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NORTHWESTERN MSLOC MASTER'S PROGRAM

Master of Science in Learning & Organizational Change Practicum Project Guidelines

The Master of Science in Learning and Organizational Change (MSLOC) program at Northwestern University focuses on the applied areas of *Learning & Performance*, *Knowledge Management* and *Strategic Change*. To ensure our students fully integrate these areas of learning within the context of complex organizations and communities and understand how to apply their learning, each student is required to participate in a Practicum project. The Practicum is a consulting experience within an organization designed to match students' academic background and career aspirations with organizational needs.

Benefits for the Sponsoring Organization

Organizations who sponsor a Practicum gain:

- Focused, dedicated work on particular projects
- Leading edge thinking and practice from individual or teams of students supported by the intellectual, professional and administrative base of Northwestern University
- Affiliation with the Center for Learning & Organizational Change at Northwestern University
- A pipeline for future Practicum project work and employee talent

The value-add that the LOC perspective offers our Practicum partners is that our students use cognition-based frameworks, methods and tools to assess, implement and evaluate organizational solutions. This includes integrating the organizational, technological, cultural and human aspects of the business and anticipating the consequences of particular options or paths to improve organizational and human performance.

The goal of the Practicum Project is for the student to make a solid contribution to an organization while benefiting from experiential learning that links the objectives of the MSLOC Program with practical experience in the field. Students are required to 1) deliver the agreed-upon outcomes to the sponsoring organization (per the client agreement) and 2) develop a thought leadership paper informed by their Practicum experience.

Policies and Guidelines

The following are policies and guidelines outlining expectations for student and sponsoring organization participation:

- Practicum duration is typically eight to ten weeks in length (one term), although this can vary based on project needs. Each student is expected to devote approximately 8-10 hours per week for a total of approximately 80 hours. Students have the option to pursue a Practicum individually or in partnership with other students to form a consulting team. Each student or student team will negotiate a client agreement and schedule that may combine on-site and virtual work.



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Policies and Guidelines (cont'd.)

- The project sponsor(s) acts as mentor and collaborator, **spending an average of thirty minutes to one hour per week** in conversations with the student(s). The meetings offer the student and the sponsor an opportunity to discuss issues and questions regarding project progress and the sponsor's level of satisfaction.
- The project sponsor is expected to provide students with access to key stakeholders and source documentation deemed by the sponsor as critical to project progress.
- A request for feedback on whether project expectations were met and an assessment of student performance in the form of a survey will be sent to the project sponsor from an MSLOC Practicum faculty member at the end of the Practicum experience.

Nature of Projects

Students must apply aspects of Learning & Performance, Knowledge Management and Strategic Change to their projects. The projects may lie within different functional areas of the organization, including HR/OD, strategy, marketing, finance, R&D, and operations, and should feature significant strategic, informational, and intelligence requirements. It is up to both the sponsoring organization and the graduate student, with the approval of the student's academic advisor, to craft a project that furthers both the initiatives of the organization and the objectives of the MSLOC Program. Students may engage in research, participate in strategic planning, design and implement changes, develop new policy, or facilitate organizational planning, as examples.

Sponsorship Costs

No payment is given to the student for participating in the Practicum, although sites are encouraged to offer students reimbursement for travel, parking and/or other expenses. The student pays tuition and receives one unit of academic credit toward fulfilling the requirements of his/her MS degree.

Sponsoring organizations will be asked for an educational contribution to be given to the Northwestern University MSLOC Program to cover costs associated with the Practicum. **This contribution will be discussed prior to the Practicum agreement. A typical contribution is in the amount of \$5,000 to \$8,000 per student per project engagement, and will depend on the project's scope and value to the organization as well as the sponsor's level of satisfaction with the final deliverables.**

Contact Us

For more information regarding Practicum requirements, case studies of past Practicum, or the Master's Degree in Learning & Organizational Change at Northwestern University, please contact:

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