

**BREAK
THROUGH
TECH**



DC

Sprinternship® Playbook

DC tech is changing!

Building a more inclusive tech ecosystem from the university to the workplace. Inclusion begins here — with you.



We are excited to work together.

This Playbook:

- **Answers questions** you might have about your participation
- Provides a **timeline** for your partnership with us
- Gives you a sense of past **challenge projects** that other Sprinternship providers have chosen
- Outlines a **general schedule** that 3-week Sprinternships might follow

Frequently Asked Questions



Isn't the FAQ normally at the end?

Yes, that's true — but we wanted to address early on the questions we often hear from Sprinternship partners. We hope these answers will offer valuable context for the information later in the Playbook.

Who will our Sprinterns be?

Sprinterns are students at George Mason University (Mason) and University of Maryland (UMD) who primarily identify as women, are in good academic standing, and have an interest in studying computer science and pursuing a career related to computing or technology. About 80 percent will be freshmen and sophomores, the remainder juniors.

How are Sprinterns matched with us?

The match event is a career fair-style event for enrolled students and employers to meet each other for the first time, and for students to begin to identify and rank their top preferred employer hosts

Why do Sprinterns come in teams?

Because Sprinterns are college students, many of them in their first or second year, it works well for them to have peer support. It helps organizations to have a balanced slate of skill sets, and industry partners report that it isn't extra work to host a group, as our students participate in all of their activities together.

Is there a day-to-day structure we must follow?

The staff member from your organization who oversees the Sprinterns can structure the schedule as appropriate.

Are there any required activities?

Yes. Sprinternships are structured around a challenge project, developed by your organization, that allows Sprinterns to work in a team. We also ask that you provide an onboarding session for students which includes an introduction to your organization (especially key functions such as marketing, finance, and HR) and a professional résumé review. How you do all of that is up to you. We also ask you to discuss the process for getting internships at your company.

More frequently asked questions



Are Sprinternships in-person or online?

Sprinternships will be held on-site, virtually and utilizing a hybrid model. This is determined by the partner company and should provide an authentic experience.

Do the staff mentors for the Sprinterns need to be physically located in DC?

We specifically seek DC Metro-area organizations as Sprinternship partners. However, we recognize that many workplaces may be working remotely. If this situation allows you to capitalize on the strengths of staff members located elsewhere who can enhance the Sprinternship experience, by all means please do.

What is the mentor time commitment like?

The time commitment varies depending on the project selection and the mentor's ability to coordinate with others at the host site. The mentor will lead the project and should expect to provide hands-on coaching but then should expect to benefit from the work that the Sprintern team provides.

Is three weeks long enough to provide a valuable experience for all involved?

A Sprinternship is intentionally designed to be a "sprint", a model that has been tested and refined in New York over the last five years. It is long enough for students to gain exposure and set themselves up for success for future internships. For employers, the effort is substantial yet achievable, and aligns with their core values of diversity and equity.

How do partner organizations typically use Sprinterns' findings and reports?

Sprinterns' recommendations and reports can do anything from inspire new ideas among your full-time staff to provide an action-ready plan. Just as importantly, several organizations have embedded the experience of leading and mentoring Sprinterns into their leadership development programs.

Yet more frequently asked questions



What financial commitment is required?

We advise organizations to plan an expense of \$10,000 to \$15,000 for a team of five Sprinterns for a 3-week duration. Your financial support is what allows our Sprinterns to pursue this career-shaping experience, as many of our students' situations would not allow them to choose an unpaid internship over a paid position outside of tech.

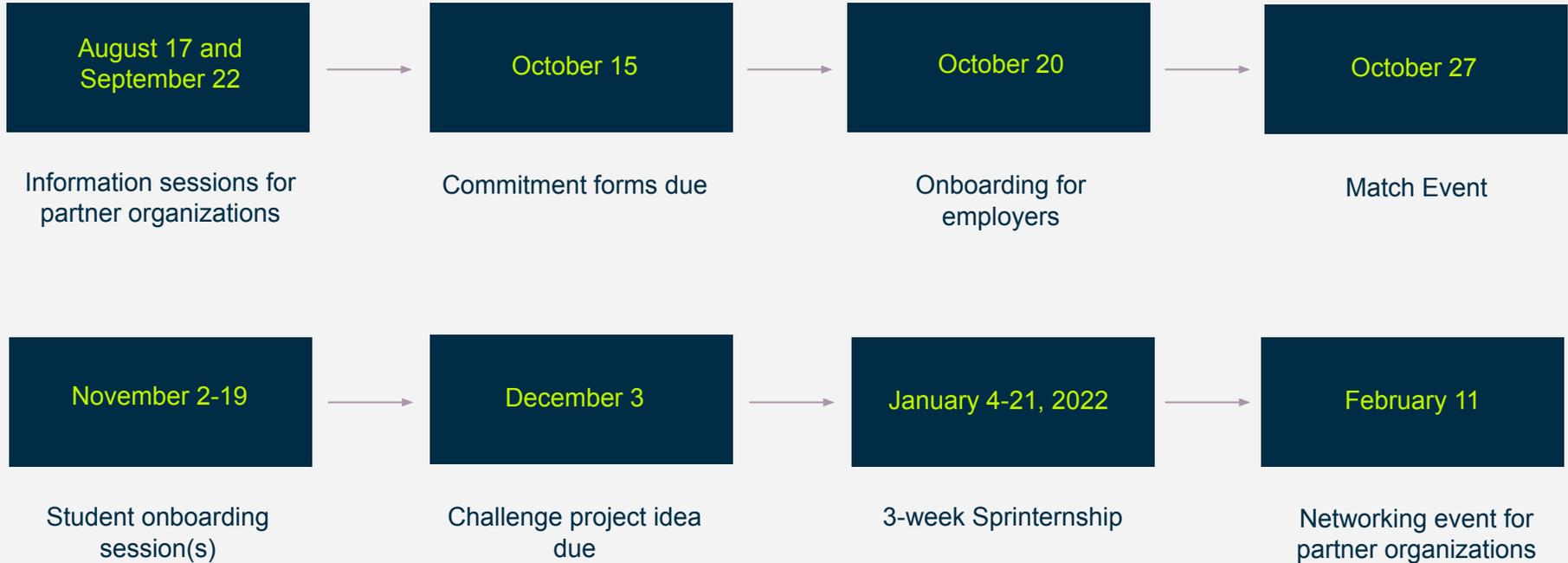
Can we hire Sprinterns for a full-time internship?

Yes! Organizations are welcome and encouraged to invite Sprinterns to interview for internships and/or extend offers. This may be beneficial if your summer internship requirements align with our Sprinterns' skills.

How will we connect with Break Through Tech DC during the Sprinternship?

A member of our team will check in with you throughout the Sprinternship. Feel free to reach out to us at anytime with questions or concerns. After the Sprinternship ends, we'll ask for feedback to help us improve on our processes. We also hope to see you at our partner event, where we will reconnect, debrief, and network.

2021-2022 Sprinternship Timeline



Setting expectations

Sprinterns...

- Have an interest in computer science or technology.
- Are likely to be enrolled in and/or have taken at least one college course in computer science or data science.
- Demonstrate a positive, constructive attitude toward the challenge project you provide for the group.
- Have completed Break Through Tech DC workshops. Topics may include goal-setting, professional communication, and résumé preparation.
- Arrive on time and are present for 35 to 40 hours a week.

Setting expectations

Partner organizations...

- Create a safe and comfortable learning environment.
- Assign a mentor/manager to supervise the Sprintern team.
- Conduct an onboarding session to welcome the Sprintern team.
- Schedule regular check-in meetings to provide guidance.
- Provide a résumé review session.
- Explain the intern hiring process for your organization.
- Introduce Sprinterns to people in various roles and departments.
- Offer constructive feedback on the final challenge project deliverable.

The challenge project

What are your tech hurdles? Where do you require forward-thinking solutions or an alternative approach?

Each Sprinternship must include a challenge project that allows Sprinterns to think creatively, develop new skills, and work as a team. Each organization **designs its own** unique project that asks the Sprintern team to develop **technological innovations**, perhaps to solve an internal issue or enhance specific products and services. This is a great opportunity to take a deep dive into areas your core team may not have the bandwidth to explore.

Suggested framework:

- Position the project as a creative sprint.
- Pose the question: How might we...?
- Give students a structure for how to approach a problem, ideate, and choose a solution.
- Provide opportunities for both individual brainstorming and teamwork.
- Finish the project with a presentation to relevant stakeholders.

Project inspiration

AccuWeather

Sprinterns proposed how to use AccuWeather's weather data and information to create a personalized experience on their website and apps. (See the next slide for a deeper dive on this Challenge Project.)

Guggenheim Museum

Sprinterns proposed how the museum might effectively use technology to improve its digital experience and convert online fans into visitors, while leveraging existing resources and maintaining low overhead.

Bitly

For this popular web shortlink service, Sprinterns were asked to find ways to improve the user experience and add features to the API (Application Programming Interface) in which Bitly users create short URLs.

Pfizer

COVID-19 produced situations that were unfamiliar and unnerving for many of us. Sprinterns at Pfizer were asked to help imagine a “digital companion” that can help people to stay healthy during the pandemic.

One project in-depth

Here's how **AccuWeather** pitched its Challenge Project to its Sprinterns.

Objective

Create a proposal for how we can use our weather data and information to create a personalized experience on our website and apps.

“How might we ...”

Weather has an undeniable impact on everyone's life, so how can AccuWeather help make the weather personalized on our products? AccuWeather has endless data points and the ability to create products to assist you with improving your planning, whether that is deciding to go out for a run or to stay at home.

Project framework

In your first two weeks, we will introduce you to AccuWeather as a company; set up time for you to speak with stakeholders in our data science, IT, and product teams; and work with you on developing an idea to focus on for the project.

This project will include presenting the data you plan to use, product requirements for any new products, monetization opportunities, analytic goals, and marketing strategies surrounding your proposed plan.

During your final week as you are creating your presentation, we will help build your presentation skills, learn how to pitch a product idea and obtain stakeholder buy-in. We also plan to take your proposal into consideration as we move forward with personalization efforts in all our products.

Three transformative weeks

How you structure your Sprinternship schedule is up to you. Here is a general example of how it might play out:

WEEK 1

Possible experiences:

- Orientation session
- Organization overview
- Challenge project kickoff
- Project work sessions
- “Get to know our department” presentations
- Shadowing afternoon
- Mentor check-in

WEEK 2

Possible experiences:

- Project work sessions
- Industry 101
- Technical workshops (e.g., coding, design, UX/UI)
- Career guidance session
- Chat with a senior leader
- Résumé review
- Mentor check-in

WEEK 3

Possible experiences:

- Project work sessions
- Final presentation prep
- Sit in on a meeting
- Recruiting overview
- Mentor check-in
- Final presentation
- Closing celebration

TIPS FOR PROJECT WORK SESSIONS

Consider involving your Sprinterns in:

- Meetings with stakeholders to explore and define the problem
- User research to inform design ideas
- Prototype creation and testing

We can break barriers.
We can open doors.
We can reshape industries.

Are you ready to be part of the DC region's inclusive tech ecosystem?

Organizations that have hosted Break Through Tech Sprinterns report that with just a few basic ingredients — a flexible challenge project, a strong tie between your Sprintern mentor and your HR team, and the willingness to be a champion for your Sprinterns — you can provide a career-changing experience.

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