The Pathways Program
Student Internship Opportunities with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Wisconsin

The Pathways Program offers a clear path of opportunity with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in meeting our mission of Helping People Help the Land. Students from high school through post-graduate school can apply to participate in the available programs.

The Internship Program

The Pathways Internship Program is targeted at current students. If you’re a student in high school, college, trade school or other qualifying educational institution, you may be eligible. This program offers paid opportunities to work at an NRCS office and explore a federal career in natural resources, while completing your education. Students enrolled in college as a Freshman or Sophomore are ideal candidates for the program; allowing 2–3 years in school to complete 640 hours worked, which is part of the internship requirement.

Interns have the flexibility of working either part- or full-time. Intern jobs will be related to your academic career goals and your field of study. Students who successfully complete the program may be eligible for conversion to a permanent job with the NRCS.

When and How to Apply

NRCS-Wisconsin hires for Pathways Interns typically in the spring, before the summer a student would start work. To get job announcements sent directly to you, set up a profile on www.USAjobs.gov and select your preferences for job notifications through the Saved Searches option, typing the keyword “Pathways” and the location “Wisconsin.” Review the factsheet Applying for a Federal Job, for more details. Pathways Internship positions are announced and open to apply for only five business days. Having your profile set up and ready, while also receiving job notifications through email, is crucial in finding Pathways announcements when they open and applying in a timely manner.

Students Benefits

The Pathways Internship Program has many benefits for students, including
1) real-world experience working in multiple NRCS offices and counties,
2) experiences working in the field with customers on unique landscapes,
3) diverse experience to add to your resume,
4) learning from NRCS mentors,
5) pay and housing provided,
6) relationship building and network building,
7) natural resources hands-on skill building,
8) a truly unique, fun experience,
9) the potential for a full-time job after completion, and
10) MUCH MORE!
Student Successes

Brittany Ehlen is an NRCS-Wisconsin Civil Engineering Pathways Intern and also an NRCS Earth Team Volunteer. She wanted to work with NRCS because of her passion for agriculture and working in the field. “It’s a really nice balance between being out in the field and office work,” explains Ehlen. As a Pathway Intern, Brittany completes engineering work, site visits, landowner visits, design work, surveying, and construction visits. Brittany was able to work with NRCS in seven different counties across the state during her first summer as a Pathways Intern in 2018.

Brady Goettl is an NRCS-Wisconsin Soil Conservation Pathways Intern. He wanted to work with NRCS because it gives him the ability to work directly with farmers, while making a positive impact on our environment. As a Pathways Intern, Brady completes soil conservation work, surveying, site visits, landowner visits, conservation practice spot checks, and more. “I really enjoy working with various NRCS field and area staff; it’s helped me expand my knowledge and expertise in conservation,” explains Goettl. Brady was able to work with NRCS in two counties across the state during his first summer as a Pathways Intern in 2018.

Completion and Conversion

Interns may be converted to a permanent NRCS position within 120 days of successfully completing the program. To be eligible for conversion, interns must

1) complete at least 640 hours of work experience acquired through the Internship Program,
2) complete their degree or certificate requirements,
3) meet qualification standards for the position to which the Intern will be converted,
4) meet agency-specific requirements as specified in your unique NRCS Participant’s Agreement, and
5) perform the job successfully.

More Information

Other Pathways Program opportunities are available, including the Recent Graduates Program and the Presidential Management Fellows Program. For more information about those programs, and the Pathways Internship Program, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/careers and www.usajobs.gov/studentsandgrads.