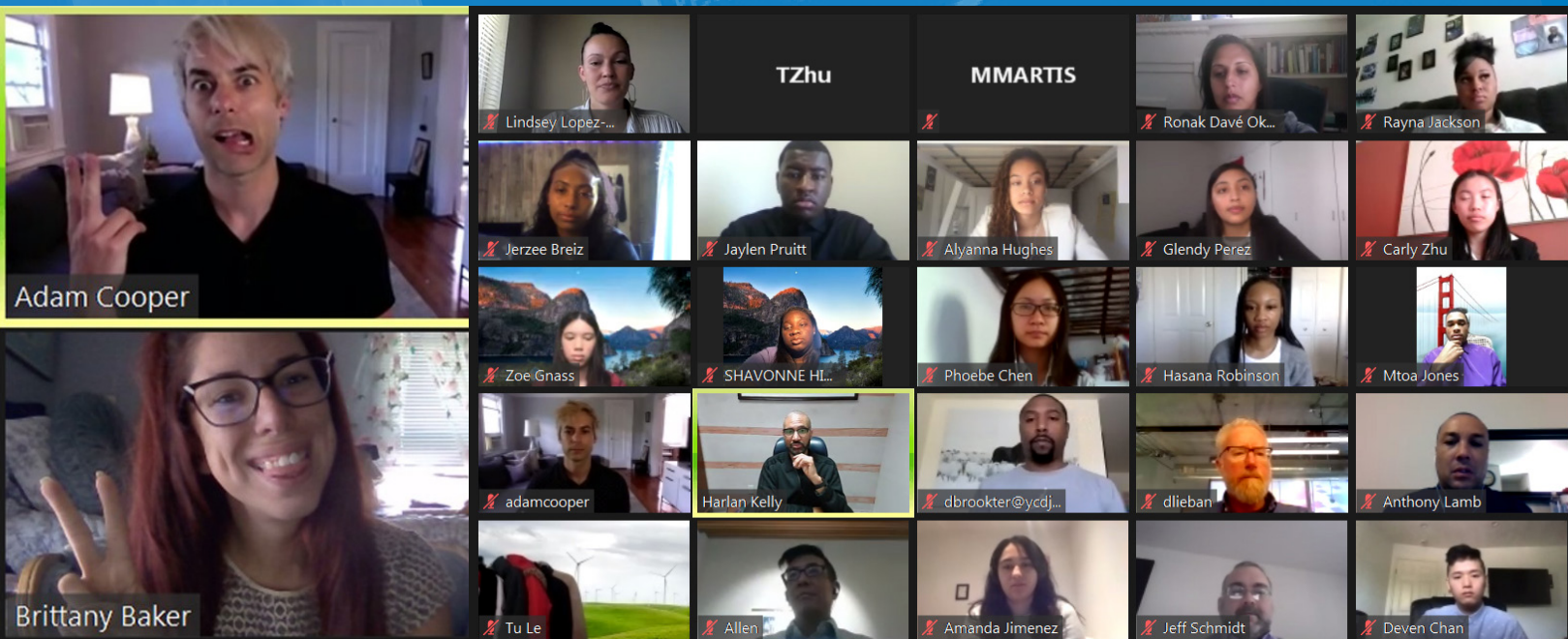


CityWorks Playbook



The San Francisco Public Utility Commission's approach to building a virtual internship program in 2020



San Francisco
Water Power Sewer
Services of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

CityWorks Playbook

Building a Virtual Internship Program

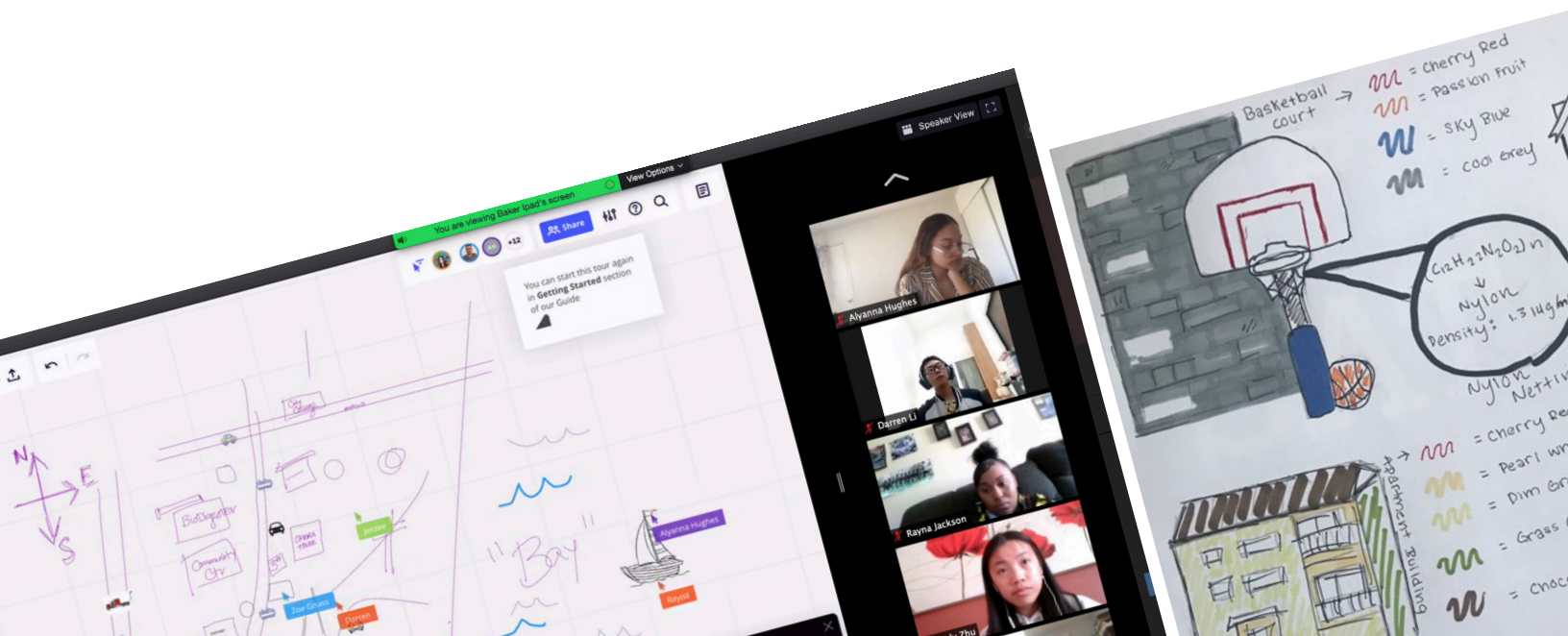
Introduction

In 2020, many in-person internship programs were canceled due to COVID-19. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) was able to quickly pivot to an entirely remote internship program to ensure that opportunities for workforce development were still available to our community. This playbook identifies eight key factors critical to our success this summer. These insights should provide a useful guide to help you move your agency's internship program from in-person to virtual.

About This Project

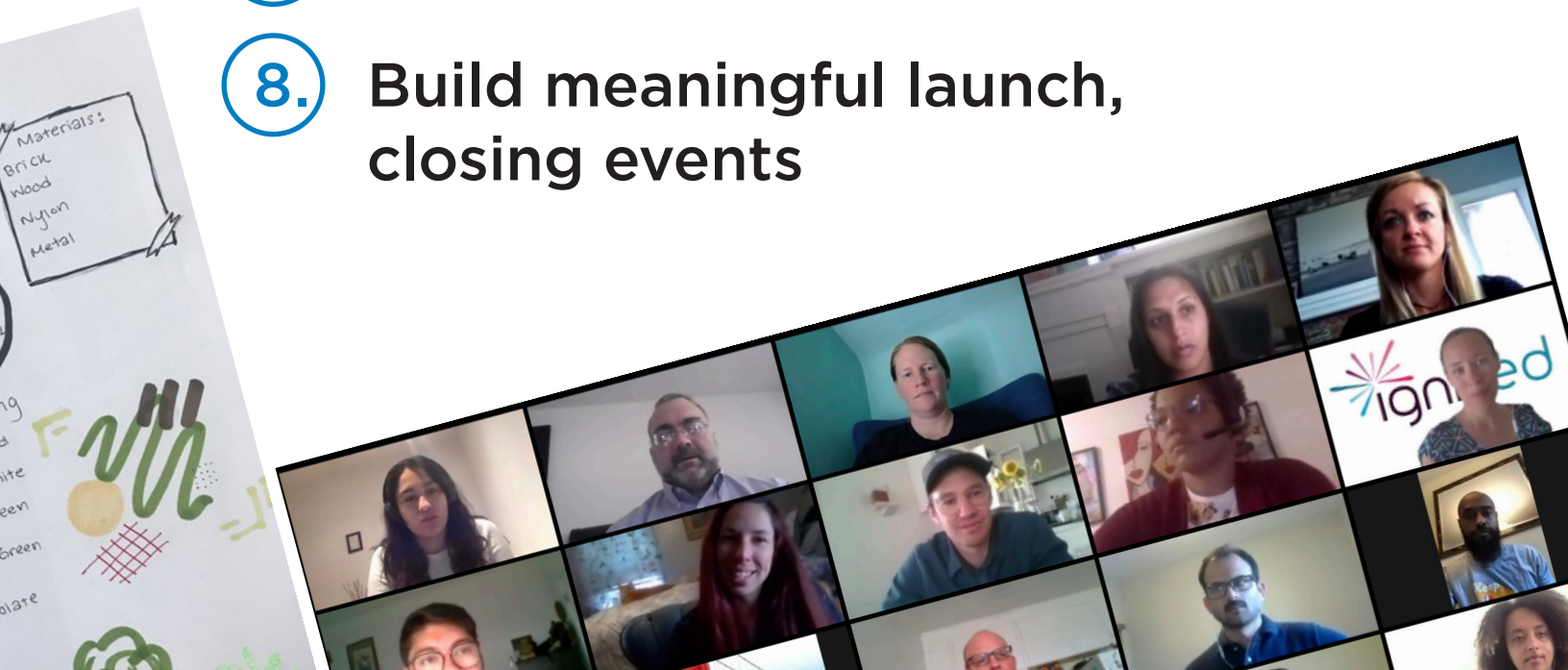
The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) delivers drinking water to 2.7 million people in the San Francisco Bay Area, collects and treats wastewater for the City and County of San Francisco, and generates clean power for municipal buildings, residents, and businesses. The SFPUC is a national leader in developing and growing a utility workforce program with initiatives focused on recruitment, retention, competency, and community partnerships.

Entering its ninth summer, CityWorks is traditionally an eight-week in-person paid summer internship program for high school students and college students from San Francisco's underserved southeast neighborhoods. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, SFPUC launched its 2020 CityWorks Summer Internship Program as a virtual internship for the first time.



Strategies for Building an Internship

1. Add system-level supports early
2. Define intern learning goals
3. Evaluate program length
4. Establish teacher selection criteria
5. Empower teachers and provide resources
6. Design a powerful curriculum
7. Set clear roles for worksite mentors
8. Build meaningful launch, closing events



1. Add system-level supports early in the program development process

1.

A virtual experience is different from a traditional internship program, but still creates valuable learning opportunities when designed appropriately. We built in extra system-level supports and accommodations in the early stages of the process. Those included providing access to up-to-date technology and reliable high-speed internet, creating a smaller intern-to-teacher ratio, and setting explicit commitment expectations while approaching individual issues with flexibility and compassion.

2. Define intern learning goals that work in a virtual environment

2.

In adapting the CityWorks internship to a remote setting, we realized that interns would be spending much less time under the direct supervision of their worksite mentors. That required designing a few new elements into the program to balance out this lack of supervision, such as boosting the learning with a more formalized curriculum that ensured the interns were engaged in authentic work leading to meaningful skill development.

3. Evaluate program length to ensure maximum participation

3.

The traditional CityWorks internship is typically eight weeks long: one week of job readiness training; six weeks of on-the-job experiences; one week for wrap-up. For the virtual program, we shortened the internship to six weeks with five of those focused on job training. Because mentors and interns wouldn't be together in person this year, teachers became the connection points between subject matter experts and young people, keeping that feedback loop tight. We also added time before the internship for teacher preparation, and worked within teachers' summer availability to schedule our program.

4. Establish clear teacher selection criteria

4.

Once clear learning goals for the internship program were set, the next key step was to create a job description for teachers that complemented the program objectives. In reviewing a pool of highly talented and motivated teachers, we considered the candidates' content area knowledge, teaching philosophies, and professional experience. It was especially critical to evaluate a candidate's communication and teambuilding skills in the virtual space.

5. Empower teachers to use their expertise and provide access to resources

5.

Having clear program design requirements and learning goals in place helped us quickly onboard selected teachers. At the same time, we recognized them as professionals in their fields and empowered them to apply their expertise in lesson development. We also ensured they had access to resources like technology, subject-matter experts, and information on things like the educational and experiential pathways interns would need to access key utility careers.

6. Design a powerful curriculum with a specific scope and sequence

6.

Teachers were provided with broad learning goals for the interns. They centered the key concepts around an essential question, and developed learning objectives in a sequence to progressively build skills and support the interns to achieve a final deliverable. Working from educational best-practices, our teachers also engaged interns as active learners by providing them with choice and weaved community-building activities throughout the internship experience. Finally, teachers recognized the need to balance screen fatigue and incorporated civically-oriented field assignments to provide meaningful computer breaks.

7. Set clear roles for worksite mentors

7.

Similar to previous years, each intern was matched with a specific worksite mentor from a company partner, based on the company's ongoing work and the intern's educational and career interests. Whereas the in-person CityWorks internship required mentors to host their intern four days a week for six weeks, we reduced the time commitment for the remote internship. We also set clear engagement requirements for workplace mentors upfront, with ample suggestions for authentic intern interaction in a remote capacity.

8. Build meaningful launch and closing events for the program

8.

Facilitating large groups through remote events is challenging and takes careful consideration, but the value added for program participants makes the extra work worthwhile. We opened the internship with a project launch to generate excitement, and closed with a formal symposium to highlight the interns' accomplishments.

Conclusion

By engaging teachers skilled in digital learning and empowering them to design and lead an authentic learning experience, the SFPUC was able to quickly pivot programming and provide twenty 17-19 year old women and people of color with transformative exposure to groundbreaking careers. Based on surveys, 100% of interns grew professionally, and worksite mentors commended our “spirit to carry on with the program and adapt to the conditions.” We are proud to partner with the local community to inspire the next generation of leaders at SFPUC or beyond.

Acknowledgements

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Ignited

Ignited delivers innovative professional development for teachers and companies with a combination of workplace experiences, hands-on coaching, and lesson plans, with the goal of providing students relevant math and science skills needed for success in the workforce. Over 35 years, more than 3,800 teachers and 3.3 million students have benefitted from these high-quality professional development experiences.

Young Community Developers (YCD)

Young Community Developers (YCD) has provided a variety of training and support opportunities for residents of the Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood of San Francisco for more than 45 years. Their mission is to use a holistic approach to deliver an ecosystem of services designed to empower residents of all ages in achieving economic mobility.

