




Community and Career Connected Learning: Growing High School Internships in Rural Appalachian Ohio

A report prepared by BB2C (Building Bridges to Careers).
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July 2022 - July 2023



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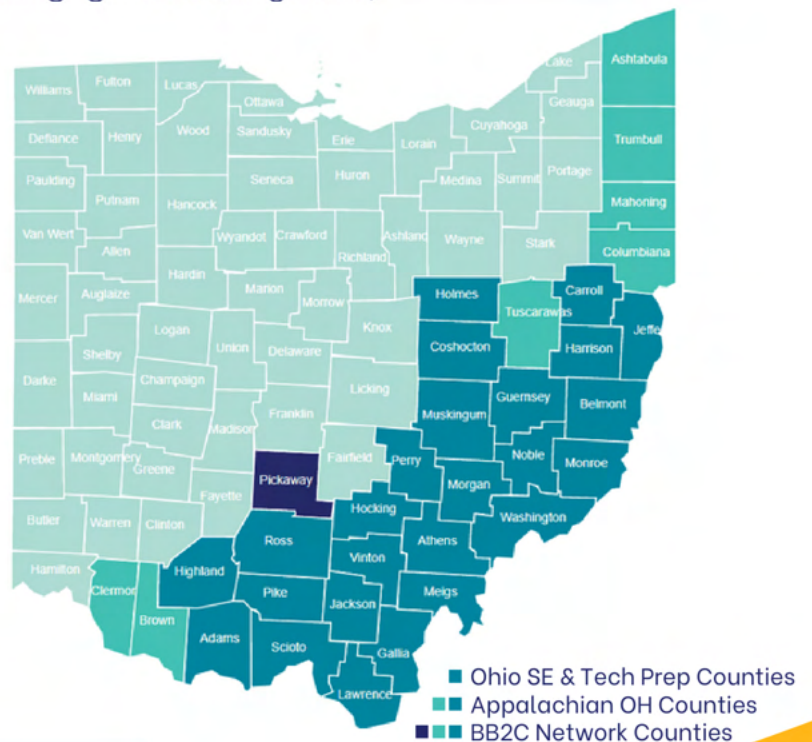
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Overview of Internships in Southeastern OH

In today's competitive job market, exploratory internships have become a crucial component of career development and experiential learning. Internships provide students with the opportunity to apply their academic knowledge in a real-world setting, gain practical skills, and make professional connections. Southeastern Ohio, also referred to as Appalachian Ohio, is a 32-county region with unique assets and challenges that impact the availability and effectiveness of high school internship.

The Appalachian Ohio region experiences socio-economic distress. Additionally, 28 of these 32 counties have experienced outmigration in 2023. As a boundary-spanning organization, BB2C helps restore these counties through internships and other, collaborative workforce opportunities. Specifically, BB2C is dedicated to developing a diverse workforce by bridging education systems, community organizations, and local businesses to coordinate efforts that create and sustain thriving communities. BB2C utilizes existing and internal data to lead best practice initiatives in Community and Career Connected Learning opportunities.

The information in this report uses survey data from 65 student interns from July 2022 to July 2023. These results represent the impact of an exploratory internship program that is half-way through a major funding cycle and expansion. As high school exploratory internships grow in number and impact in Southeastern Ohio, there is an increasing need for sustained funding.



Community and Career Connected Learning:
A learning system integrating community partnerships and career awareness into experiential, place-based learning.

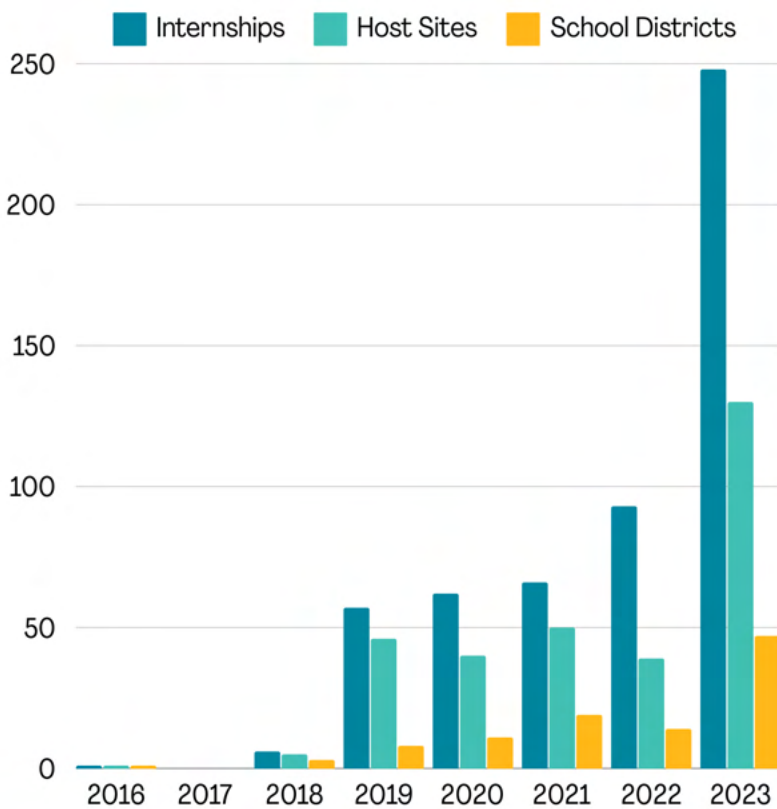
The Role of BB2C

BB2C is a regional non-profit organization that promotes Community and Career Connected Learning (CCCL) to connect students with career pathways and community resources.

The goal of CCCL is to provide an continuum of experiences for developing students to gain exposure, explore opportunities, and create sustained connection with community members and within local careers.



BB2C High School Internship Growth From 2018 - 2023



BB2C provides career exploration opportunities to offer hands-on experiences and essential skills to students. This approach is grassroots and place-based.

Working across Southeastern Ohio and beyond, BB2C breaks down boundaries and creates synergy between organizations to foster a culture of collaboration. These partnerships increase cooperation and deploy sustainable resources within our communities. A great example of this is the growth of high school internships.

It is clear that the interest in and awareness of paid high school internships is increasing, yet our region does not have sustained funding to ensure its continuation or expansion. When BB2C receives more resources, it leads to increased capacity and provides more opportunities to the region's students.

The BB2C Internship Process



BB2C supports and implements an exploratory internship program that provides stipends to students and is flexible to meet the needs of the local community and schools. This snapshot provides an overview, but please contact us for more details on the process and Community and Career Connected Learning model.

START: Make connections





Summary of Internship Funding Partners

The BB2C exploratory internship program provided 326 paid high school student internships between July 2022 and July 2023. Funding was made available through partnerships with the Appalachian Children Coalition (ACC), Appalachian Ohio Manufacturers' Coalition (AOMC), Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, and Rural Action. With this funding, BB2C and Network Partners were able to offer the students a stipend for their work, which reduced barriers to students who would otherwise not be able to participate.

Funder	Internship Overview
 <p>The logo for the Appalachian Children Coalition features the text "APPALACHIAN CHILDREN COALITION" in green, with a green outline of the state of Ohio below it. Inside the outline, there is a silhouette of a person climbing a set of stairs.</p>	<p>Who: High School Students (Grades 9-12)</p> <p>Purpose: To address the mental health pipeline crisis in Southeastern Ohio by exploring mental and behavioral health career pathways.</p> <p>Parameters: Students must live in one of the 32 Appalachian Ohio Counties in Southeast Ohio. All students who complete the exploratory internship are eligible for the deep-dive internship that ACC facilitates.</p>
 <p>The logo for the Appalachian Ohio Manufacturers' Coalition features a stylized map of Ohio in black and white, with a green circular element behind it. To the right, the text "Appalachian Ohio" is in green, and "MANUFACTURERS' COALITION" is in smaller green letters below it.</p>	<p>Who: High School Students (Grades 9-12)</p> <p>Purpose: To show students manufacturing and STEM fields are changing and also to fill labor shortages.</p> <p>Parameters: Priority is given to students who live in one of the following Ohio counties: Athens, Meigs, Morgan, Noble, Washington. Exceptions can be made for students living outside of these counties on a case-by-case basis.</p>



Funder	Internship Overview
	<p>Who: High school students (Grades 9-12) have priority. However, upper-middle school students (Grades 7-8) may also be considered.</p> <p>Purpose: Better connect BB2C and local high school students to include student voice in process, program decisions, and local career pathway exploration</p> <p>Parameters: Priority is given to students who live in Washington County, OH. Exceptions may be made for students outside of Washington County on a case-by-case basis.</p>
	<p>Who: High school students (Grades 9-12) have priority. However, upper-middle school students (Grades 7-8) may also be considered.</p> <p>Purpose: Raise awareness and connect students to sustainable-community, agriculture and natural resources-related career pathways.</p> <p>Parameters: Priority is given to students who live in one of the following Ohio counties: Athens, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Scioto, Washington. Exceptions may be made for students living outside of these counties on a case-by-case basis.</p>

Internship Impact: Certifications, Credentials, Jobs

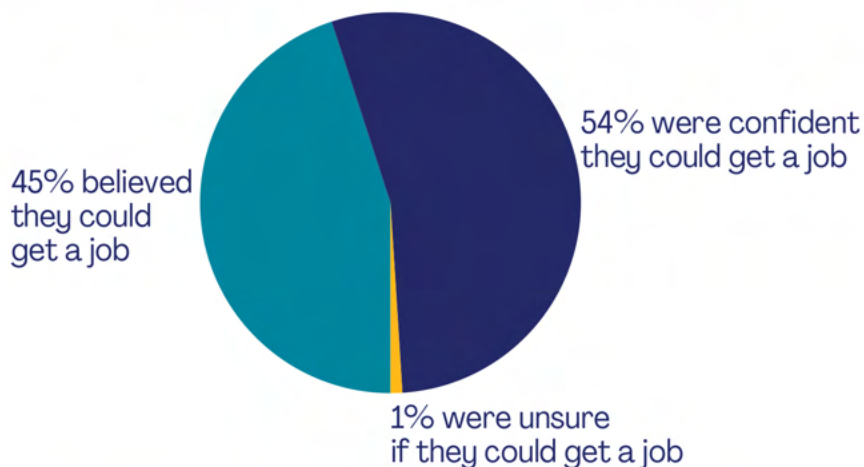
Earning a certification, credential, or job is not necessary for BB2C exploratory internships, but it can benefit students and employers. In the BB2C student feedback survey, it became clear that students were interested in, and achieved, additional certifications, credentials, and job offers as a result of their exploratory experience.

68% reported that their internship influenced the credential or certification they planned to pursue

Certifications/credentials earned by high school interns through Shawnee State University's Bear Tracks & Bear Cubs Summer Camp in 2023 included:

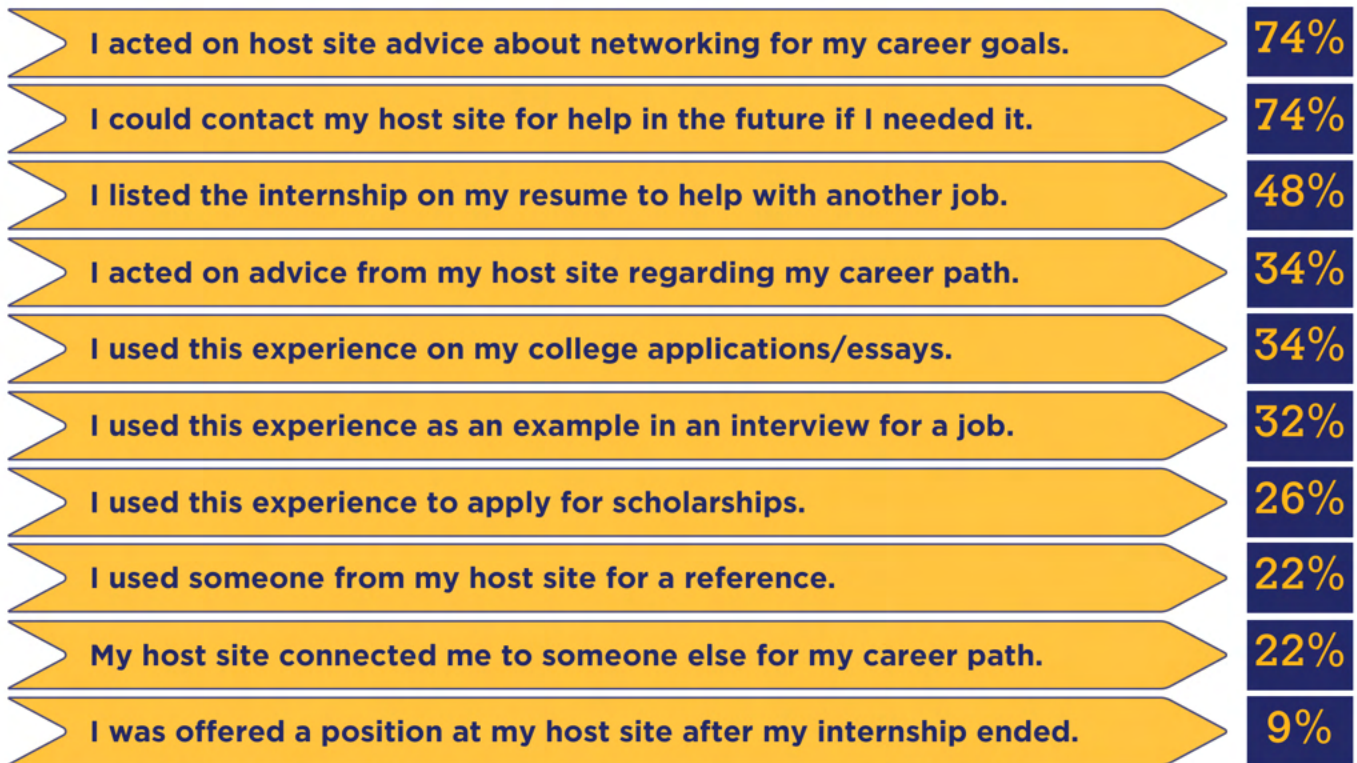
- Basic Life Support
- Certified Phlebotomy Technician
- Child Care Staff Member Certificate
- Help Desk Support Specialist
- Lean Six Sigma Yellow Belt
- Microsoft Office Certificate
- Social Media for Business Certificate

Confidence in Job Opportunity Post-Internship



Internship Impact: Outcomes

Students chose action steps from their internships to help achieve their career goals. Some even explained how they planned to use their connections and experiences for future plans.



Internship Impact: Career Exploration

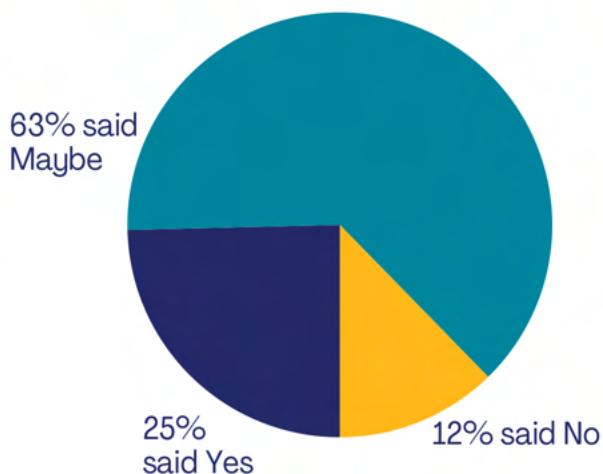
One of the most valuable aspects of internships is that they provide students with the chance to investigate career paths that may have been unclear or unfamiliar to them before making post-secondary decisions.

89% reported that their internship was helpful in determining a “next step”

79% reported that their internship helped them imagine their career path



Would you have known your next career step without your internship?



“I believe the high school internship program is what Wendell Berry referred to as ‘solving for a pattern.’ It’s an initiative that provides simultaneous solutions to multiple problems: students are able to directly earn money, expand their professional network, engage their communities by doing something positive, and get a better idea of the career that may best suit them. It’s an individualized approach to workforce development that is rooted in place.”

Joe Brehm, Rural Action’s Chief Program Officer



Internship Impact: One Student's Story

“Through this internship I learned the importance of thorough, hard work. Whether it be weeding or packaging orders, doing my best work feels gratifying and I make a positive impact. I also gained [wonderful friendships] and they made any task we had to do more fun.

The biggest challenge I dealt with was manual labor (especially in the cold!) But even that became enjoyable when I got comfortable with my task at hand.

The top 3 soft skills I have practiced at UpS are detail orientation, teamwork, and project management! I show these skills by collaborating with the Americorps and completing projects efficiently and effectively.

In conclusion, I loved this internship at United Plant Savers so much that I asked to continue it in the Spring semester!”

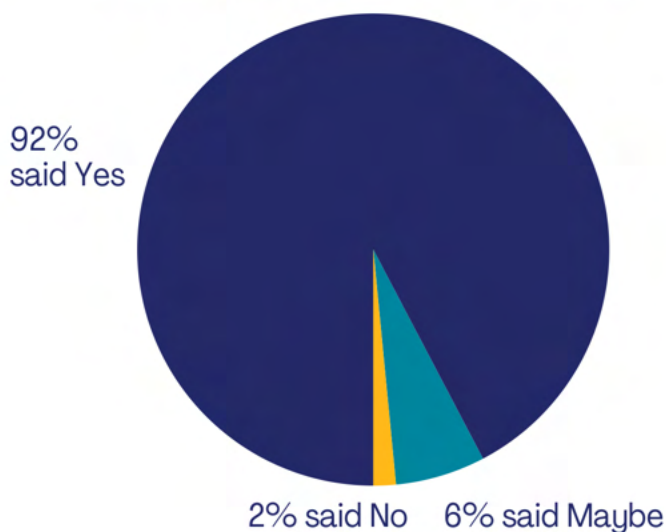


Internship Impact: Career Mentors

One of the questions the feedback survey asked interns was if they had gained mentors through their experience--someone they could rely on for advice, a reference, or any kind of assistance. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Students reported that their internships had a positive impact on their workplace growth by enabling them to create relationships with employers in their local community. Mentoring had a significant effect on students' transferable and employable skills, such as decision-making. It also increased students' knowledge of future career opportunities. High school internships empowered students to connect with their community and provided them with social capital development and resources they needed for success.



High School Student Interns who gained mentors



Internship Impact: Community Understanding

Student interns provided feedback on how their internship impacted their understanding of the local community:

“It helped me understand that even if you aren’t close with someone in the community, they are always willing to give you opportunities to grow and learn.”

“This internship helped show the importance of healthcare in every industry, in this case many large companies needed hearing and drug tests.”



“It helped me realize how important and needed lawyers are in the area. Even though Noble County seems like a peaceful county, there’s a lot that goes on behind the scenes. attorneys, police officers, government employees, etc. are a necessity to keeping the community safe.”

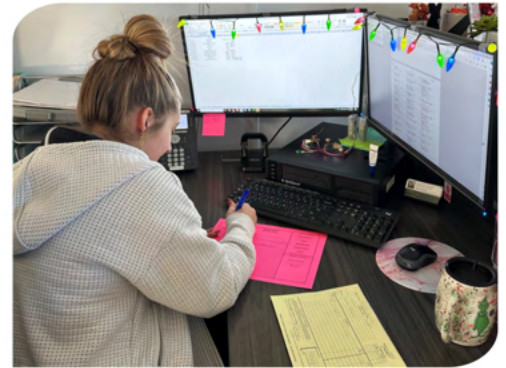
“I think I’ve learned that there are a surprising number of people out in the community who are doing their own interesting things, involved with a group, or working on their own projects, that I can connect with and learn from. Everyone has a unique set of interests and knowledge to share, and connecting with those people is a great way to learn more about that which I want to know about, as well as that which I did not know I wanted to know about.”

Overcoming Challenges

BB2C has faced several obstacles in finding companies willing to take on minors for internships, but we have successfully built relationships to overcome this. BB2C has also helped raise awareness about the value of providing students with opportunities to explore various career pathways. Despite this, high school internships are still not a common concept or practice among businesses, schools, or students in Southeastern Ohio. Additionally, BB2C has introduced stipends for students who rely on part-time work unrelated to their career goals, allowing them to participate in paid internships in industries of interest. So far, the project has met its objectives with few significant hurdles. These primary hurdles include transportation and continued need to fund expanding internship opportunities. The BB2C model has had a great impact in developing exploratory internships for partners in Washington County and Appalachian Ohio. Additionally, the inclusion of stipends allows students to participate in exploratory internships, which is best practice.



BB2C Internship Timeline: Past, Present, Future



BB2C's **Student Ambassador Program** better connects BB2C with local High School students.

BB2C creates a **fulltime position** for internship oversight.

Businesses create **virtual internship opportunities**. Internships offered throughout the BB2C Network.



BB2C is founded in Washington County to foster multi-sector relationships, inspire career choice, create successful students, prosperous business, and thriving communities.

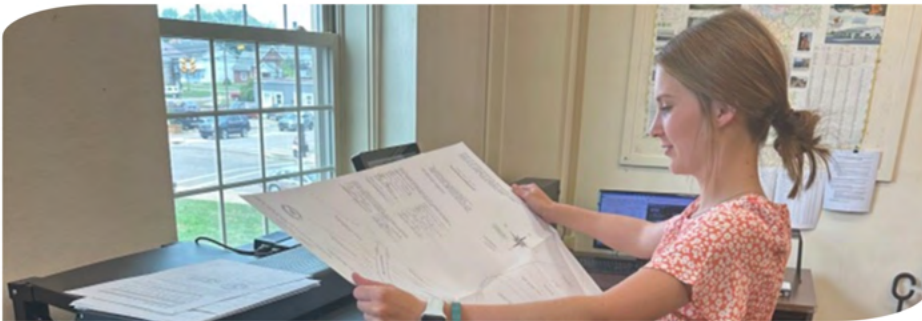
BB2C pilots **first internship** placement.

BB2C partners with Rural Action to provide **stipends for student interns** and **partnerships expand** to other groups doing similar CCCL work in the region.

Internship opportunities continue to **thrive and expand** in the region.

2024 and Beyond: BB2C is looking forward to serving as the Office of Workforce Transformation High School Tech Internship Intermediary and building upon existing partnerships.

Conclusion



BB2C's mission and vision employs a three-pronged, cyclical approach to Community and Career Connected Learning, which aims to empower Successful Students, Prosperous Businesses, and Thriving Communities. In the spirit of cooperation, we are eager to continue promoting internships and fostering similar opportunities throughout Southeastern Ohio's counties, particularly in areas where current grant limitations exist. We also look forward to engaging in new high school internship programs to help expand current efforts. This will give the students in our region the confidence and experience they need to succeed in the competitive, evolving occupational landscapes waiting for them upon graduation.

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Technical Appendix

Please scan this QR code if you are interested in a more detailed breakdown by county.



bb2careers.org/2023-report-appendices



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