



Georgia County Internship Program (GCIP)
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MEMORANDUM

To: County Commission Chairs, Sole Commissioners and CEO

From: Michele NeSmith, ACCG Research and Policy Development Director on behalf of the ACCG Civic Affairs Foundation

Re: Summer 2027 Georgia County Internship Program Grant Opportunities

Date: August 17, 2026

The ACCG Civic Affairs Foundation is a nonprofit organization established by ACCG in 2006. Its mission is to help strengthen Georgia counties by undertaking programs and projects that enhance citizen education, encourage civic engagement and community improvement, and promote participation in government.

The Foundation operates the Georgia County Internship Program (GCIP) which offers grants to counties to recruit and hire college and university students for county internships. These grants are made available thanks to grants and generous financial contributions of supportive donors from the private sector including individuals, corporations and businesses, and philanthropic foundations.

County internship grant opportunities are exclusively available for summer. The goal of the program is to enable counties to hire talented high school and college students and recent graduates for specific projects that will: benefit county government and its citizens; give students a chance to learn first-hand about the role of county government; provide practical work experiences students can use in the job market upon graduation; and inspire young people to consider a career in county government.

Any ACCG member county that has a substantive internship project proposal may apply for a grant. ***Applications must be submitted via the grant application portal at <https://gcip.civicaffairs.org>.*** Details about the grant application and internship requirements can be found in the enclosed Application Process and Guidelines. **Please read the entire grant application packet before submitting the application.**

There are three different internship opportunities available: 1) the general GCIP, which is open to all counties 2) Dr. Jim Kundell Environmental Management Internship Grant and 3) Georgia Bar Foundation Legal Internship Grant.

Counties that are interested in applying for a specialty grant such as the Kundell Grant or the Georgia Bar Foundation Grant will need to check that category on the grant application. An overview of these grants is provided below.

Kundell Environmental Management Grant

The Kundell Environmental Management Internship/Fellowship Program was established by the ACCG Civic Affairs Foundation in 2017 to honor the work of Dr. Jim Kundell. Dr. Kundell was a distinguished professor and highly awarded member of the University of Georgia faculty. During his lifetime, he made significant contributions to environmental law and served as an advisor to many local, state, and national organizations on environmental matters.

Grant applications for the Kundell grant must include a project that has an environmental impact. Suggested projects include anti-littering campaigns and projects, green energy, LEED certification, recycling projects, brownfield projects, pollution projects, water related projects, storm water runoff projects, etc. One or more internships will be awarded.

Georgia Bar Foundation Grant

The Georgia Bar Foundation Grant will cover the costs of five legal internships for the 2027 GCIP. Grant applications for the Georgia Bar Foundation Grant must include a legal project. Suggested projects include legal research; drafting, preparing, and/or reviewing legal memos, motions, briefs, ordinances, policies, orders, other legal documents; creating legal resources: videos, how-to guides, toolkits, resource guides, creating websites and social media campaigns; creating public assistance programs related to the legal system such as foster care, at risk youth, alternative court programming; analyzing and preparing reports on court/caselaw/crime data, GIS projects; assistance with trial preparation, investigations, and negotiations and settlements; etc. Projects may also include court observation, shadowing attorneys, investigators, caseworkers, law enforcement, and other legal staff, client interviews and intake, and other experiential learning opportunities related to the legal work of the applying entity.

***** Georgia Bar Foundation Grant Internships must be completed by the intern by August 6, 2027.**

If your county chooses to apply for a Kundell or Georgia Bar Foundation grant and is not selected, your application can still be considered for a general GCIP grant if it meets all application requirements.

2027 Summer GCIP grants will be awarded for the period of May 1, 2027 - September 1, 2027 for all grants EXCEPT Georgia Bar Foundation grants which must be completed by August 6, 2027.

The deadline for counties to apply for summer internship grants is Friday, October 9, 2026. Recipients will be notified by Friday, January 8, 2027.

It is the responsibility of the county to recruit, interview, and hire the intern. The Foundation will assist counties that receive GCIP grants with recruiting by posting internship positions on its website.

All county grant recipients will be required to sign an agreement with the Foundation and adhere to the terms of that agreement. County grant recipients will be required to submit an accounting of all internship expenditures and will be awarded grant funds at the end of the grant period.

A grant will cover 200 internship hours at a pay rate of \$15 per hour. It will be the decision of the county and the intern to determine the work schedule in terms of number of hours worked per week and total number of weeks worked for the internship. If a student needs academic credit, it will be the responsibility of the county to work with the student and his/her academic institution to fulfill this requirement.

For more information about the Foundation, please visit our website at www.civicaffairs.org.



Georgia County Internship Program (GCIP) Application Process and Guidelines

GCIP grants to counties

As described below, counties may apply to the ACCG Civic Affairs Foundation for GCIP grant funding that will allow them to recruit and pay college students for college internships. GCIP is funded through grants and private and corporate donations to the Foundation. As a result, this is a competitive program and not every application that is submitted will be able to receive a grant due to limited funding.

There are three internship opportunities available: 1) the general GCIP, which is open to all counties, 2) the Dr. Jim Kundell Environmental Management Internship Grant and 3) the Georgia Bar Foundation Grant.

Counties can create intern positions for any department within the county that seeks assistance with a project that, within the grant period, can produce a specific outcome defined by the department. As a general matter, this would not include day-to-day administrative or operational jobs.

2027 Summer Grant Period

Based on available funding, the Foundation is awarding grants for internships for the Summer Grant Period from May 1 - September 1, 2027, except for Georgia Bar Foundation Grants which must be completed by August 6, 2027.

The deadline to submit applications for the 2027 Summer Grant Period is Friday, October 9, 2026.

It should be noted that intern project topics sometimes may be specified if required by a donor's contribution to the program.

Application Process

In order for an application to be considered, all grant application guidelines must be met.

As noted above, the deadline to submit applications for GCIP funds for the 2027 Summer Grant Period is October 9, 2025. **Applications received by the Foundation after midnight on this deadline will not be eligible for consideration.**

Applications should be submitted via the application portal at <https://gcip.civicaffairs.org>. You may submit more than one application, but each form must be completed in one sitting. If you leave the portal before submitting, your work will not be saved.

Only one user at a time can manage an application and, if awarded, an internship on the portal. We recommend deciding in advance who will serve as the primary contact and using their account to submit

the application. As an alternative, you may create a shared account for your county or department and provide the login information to those who need access.

In order for an application to be considered, all GCIP grant application requirements and program guidelines must be met.

All applicants must submit the 2027 GCIP Grant Application which must include a project statement of no longer than two pages that includes:

1. A detailed overview of the project(s) that the intern will complete during the grant period,
2. A description of the need for the project(s),
3. A statement of the overall benefit the project(s) will provide to the county and the community, and
4. If the project(s) involve a partnership of the county with other counties, a regional commission, or a nonprofit organization or college or university, a description of the partnership arrangement is required. All partnerships with nonprofits organizations, colleges or universities must include funding for at least 25% of the internship cost. No funding is required for multiple county or regional commission partnerships.

The project statement should be submitted as part of the GCIP Grant Application form as Section II of the application.

In addition to the project statement, a county must also complete the GCIP Grant Application.

A county may apply for grant funding for more than one internship, meaning that more than one department may apply, or a request may be made for more than one intern for a particular department. Each department requesting an intern(s) must submit a separate application.

There should only be one primary contact person per grant application. The primary contact should be the grant coordinator, or if the county does not have a grant coordinator, the person who will be responsible for managing the grant application process, preparing the accounting of internship expenses at the end of the grant period, and receiving the grant funds. While not required, it is recommended that this person be the human resources director or county clerk. **It is the responsibility of the county to notify the Foundation if the primary contact person for the grant has changed from the point of application. Failure to do so may cause the county to miss notifications and critical information distributed to grant recipients.**

If a grant application is being submitted on behalf of a partnership arrangement, the primary point of contact should submit the application. The primary contact should be the person who will be responsible for receiving and managing the grant. Any changes to the primary contact during the grant period should be communicated to the Foundation as soon as possible.

Payment of grants to counties

The Foundation will notify grant applicants if their funding has been approved for the 2027 Summer Grant Period by January 8, 2027.

All GCIP grant recipients will be required to sign a Grant Agreement and adhere to the terms of that Agreement.

At the end of the grant period, all grant recipients will be required to submit an accounting of eligible expenditures related to the internship and, upon review of this accounting and approval by the Foundation, will receive grant funds as reimbursement for eligible expenditures. The Foundation will send grant funds to a county by check via U.S. Mail.

Factors that will be considered in awarding grants

Grants will be awarded to counties based on a number of factors, including but not limited to:

1. The competitiveness of a county's proposed intern project compared to other internship applications seeking funding.
2. The overall impact and benefit to the county of the project(s) proposed.
3. Whether a county can provide the appropriate supervision of and support for an intern, as well as provide the physical facilities or special equipment needed by an intern for a project and meet program criteria regarding pay, insurance, and any other noted requirements.
4. Whether partnerships have been formed with other counties or regional commissions in order to maximize the benefit of an internship project by sharing it across multiple counties to address shared issues or needs (see below). No financial contribution from other counties or regional commission is required for this type of partnership.
5. Whether counties are able and willing to absorb a portion of the internship cost from its own resources or resources donated by members of the community, in order to help stretch available Foundation funding to as many counties as possible (see below).
6. Whether counties have formed partnerships with nonprofit organizations or colleges or universities that will agree to absorb a portion of the internship cost (see below). These partnerships must include funding for at least 25% of the internship cost from the nonprofit, college, or university.
7. Whether counties that have previously participated in the GCIP properly adhered to grant requirements, guidelines, deadlines, and information requests made by the Foundation.
8. Counties that have submitted competitive projects that have not previously participated in the program.

Partnerships for interns

Counties are encouraged to develop partnerships with other counties or with local regional commissions for shared intern projects. Working cooperatively on common interests and issues will allow more

efficient use of limited intern funding to benefit as many counties as possible and will be a factor in considering applications.

A county also may partner with a nonprofit organization or college or university for a project funded by a GCIP grant. **However, in order for a county to be eligible to apply under this provision, the partnering organization or college or university must fund from its own resources at least 25% of the internship cost for which the grant application is made.**

County funding for a portion of intern costs

Counties are encouraged to identify local funding sources that can be used to pay a portion of the intern costs. Such sources might include county funds or private funds donated from local businesses, organizations, or individuals. There is no minimum county-funded or privately raised matching amount required under this provision. However, to the extent counties can help stretch available funding from the Foundation, to hire as many interns as possible, such a contribution to the program will be a factor in considering applications.

If a project proposed by a county requires an intern with higher level specialized skills for which the job market normally would pay above \$15 per hour, the county may use its own funding sources under this provision to increase the amount needed to recruit a qualified intern. GCIP will not provide funding for wages over \$15 per hour or for more than 200 hours.

It should be noted that ACCG and the Foundation recognize the enormous fiscal constraints on county governments. However, it is believed that counties can use GCIP as an incentive to encourage local donors to support interns and projects in that, if a donor provides funding, they know their dollars will be matched with GCIP funds.



Georgia County Internship Program (GCIP) Frequently Asked Questions

Who should be the grant contact person for my county?

If the county has a grant coordinator, that person will need to serve as the point person for the grant. Absent having a grant coordinator, it is up to the county to determine the point person for any given position. It is strongly recommended that the human resources director or clerk be considered for this position and that at the very least they are consulted throughout the process considering that several components of the grant may require their participation. **If the point person changes after the application has been submitted and/or approved, it is the responsibility of the county to inform the Foundation of this change as soon as possible. Failure to inform the Foundation may cause the county to miss important information regarding the administration of the grant.**

Do I have to submit the grant application via the portal? How do I use it?

Yes, all grant applications should be submitted to the GCIP grant portal at <https://gcip.civicaffairs.org/>. The grant portal is the management hub for grant applications and, if awarded, internships.

You may submit more than one application, but each form must be completed in a single session—if you leave the portal before submitting, your work will not be saved.

All grant applications are tied to the user account that originally submitted them. If the application is awarded, that same account will be linked to the internship in the portal. We recommend deciding in advance who will serve as the grant contact person and using their account to submit the application. Alternatively, you may create a shared county or department account and provide the login information to those who require access. If necessary, internships can be reassigned to another user due to staffing or other changes.

Guidance on using the grant portal will be provided during the 2027 GCIP Grant Application and Overview Webinar and will also be available on the Foundation's website. Any further questions about the portal should be directed to Liz Greene (egreene@accg.org).

What is the Kundell Environmental Management Grant?

The Kundell Environmental Management Internship/Fellowship Program was established by the ACCG Civic Affairs Foundation in 2017 to honor the work of Dr. Jim Kundell. Dr. Kundell was a distinguished professor and highly awarded member of the University of Georgia faculty. During his lifetime, he made significant contributions to environmental law and served as an advisor to many local, state, and national organizations on environmental matters.

Grant applications for the Kundell grant must include a project that has an environmental impact. Suggested projects include anti-littering campaigns and projects, green energy, LEED certification, brownfield projects, pollution projects, water related projects, storm water runoff projects, etc. One or more internships will be awarded.

What is the Georgia Bar Foundation Grant?

The Georgia Bar Foundation Grant will cover the costs of five legal internships for the 2027 GCIP. Grant applications for the Georgia Bar Foundation Grant must include a legal project. Suggested projects include legal research; drafting, preparing, and/or reviewing legal memos, motions, briefs, ordinances, policies, orders, other legal documents; creating legal resources: videos, how-to guides, toolkits, resource guides, creating websites and social media campaigns; creating public assistance programs related to the legal system such as foster care, at risk youth, alternative court programming; analyzing and preparing reports on court/caselow/crime data, GIS projects; assistance with trial preparation, investigations, and negotiations and settlements; etc. Projects may also include court observation, shadowing attorneys, investigators, caseworkers, law enforcement, and other legal staff, client interviews and intake, and other experiential learning opportunities related to the legal work of the applying entity. ***All Georgia Bar Foundation Grant Internships must be completed by the intern by Friday, August 6, 2027. All grant paperwork by the county must be submitted by Monday, August 16, 2027.***

What if my county applies for a specialty grant but is not selected? Can my application be considered for the general program?

Yes. Any applicant that is not selected for a specialty grant but scores high enough through the grant review process will be considered for the general program.

Can applications be submitted that only contain projects that impact certain geographic parts of the county, such as a particular district?

While there are no prohibitions against submitting such applications, it is recommended that a project's impact be applicable to the county as a whole. In that the Foundation has limited resources, there are a finite number of grants available. As such, not every county can receive a grant which makes it difficult to justify awarding a grant that only impacts a particular district of a county.

Can a commissioner submit a GCIP grant application?

Yes, however, the projects submitted must not be personal in nature, such as campaign work or projects unrelated to county operations and should be applicable to the county as a whole and not a particular district. If the intern is to work with the board of commissioners, it may be best to have the chair serve as the supervisor unless the commissioner who has applied for the grant is the point person for the project(s) requested.

Will the grant contract need to be approved by the board of commissioners?

Yes. Please consult with your grant coordinator, clerk, or county attorney to ensure that the proper guidelines for the county are being followed.

What qualifications does an intern have to meet?

The program is open to undergraduate and graduate students from a variety of educational backgrounds, provided a student's abilities are appropriate to the intern project proposed by the county. Since county governments provide a wide range of services, counties are encouraged to be creative in proposing internship opportunities across diverse areas of study from engineering and law to human resources and veterinary sciences.

Recent college graduates may be selected for an internship provided they can provide proof that their graduation was within one year of the start date of the internship. Also, high school students who are 16 years of age or older **AND** are dually enrolled in a college or university are now eligible to participate in the program.

How many hours should an intern work and how should this time be scheduled?

GCIP grant funds will pay internship costs for up to a maximum of 200 internship hours. It will be up to the county and the intern to determine the work schedule in terms of the number of hours worked per week and total number of weeks to be worked. It is recommended that the minimum number of hours worked per week is 15.

Interns are not required to work the total 200 hours for the county to receive the grant, although the Foundation will only reimburse the county under the grant based on the actual number of hours worked if less than 200. Also, if a grant for multiple interns is awarded to a county, the interns can work different schedules and hours if the total number of hours worked under the grant does not exceed 200 for any one intern. Further, if a county was awarded a grant for one intern and later determined that more than one intern was needed, the grant can be split into two 100-hour internships if the county abides by all the requirements of the grant agreement. If the county needs to split the grant, the Foundation must be contacted first to ensure that the requested split meets all the grant requirements.

A student may start an internship at any time during the grant period. Students must complete their internship no later than the last day of the grant period.

While GCIP grant funds cannot be provided past the grant period, a county and an intern can extend the duration of any internship based on mutual agreement. All expenses incurred beyond the grant period will be paid by the county.

How much do interns get paid under GCIP and how is this funded?

The wage for interns paid using GCIP grant funds is \$15.00 per hour. Grant funding also will pay counties for the employer share of FICA costs associated with an intern. An intern paid using GCIP grant funds must be covered under the county's Worker's Compensation Plan, but this cost also will be reimbursable to the county based on the formula allowed as calculated by the Foundation.

Given the 200-hour maximum on internship hours that may be funded from a GCIP grant, total hourly pay per intern may not exceed \$3,000. This amount does not include the employer share of FICA costs and Worker Compensation coverage that will be reimbursed as part of the grant.

If a county wants to pay an intern more than \$15 per hour, that amount over \$15 will need to be paid by the county along with the additional FICA and worker's compensation costs applicable to the additional salary. The GCIP grant does not cover wages paid over \$15 per hour nor does it pay for more than 200 hours of employment during the grant period. The grant also does not pay for overtime costs. All hours must be accrued during the regular work week.

What are counties responsible for if they receive a GCIP grant?

Counties are responsible for finding and hiring the intern. While the Foundation will post internship positions on their website, it is ultimately up to the county to advertise the position locally, contact area colleges, and hire the intern.

Counties are also responsible for withholding all applicable state and federal income taxes on a GCIP intern's earnings and for withholding the employee share of applicable FICA costs. Counties must make timely payments of these monies withheld (as well as any other payroll taxes due) to the appropriate federal and state agencies.

Counties are additionally responsible for 1) submitting the prerequisite grant paperwork to the Foundation in a timely manner, 2) verifying the intern's eligibility to work for the county through E-Verify and 3) adhering to the grant agreement requirements.

Counties are further required to provide adequate workspace for an intern and to provide an intern supervisor. Depending on the project, a county also may have to provide equipment, technical assistance, or training to the intern.

If a student wants to obtain academic credit for the internship, it will be the responsibility of the county to work with the student and the student's academic institution to fulfill this requirement. The Foundation is not responsible for securing academic credit or certifying work performed by the intern for this purpose.

What if my county has already hired an intern for the grant period?

If a county already has identified a college intern for the grant period, the county is eligible to receive grant funding for that intern if it submits all required application materials by the applicable deadline and is selected to receive a grant. Note that the internship must be completed within the grant period.

Who is responsible for recruiting interns?

It will be the responsibility of the county to recruit, interview, and hire the intern.

The Foundation will assist in identifying potential interns by posting county positions on its website www.civicaffairs.org to provide statewide exposure to interested students. If needed, the Foundation also will assist a county with its intern search process by contacting colleges, universities, and technical colleges in your area.

What happens if a county cannot recruit an intern for its GCIP grant?

If no intern can be identified, the GCIP grant will be rescinded for the grant period.

What happens if an intern is fired or quits before the term of employment is completed?

The county is required to notify the Foundation within five business days of termination of the intern. If the county can find an intern to fulfill the rest of the internship within the grant period, it may do so. If another intern is not found, the Foundation will reimburse the county for the time that the original intern worked for the county if the prerequisite paperwork is submitted as provided for in the grant agreement.

Can interns be hired to exclusively perform administrative or clerical work or to perform the duties of a full-time or part-time position that is currently unfilled?

No. Interns cannot be hired to perform solely administrative or clerical work or to perform the work of an unfilled existing position. The internship must be project oriented. Although some administrative work may be required if related to the internship project, such work cannot be the basis for the internship.

Can interns be hired to perform private projects for commissioners?

No. Interns are not allowed to work on projects that are not county related. Interns funded by GCIP are prohibited from participating in any type of political campaign work. The purpose of the internship is for the student to learn about county government through a project that benefits the county as a whole.

Are there hiring restrictions regarding family or personal relationships?

Counties that have a nepotism policy for their new hires are required to apply that policy to the hire of any intern through the Georgia County Internship Program that is paid through this grant. In the absence of such a policy, the county should refrain from hiring interns who are closely related by blood or marriage to an elected or appointed county government official for that county or who has a hiring or supervisory role over the intern. Counties should also apply their personnel policies on dating in the workplace to any intern hired through this grant. Counties that fail to follow these requirements will not receive grant funding for any of the interns who have been involved in any of the aforementioned activities.

Will grant opportunities be offered for any period other than summer?

No. Due to the high demand from counties and students for summer internships, the GCIP will be exclusively providing summer grants to maximize the number of program participants.



Georgia County Internship Program (GCIP) County Grant Application Check List

- ☐ Read **all** provided information before completing required forms, including the “Grant Memorandum,” the “Grant Application,” the “Application Process and Guidelines,” “Suggested Tips for Writing a GCIP Grant Application,” and the “Frequently Asked Questions.”

- ☐ Submit completed GCIP Grant Application form by the grant deadline which includes a 1 to 2-page description of the internship project being proposed, the need it addresses, and the expected benefits to the county (**by the grant deadline Friday, October 9, 2026**).

- ☐ Ensure that the county can provide adequate workspace for an intern, that a qualified person has been selected to be the intern’s supervisor, and that any necessary equipment, technical assistance, or training that an intern may need can be made available.



Georgia County Internship Program (GCIP)

Tips for Submitting an Internship Grant Application

Do:

1. Provide a detailed project description that specifically includes the intern's role in completing the project and what the final product or outcome of the project will be.
2. Explain the "Who, What, Where, Why and How" of the intern project in a way that provides a clear understanding of the proposed internship.
3. Clearly explain the need for the project, why it is important to the county, and the benefits that will result to the county and/or the community.
4. Write project descriptions in simple terms since it may be difficult to understand the intern position if only highly technical terminology is used to describe the project and intern duties. This is especially true of IT and GIS project descriptions.
5. Detail how the county plans to advertise and recruit interns.
6. Ensure the skills requested for the intern are appropriate for a college student. For example, it is highly unlikely that a student will have 3-5 years of experience in a specific field of government work.
7. Make sure that the intern has an active, substantive role in the proposed project. A great project does not provide much benefit if the intern is on the sidelines.
8. Obtain prior permission from the county to act as fiscal agent for the grant if the county does not typically act in this capacity for your local agency or department.
9. Consider submitting a project that involves a partnership with other counties, regional commissions, nonprofit organizations, or institutions of higher education. These types of projects maximize grant funding, which can factor into the grant selection process.

Don't:

10. Submit proposals that are unfilled, county job descriptions. Internships need to be project-oriented and created specifically for the work being done by a qualified high school or college student or recent college graduate.
11. Submit projects that merely provide administrative assistance or entail only administrative duties. While most interns expect some administrative work, the core of the internship needs to be a substantive project(s).

12. Submit, for example, a project where the sole purpose is to scan records. There must be a substantive element such as redesigning or creating a records management system, retention schedule, or historical preservation process.
13. Submit, for example, a project where the sole purpose is to perform data entry that requires no analysis, research, or collection of information.
14. Submit, for example, a project that only benefits one district or area of a county. Projects should have a broader impact.
15. Submit the same project as the previous year with no new tasks or requirements unless it is a continuation of the previous project.
16. Submit a project that is much too ambitious or complex for an intern to complete within the timeframe allotted.
17. Be afraid to think outside the box. Some of the best projects are those that are unexpected, interesting, and imaginative. Be creative!
18. Submit proposals that provide vague details. If we cannot understand the project, there is a lesser chance of your county being selected for a grant.