right track.**
- **Advisors need to be updated on the intern's progress. Is the intern encountering any problems?**
- **Advisors must be available to answer questions.**
- **Interns also need space. They won't learn if they aren't free to make mistakes.**

## Things That Could Go Wrong

Despite the best planning and intentions, sometimes things can go wrong. How we deal with these things will determine whether the internship is a success! Here are some examples of troubleshooting that may need to take place during the internship.

**It's important for the intern to remember that when they are working in a professional capacity toward any type of objective, keeping the project goal in mind is crucial.**



**Problem:** Work plan is not realistic.  
**Solution:** Revise goals, objectives and tasks as necessary.



**Problem:** Intern skills may not be advanced enough to carry out the research project.  
**Solution:** Provide training opportunities.  
Change tasks to match intern skills.



**Problem:** Lack of coordination between Academic and Community Advisors.  
**Solution:** Refer to workplan. Arrange a meeting or teleconference to discuss the problem.



**Problem:** The intern is not receiving enough support and guidance, or isn't being given enough independence.  
**Solution:** Adjust supervision as required by the intern.



## Evaluation



It is important that everyone knows how performance will be judged in the internship. This is especially important for the intern.

When the Community and Academic Advisors provide the intern with feedback in a timely manner it makes for a more valuable learning experience and avoid potential problems.

**By answering the following questions and incorporating the answers into the workplan, everyone will know how performance will be reviewed.**

### Community

- How will the community partner review the performance of the intern and the success of the project?

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### Academic

- How does the intern expect performance to be reviewed? What are the expectations of the academic institution?

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### Intern

- How will the intern be able to provide feedback on the internship experience?

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## Ethics



Ethical research is research that respects the confidentiality and privacy of research participants. In Canada, the guidelines for ethical research are laid out in the Tri-Council Policy Statement - a joint publication of the Medical Research Council of Canada, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Academic institutions (and increasingly, other organizations) require that all research conducted by its faculty, staff and students needs to be submitted to its Research Ethics Board for approval.

For more information on research ethics, go to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* at:  
[http://www.ncehr-cnerh.org/english/code\\_2/](http://www.ncehr-cnerh.org/english/code_2/)

- ✓ Three key concepts in research ethics are:
  1. **Free and Informed Consent** - all participants in the research must know the nature of the research and freely agree to be a participant. This consent should be documented in written form.
  2. **Confidentiality** - when personal information is confided to a researcher, the researcher has a duty not to share the information with others without the person's free and informed consent.
  3. **Causing No Harm** - the research process must cause no harm to the participants.

### The University Ethics Approval Process

- ☞ This process can take 4-6 weeks, so be prepared!
- ☞ It is the responsibility of the intern and Academic Advisor to prepare the ethics proposal with input from the community partner.
- ☞ It is important to find out early on if the research project requires ethical approval. If the project involves research with human subjects, it probably does.

## RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Every Research Participant Has the Right:

1. Not to be deceived about the nature of the research or about who is sponsoring and carrying it out
2. Not to be coerced in any way to participate in the research
3. Not to be interviewed or researched by persons whose positions enable them to exercise direct or indirect power over them, or by persons who are closely associated with persons who exercise direct or indirect power over them
4. To cease participation in the research mid-stream and/or to ask to have the researcher's tape recorder shut off
5. To be informed about the uses to which their information will be put, how that information will be stored, and who will have access to it
6. To keep their confidentiality and anonymity intact
7. To withdraw from the study
8. To be debriefed after their participation in the study, and to be helped to find appropriate counseling if their participation has caused them distress
9. To know the name(s) of the person(s) who interviewed them, and how to contact them
10. To receive information about the progress of the research and about how to access copies of reports

Source: Muriel McQueen Ferguson Centre for Family Violence Research  
*Guidelines for the Conduct of Collaborative Research* (draft, 1996)



## Resources

It is important to determine who will supply the resources needed to complete the project. The following is a checklist of resources that may be needed and some space to document who will supply them:

<input type="checkbox"/> Office supplies
<input type="checkbox"/> Office space
<input type="checkbox"/> Accommodations
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation for the intern to carry out project tasks
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation or child care for research participants
<input type="checkbox"/> Printing/Copying charges
<input type="checkbox"/> Dissemination of final products
<input type="checkbox"/> Salary for the intern

***The most important resources in the Internship are the people involved in the project! This guidebook doesn't cover every detail of student research internships, but we hope it will provide a good foundation for community-academic collaboration. No two internships will be exactly the same, just as no two students, academic institutions or communities are the same. However, with the common goal of enhancing and sustaining rural communities, an internship can be an exciting and rewarding experience for everyone.***











## Appendix 2 - RCIP Student Intern Program Description<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Rural Communities Impacting Policy (RCIP) is a Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) Project (2001-2006) funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. It is a partnership between the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre (AHPRC) at Dalhousie University and the Coastal Communities Network. The goal of the RCIP Project is to increase the capacity of rural communities and organizations in Nova Scotia to access, use, and produce social science research in order to influence and develop policy that contributes to the health and sustainability of rural communities. As part of its education and training component, RCIP created student research internships to take place in rural communities in Nova Scotia.

### Community-Based Research for Policy Change

The Summer Student Internship Program has been offered as part of the RCIP Project since 2002. In its first two years (2002-2003), community sponsors were invited to submit research project proposals. Four proposals were chosen each year and an intern assigned to each. In these first two years, students were primarily at the undergraduate level.

In 2004, the third year of the internship program, three interns were hired to work on policy change strategies identified at the Rural Policy Forum in February 2004. Project teams were developed for each research topic and partners recruited from community, government and academic sectors. The success of these projects was measured by the degree to which the research conducted by the interns played a role in policy development or change. In 2005, the same approach was used. For 2004 and 2005, students were primarily at the graduate level.

### The Internship Program - General Notes

It is important to note that in 2002 and 2003, student interns lived in the rural communities where the research was being conducted. In 2004 and 2005, student interns worked out of the AHPRC office in Halifax and traveled to the communities they were working with. There were pros and cons to each approach and they are noted in RCIP reports produced at the end of each internship year. It is also important to say that it was extremely challenging to keep academic partners involved in the process - research needs to be conducted about the reasons why this occurred. Lastly, it is important to emphasize that the intern program evolved over the four years and although each year had its successes and challenges, the 2005 program reflected the most up-to-date changes based on all previous recommendations adopted by the RCIP Student Training Work Group.

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<sup>1</sup> The RCIP community workshop about 'using research to influence policy' heavily informed the training sessions for student interns and project partners. It is called: *Doing Our Homework: Social Science Research as a Tool for Policy Change - A Workshop Guidebook for Communities*. Available online at: <http://www.ruralnovascotia.ca/tacklebox/default.asp?mnu=8>

## **The Internship Program - 2005**

Each intern was assigned to work on a selected topic with a Research Project Team. Internships lasted sixteen weeks from the last week of April to the third week of August - although students and partners were often engaged into the fall with RCIP staff in final editing and review of research reports. One of the individuals on the team acted as the designated lead partner and was the liaison between the intern and the team members. With this in mind, interns also communicated regularly with team members (Teams always included at least one RCIP staff member). Pre-set team meetings included a pre-internship Partner Day at the beginning of the internship during Student Orientation Week, a Mid-Point meeting during the summer and a Wrap-Up meeting in late August where the findings were presented and strategies for communication and policy change were put into action. Project teams also met informally as needed.

### **Partner Day**

At this meeting (mid-April) interested community, academic and government partners gathered to begin creating the policy change research projects that the interns would be working on in the summer.

### **Orientation Week**

The Internships began with one week of orientation about conducting research in rural communities. The orientation program focused on:

- Building the Foundation for Policy Change
- Research and Ethics
- Working in the Community
- Mobilizing Knowledge for Policy Change
- Working with Community, Government and Academic Partners

Members of the RCIP Student Training Work Group and RCIP staff provided facilitation for the sessions. A curriculum was been developed for each component of the orientation week - largely following suggestions from the *Guidebook for Collaborative Research Internships* and *Doing Our Homework: Social Science Research as a Tool for Policy Change - A Workshop Guidebook for Communities*.

### **Research Ethics Approval**

Research proposals were subject to approval by the Research Ethics Review Board at Dalhousie University. Interns submitted detailed plans - drawing on expertise of RCIP and AHPRC staff and the research project team. In a few cases, additional ethics reviews were required by other research partners [e.g. District Health Authorities, other universities or community partners (e.g. Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association)].

### **Data Collection**

The research projects used a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods. Some data were collected from secondary sources (e.g. Statistics Canada, RCIP Rural Report and Nova Scotia Community Counts). This work was usually done while waiting for ethics

approval. Ethics-dependant data collection occurred during late June and July. Interns visited, and in some cases lived in, many rural community locations for data collection.

### **Mid-Point Meeting**

Research project teams and interested community, academic and government individuals gathered to discuss the progress of the research.

### **Data Analysis and Report Writing**

Interns were provided with a half-day workshop in late July on data analysis and report-writing. Ideally, the research outcomes (e.g. report) were completed by the end of the internship in late August when findings were presented to the project team members at the Wrap-up Meeting. As indicated earlier, students and partners were often engaged into the fall with RCIP staff in final editing and review of research reports.

### **Wrap-Up Meeting**

Interns presented their findings to research project teams and interested community, academic and government individuals. With the research wrapping up, strategies for communication and policy change were put into action.

### **Evaluation**

There are several components to the evaluation plan for the Internship Program:

- Intern evaluations of the training program
- Mid-point meeting with interns, community partners and RCIP staff
- Wrap-up meeting of interns, community partners and RCIP staff
- Individual intern evaluations
- Community partner evaluations
- RCIP staff evaluations

An evaluation report was compiled annually by RCIP staff for review by the RCIP Student Training Work Group. Any changes to the program were made based on these evaluations.

### **Knowledge Mobilization**

The research projects conducted by RCIP Interns were part of policy change strategies that included community engagement and knowledge mobilization components. The research reports were presented to the project partners and a wider audience based on a communication plan developed by each project team addressing the following questions:

- Who needs to see this research?
- What form should it be in?
- What opportunities are available to present this work?

Our experience has been that research results were most useful when people interested in the research findings were involved in the research process from the beginning. This

was especially true for people in government who are involved in policy development and implementation related to the topics being studied.

### **The Future of the RCIP Student Internship Program Model**

The RCIP Student Internship Program concluded in 2005. It has been such a successful program that the RCIP partners, AHPRC and CCN, want to find future funding to continue these types of internships. Suggestions include: Finding academic partners in other provinces who may be interested in the training as a stand-alone model; including the concept of an internship program in future research proposals by AHPRC and CCN; and, expanding the program beyond the spring and summer semester.

Based on the RCIP experience, future internship programs need to provide opportunities for community-generated research topics (2002-2003) and research generated through policy and research forums (2004-2005). Both methods for topic generation have an important contribution to make - ultimately empowering rural communities to use research for influencing policies that affect their sustainability.

**RCIP Student Training - Partner Day Agenda**  
**April 13, 2005**  
**Fisherman's Cove - Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia**

**Wednesday April 13th, 2005      Planning for Research and Policy Change**

*This Partner Day is open to all community, academic and government partners that will be working with the RCIP Student Interns. Pre-register with Barb Kehoe at 902-494-2240 or [barb.kehoe@dal.ca](mailto:barb.kehoe@dal.ca)*

**Trainers:** Malcolm Shookner, Todd Barr, Lynn Langille, Ishbel Munro, Andrea Caven

8:30 to 9:00	Continental Breakfast	
9:00 to 9:15	<b>Overview of agenda for the day</b>	[Malcolm]
9:15 to 10:00	<b>Elements of a Successful Internship</b>	[Lynn & Ishbel]
10:00 to 10:15	BREAK	
10:15 to 10:30	<b>Intro: Creating a Strategy and Work Plan</b>	[Todd, Andrea & Malcolm]
10:30 to 12:00	<b>Creating a Policy Change Strategy</b>	[Todd, Andrea & Malcolm] [small groups]
12:00 to 1:00	LUNCH	
1:00 to 2:15	<b>Creating a Project Work Plan</b>	[small groups]
2:15 to 2:30	BREAK	
2:30 to 3:45	<b>Presentation of work plans</b> <b>Collaboration strategies</b> <b>Common Themes</b>	[Ishbel] [Discussion] [Discussion]
3:45 to 4:00	<b>Next Steps</b> Internship Training Week Tools for Community Research workshop Mid-point meeting Data analysis and report writing workshop Final meeting	[Malcolm]
4:00	ADJOURNMENT	



# **Rural Communities Impacting Policy Project**

## **Student Internship Training Week Agenda**

**April 25 – 29, 2005**

**Dauphinee Inn, Shore Club Rd., Hubbards, NS**

### **The Rural Communities Impacting Policy Project**

The goal of the Rural Communities Impacting Policy (RCIP) Project is to increase the ability of rural communities and organizations in Nova Scotia to access and use social science research in order to influence and develop policy that contributes to the health and sustainability of communities. RCIP is a 5-year research project (2001-2006) funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and co-sponsored by the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre at Dalhousie University and the Coastal Communities Network.

### **Training Week**

#### ***Part of the RCIP Internship Program***

This training week has been designed for RCIP student interns and their community and academic partners who are beginning a four-month policy change research internship.

### **Training Week**

#### ***Available to non-RCIP students and their community and academic partners***

This training week has also been designed for academic-community groups who are doing collaborative work or simply are interested in learning more. Students are invited to attend all week.



**RCIP Student Internship Training Week Agenda**  
**April 25 – 29, 2005**  
**Dauphinee Inn, Shore Club Rd., Hubbards, NS**

**Monday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005      Building the Foundation for Policy Change**

**Trainers:** Malcolm Shookner, Todd Barr, Lynn Langille

8:30 to 9 AM	Breakfast	
9:00 to 9:30	<b>Introductions</b>	[Malcolm]
	<b>Distribute and review Internship package</b>	[Todd]
	<b>Group activity: Getting to know each other</b>	[Todd]
9:30 to 10:00	<b>Introduction to RCIP Project and Project Partners</b>	[Malcolm]
	<b>Overview of RCIP Project</b>	[Malcolm]
	<b>Review of Training Agenda</b>	[Todd]
10:00 to 10:30	<b>Science Shops Presentation</b>	[Lynn]
	<b>Our own Science Shop in Nova Scotia</b>	
10:30 to 10:45	BREAK	
10:45 to 11:15	<b>Elements of a successful internship</b>	[Lynn]
11:15 to 12:00	<b>Healthy and sustainable communities</b> - presentation and discussion	[Malcolm]
12:00 to 1:00	LUNCH	
1:00 to 3:00	<b>Introduction to Policy and Policy Change</b>	[Todd]
3:00 – 3:30	BREAK	
3:30 to 4:15	<b>Rural Policy Forum and RCIP Policy Projects</b>	[Malcolm]
4:15 to 4:30	<b>Wrap-up</b>	[Malcolm]
4:30	Adjournment	

**Tuesday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005 Research and Ethics**

**Trainers:** Todd Barr, Lynn Langille, Malcolm Shookner

8:30 to 9 AM Breakfast

9:00 to 9:15 **Overview of agenda for the day** [Malcolm]

9:15 to 10:30 **Research and Policy Change** [Todd]

10:30 to 10:45 BREAK

10:45 to 12:00 **Research and Policy Change (continued)**

12:00 to 1:00 LUNCH

1:00 to 2:30 **Social Science Research Methods** [Lynn]

2:30 to 3:00 **Research Ethics** [Lynn]

3:00 to 3:30 BREAK

3:30 to 4:15 **Writing a Research Ethics Proposal** [Lynn]

4:15 **Wrap-up** [Malcolm]

4:30 ADJOURNMENT

**Wednesday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2005 Working in the Community**

**Trainers:** Jim Mahone, Ishbel Munro, Wendy Robichaud, Malcolm Shookner, Todd Barr

8:30 to 9:00 Breakfast

9:00 to 9:15 **Overview of agenda for the day** [Malcolm]

9:15 to 10:45 **Understanding the Community Context** [Jim & Ishbel]

**Fieldwork in Rural Communities**  
**Group facilitation**  
**How to conduct a meeting**  
**Presentation Skills**

10:45 to 11:00 BREAK

11:00 to 12:00 **Using Community Resources** [Wendy]

- **Community Libraries**
- **C@P Sites**

12:00 to 1:00 LUNCH

1:00 to 4:30 **Understanding Community Context (cont'd)** [Jim & Ishbel]

**Leadership and team-building**  
**Diversity and Inclusion**  
**Community Conflict Resolution**

4:30 PM ADJOURNMENT

7:00 to 9:00 **Facilitation Practice** [Jim]

**Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005 Mobilizing Knowledge for Policy Change**

**Trainers:** Todd Barr, Ishbel Munro, Jim Mahone

8:30 to 9:00 Breakfast

9:00 to 9:15 **Overview of agenda for the day** [Todd]

9:15 to 10:30 **Intro to Working with Community and Academic Partners**  
[Ishbel & Todd]

10:30 to 10:45 BREAK

10:45 to 12:00 **Creating a Policy Change Strategy** [Todd]

12:00 to 1:00 LUNCH

1:00 to 2:45 **Creating a Policy Change Strategy (continued)** [Todd]

2:45 to 3:00 BREAK

3:00 to 4:00 **Creating a Work Plan (Action Plan)** [Ishbel & Todd ]

4:00 ADJOURNMENT

**Friday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005      Working with Community and Academic Partners**

**Trainers:** Malcolm Shookner, Todd Barr, Ishbel Munro, Lynn Langille

**Project Partners:** To be determined

8:30 to 9:00    Breakfast

9:00 to 10:00    **Introduction of Community & Academic Partners & Policy Change Projects**    [Malcolm & Ishbel]

**Roles, Expectations and Communication**    [Malcolm]

- RCIP staff
- Student interns
- Community & academic partners
- Project teams

10:00 to 12:00    **Development of project work plans and internal communications plan**    [Small groups]

BREAK at group discretion

12:00 to 1:00    LUNCH

1:00 – 2:30    **Presentation of work plans  
Collaboration strategies  
Common Themes**    [Todd]  
[Discussion]  
[Discussion]

2:30 - 3:00    **Next Steps**    [Malcolm]  
Tools for Community Research workshop  
Using Media  
Mid-point meeting  
Data analysis and report writing workshop  
Final meeting  
Evaluation

3:00 PM    Adjournment

**RCIP Student Intern Program - Midpoint Meeting**  
**Thursday July 7<sup>th</sup>, 10am to 3pm**  
**Nova Scotia Community College - Truro**  
**Forrester Hall, Room 226**

**Agenda**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>10-10:15</b>                         | <b>Introductions and overview of agenda - Malcolm</b>  |
| <b>10:15-12:00</b><br>(break as needed) | <b>Project team meetings: <i>Community Development, Retention of Health Professionals and Coastal Area Management</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Review of project to date: Research and policy change strategy</b></li><li>• <b>Discuss plans for August and beyond (including: The role of project partners)</b></li><li>• <b>Interns mid-point check-in: What's going well? What do we need to work on?</b></li></ul> |
| <b>12:00-1:00</b>                       | <b>LUNCH (provided)</b>  |
| <b>1:00-2:30</b>                        | <b>Large group meeting: Reports and discussion - Malcolm</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Project update: Research and policy change strategy</b></li><li>• <b>Plans for August and beyond (including: The role of project partners)</b></li><li>• <b>Interns mid-point check-in: What's going well? What do we need to work on?</b></li></ul>   |
| <b>2:30-3:00</b>                        | <b>Other Business</b>  |
| <b>3:00</b>                             | <b>Adjournment</b>   |

**RCIP Student Interns 2005  
Evaluation and Wrap-up Meeting – August 16, 2005  
Windsor Community Centre  
Windsor, NS**

**Agenda**

- 9:00 – 9:30 AM**      **Coffee, tea and muffins**
- 9:30 – 9:45**            **Introductions, overview of agenda, check-in (Malcolm)**
- 9:45 – 10:00**        **Action Planning for Policy Change - An Introduction**  
**(Todd)**
- 10:00 - 10:45**        **Research Projects - Team Meetings**  
- Findings and recommendations  
- Next steps for policy change  
*(break as needed)*
- 10:45 - 11:30**        **Research Projects - Large Group Reporting (Malcolm)**  
- Findings and recommendations  
- Next steps for policy change  
- Cross-cutting themes
- 11:30 - 12:00 PM**   **Program Evaluation - Interns Meet & Partners Meet**  
- Did the internship meet your needs & expectations?  
Why or why not?  
- Future program recommendations?  
*(break as needed)*
- 12:00 – 12:30**        **Program Evaluation - Large Group Reporting (Malcolm)**  
- Interns  
- Community Partners
- 12:30**                    **Special Presentations**
- LUNCH**
- Written Evaluations**

## **Appendix 3 - Sample Job Interview Questions: Student Intern**

### **Rural Communities Impacting Policy Project RCIP Student Interns – Rural Policy and Data Analyst Position**

#### **Interview Questions**

1. Why are you interested in this position?
2. What experience and qualifications would you bring to this work?
3. Describe your research experience.
4. Have you done any policy research or analysis?
5. Do you have any experience working with community groups?
6. What was one big challenge you faced in working with community groups?  
How did you overcome it?
7. Have you lived or worked in a rural community?
8. What do you plan to do once you've graduated?





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