

City Hall Shadowing Program For High School Students

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OVERVIEW

A city hall shadowing program gives high school students the opportunity to explore municipal careers by spending a day with a city staff person. A shadowing program gives students a firsthand experience in city government and a networking opportunity among city staff and elected officials.

YOUR ROLE

Your role will be to work with city staff in designing and implementing this program. Your role, as an elected official, can also include allowing a student to shadow you.

PREPARATION

- The first step is to determine if a shadowing program is right for your city. Consider aspects such as: student interest in the program, availability of staff, and staff time and resources needed to design this program. Two or three city staff may be needed to design this program.
- Recruit hosts. Hosts are the city staff people whom the students will be shadowing. Hosts should show a desire to work with students, be able to communicate openly with students and be willing to dedicate a workday to teaching a student about their job.
- Determine how many students can participate and the criteria for selecting students. You can create an application or ask the local school(s) to select interested students.
 - Students should have a desire to explore municipal career options, be able to follow all rules/procedures provided by the host and actively participate in the day's events.
- Additional aspects to consider:
 - Prioritizing students' safety.
 - Permission forms.
 - Liability waiver.
 - Providing breakfast/lunch.
 - Transportation.

PROCEDURE

Prior to the event:

- Invite students to city hall. At this time, an overview of municipal government should be provided, along with an overview of the different municipal career options. Ask students to choose the department they will shadow.
- Consider discussing topics such as the need to make a good first impression, behavior expectations and attire.

Day of the Event:

- Meet with the student(s) the morning of the program. Introduce yourself and all other hosts. Allow each host to provide an overview of their job.
- Allow students to break away with their hosts for the day.
- At the end of the program, bring students together for a chance to network with each other and city staff.

MUNICIPAL EXAMPLE

The city of Temple Terrace hosts a job shadowing program each year during Florida City Government Week. The city invites 10-15 students who have been recommended by Florida College staff to participate in the program. Prior to the event, students are given an overview of city government and how the City of Temple Terrace operates. At the same time, students are given an overview of the roles of city staff, and students select the job they would like to shadow. Additionally, students are presented with a local issue and are asked to research the impact the issue has on their chosen department.

On the day of the event, students are transported to city hall via city vehicles. Students are introduced to the city's elected officials and department directors. The students then break away with their host and spend the morning learning about their role and gathering information on the local issue. At the end of the program, students participated in a mock city council meeting by playing the role of the individual whom they shadowed to discuss the local issue. The meeting is followed by lunch and an opportunity to network before returning to the college.

This information was provided by Laurie Hayes, marketing and communications officer with the City of Temple Terrace.