

Kevin Minor: 0:02

And welcome to the NASPO Pulse podcast, your go-to source for all things state procurement. I'm your host, Kevin Miner, and I am thrilled to be here bringing you another mini-series. We love mini-series here at the Pulse. This one is the other side of our internship mini-series the mini-series that we put out before this. We're going to talk to the state members who hired and managed the NASPO interns in this one. Not necessarily all the same, they didn't work in conjunction together, but this is the state member side, so we give you a little bit of compare and contrast to work with. It's a special one.

Kevin Minor: 0:44

We have the great, the wonderful Brandy Ann Willard, Director of Partnerships at NASPO, joining me today as our co-host and we are talking with Will Camp. He is a Supplier Relations Manager for the Pure State of Michigan and we're going to talk to Will about his office's process in hiring an intern, the day-to-day task that an intern would work on in Michigan, common solutions that the intern was a part of and miss a beat. Shoot me an email. Podcast at naspo.org and, most importantly, sit back, relax and join us as we take the pulse. Will, how are you doing today? I'm good, thank you. Thank you for joining us. We really appreciate your time Will. Before we get started on our mini series interview with you, can you just tell us a little bit about what you do?

Will Camp: 1:48

Absolutely so. I'm Will Camp. I'm the Supply Relations Manager for the state of Michigan and my area handles all the stuff that could go wrong, essentially Bid protests, bidders that aren't happy with our award decision. Uh, we handle vendor issues when somebody isn't performing or we're not getting what we're paid for. I handle yearly meetings with vendors, kind of state of the contract meetings. I handle, um, all kinds of different special projects, things that come up that involve managing our suppliers, essentially.

Brandi Ann Willard: 2:27

That's awesome. Well, so can you tell us a little bit about how your office kind of decided to hire an intern for your state?

Will Camp: 2:34

Yeah, so Michigan has always been pretty involved with NASPO and we our primary member, our CPO, came across that there was an internship program and we looked into it and thought it would be a great idea. I mean, who can really complain about having a summer intern? That is NASPO funded and is a great way to get somebody in to get their feet wet in public procurement. And we're always looking for kind of that pipeline of how do we find new people to enter state, you know, state purchasing. No one goes to college or university to say you know, I want to work for the state and procurement.

Kevin Minor: 3:17

Not yet anyway.

Will Camp: 3:19

Maybe they do. I doubt it. I think we kind of end up here and fall in love with it. Doubt it, I think we kind of end up here and fall in love with it, and so this is a great opportunity to do that.

Kevin Minor: 3:30

Yes, and shout out to Jared CPO in Michigan. He's a friend of the pod. We've had him on a couple of times. Jared, I know you're listening. How's it going, Will? So what are some of the primary day-to-day tasks for your interns? So what are some of?

Will Camp: 3:45

the primary day-to-day tasks for your interns. So the work, supply relationship management, or SRM as we call it,

does varies a lot day-to-day. We, like I said earlier, handle bid protests, issues with vendors, contract management, monitoring, yearly review meetings, market research. So we handle all of this day to day and kind of wait for things to pop up, because we don't have a protest every second of every day, we don't have a vendor issue, so we are always ready to jump on these things and it leaves us with a little bit of extra time. So we then dip our feet into helping with audit stuff, doing change notices and, you know, contract amendments for sourcing, so with getting an intern.

Will Camp: 4:31

When she came in I kind of said here's what we do, and then there's all this other stuff that we help with when we get a chance. So it's been this really kind of holistic fall into procurement on every side. We handle, you know, here's the problems at the front end, here's problems at the back end, here's no problems, just audit stuff which I would call a problem. Um, here's all this other thing. So primary tasks very day-to-day. Her job is essentially what I do every day also. So she's coming in doing everything that myself and the two other people that work with me do that's awesome.

Brandi Ann Willard: 5:07

Well, so can you tell us a little bit more about what are some of the common problems you see your interning confront in their position?

Will Camp: 5:15

Yeah, I think the most common problems are pretty fundamental. For our intern and, I assume, many others, this is the first large organization they've worked in, so from day one it's access, basically from physical access to the building on your first day, getting an ID and then accessing the dozen or so systems that we use, from financial to timekeeping, to e-procurement, vendor information, shared drive, sharepoint, all of this stuff that we use every day to support what we do. That I don't think about, but somebody had to grant me access, somebody had to give me a password. You know there's this huge apparatus that we've wrapped around us every day that we then have to get them access to. So that takes a while and this is really what any new hire would go through.

Will Camp: 6:03

In our office we have a pretty on you know, pretty good onboarding program and our office is pretty I don't want to say our office is really chill, but there isn't a rigid hierarchy. You know we collaborate a lot, so it's an easy office to get into. It's just those classic bureaucracy barriers that take a couple days to get worked out.

Brandi Ann Willard: 6:27

Yeah, I think that's great what you're saying, will, because it's really essential, as what we've seen from you know. The NASPO side of things talking with these students is that they want this onboarding experience to help them feel more connected, not only to the office, but to other employees that they're going to be working with within the state. So, will, how did you really get this student involved more with the state or get them onboarded correctly, or help them to get their feet wet with the office?

Will Camp: 6:59

Yeah.

Will Camp: 7:00

So our intern came from Michigan State, go green, just down the road in East Lansing and we're in Lansing and it's always interesting because I I went to Michigan State for law school and we never came downtown.

Will Camp: 7:15

You know, I saw the Capitol way down at the end of the road but we never went there.

Will Camp: 7:19

So it was kind of an introduction to state government and the center of you know Michigan that she hadn't really seen before.

Will Camp: 7:27

So I found the most helpful thing was this informal meeting myself and my team had where we essentially stood in front of a huge whiteboard and did kind of a flow slash mini civics lesson to help map out state government and essentially draw a line from our governor shout out, big gretch, she's the best um to us so from the governor to the cabinet, to our agency's director, to our cpo Jared, you know, bureau me, our intern kind of lining this all up and walking through how we interact with the legislature and the judiciary and how you know we are an executive agency, so where we fit in state government and then how our IT apparatus and cybersecurity all loops into that.

Will Camp: 8:12

So it was this really good conversation for my team and there were some other new hires that had just kind of been on board that week, who kind of wandered into the room and are like, are you guys discussing kind of the basics? And so they sat down and it filled in some blanks for me as we all talked. So is this, you know, here's state government, here's how it works? We all live in Michigan, but who really knows how it works, you know, outside of Schoolhouse Rock sometimes?

Kevin Minor: 8:42

Yeah Well, yeah, schoolhouse Rock. Wow, you're really taking me back there.

Will Camp: 8:47

I just dated myself.

Kevin Minor: 8:48

That's great. Well, me, but me too, though, because now I'm just going to be thinking about I'm just a bill for the rest of the day. So thanks for that Correct, you know, but I really liked that. It takes some of the mystique out of, out of that hierarchy that you were talking about. Right, it allows the communication to flow more freely.

Will Camp: 9:10

Yeah, it contextualizes our work and the role we play and also kind of even bring me back to this is the role we play. Also kind of even bring me back to this is the role we play. This is why my job's important. You know, I I left that day a little bit more. You know, yeah, I'm actually making a difference. Our jobs are important. We, we play a big role. Um, so that's it's nice to get, that, I mean for me, but also for people just starting. This is where we fit in. This is why what we do is important. So, even if it feels like we push paper some days, you know, here's how it all connects, sure.

Brandi Ann Willard: 9:43

Sure, I love that and it sounds like it makes your day to day more exciting to when you have an insert and an intern in your office and gives you all a fresh perspective to from somebody who's new coming to the role.

Will Camp: 9:55

It does, and it gave us the opportunity to look at our jobs with fresh eyes. And also there's this big fountain that is amongst a lot of the state buildings that they start every year kind of in the at the end of spring, and so we all went to that in our interns first week and the governor always comes and speaks, so it was kind of cool. Hey, you've been with us two days. Like there's the governor. You know we couldn't get that close to her because everybody wants a picture. We tried but we weren't successful, but that was really cool and I know she really enjoyed that and it's exciting for us. You know, there she goes in her pink pantsuit like she's amazing. So yeah, that's great.

Brandi Ann Willard: 10:37

Um, so oftentimes when we're interacting with students, we go to career fairs we get this question, where students really want to know what our employers are looking for when it comes to hiring a successful intern. So what did you all look for when it came to hiring your student, and what were some of her characteristics that made the internship a success?

Will Camp: 11:03

Yeah, and, as you say, that what I have written in my notes isn't where I want to start, so it's part of it is really just a fit. We focus a lot on skills and you know, are you from a supply chain background or do you have a law degree or kind of? We focus a lot on those skills but we've been looking more and more. You know, are you a fit for our office? You know how do personalities interact sometimes, and so that's some of it. It's, and that comes from an openness to to listen and to understand and to ask questions. I think that's really important. Your first week you're going to come to every meeting I go to and not understand most of it. But if you come out of that meeting and go okay, I heard 11 acronyms, I wrote some of them down. Tell me about them or how does this draw back, and then we can make those connections and just slowly start to build some sort of understanding of the everyday workings and with that is really genuine flexibility.

Will Camp: 12:15

I think state government is a large bureaucracy. Ours works really well, but some things take time and there are many approvals. So a willingness to you know I need to do this today, but I can't because I don't yet have access to this. So what else can I do? Or how? What can we pivot? What can I? What else can I do? Or how, what can we pivot? What can I? What else can I do?

Will Camp: 12:37

So that, that, I think, is really valuable. It's flexibility, it's a willingness, I mean, be a be a little excited about it. It's kind of cool working for the state, especially when you're coming in and have never been inside before. You know it's like all right, I work for state government. That's kind of cool, like all right, I work for state government. That's kind of cool. Um, and you know, of course, the academic answer is you know, written and verbal communication is important. Um, that's Not even an ability, I would say like a willingness to communicate more and, to you know, improve if it's something that you're concerned about. You know we can talk about professional writing, we can talk about communication, but what we do every day is email and phone calls and letters. So communication is really, really key. Yeah key.

Kevin Minor: 13:38

Yeah, it sounds like too that you offer your interns a little bit more professional development.

Will Camp: 13:41

Can you speak to that? Yeah, so I think we do both formally and informally, informally. Like I said, our office is very open and very collaborative. So you know, myself and the two other people that work with me, vera and Joe, you're great. We talked before they came on board our intern and said you know, what meetings do we have coming up? Where can we kind of push her in? What meetings do we want her in to listen and understand? I think we basically spend those first couple days any meeting you have. Let her go with you, let's talk. Is there anything she can take over? Do a first draft of this. So there's a lot of that on the ground. Informal professional development, I'd say. And then all of our standard contract terms, training or other things that we offer to normal, normal state employees. I don't know what that means, but to some, you know, a regular employee is absolutely available as well. Take that training.

Will Camp: 14:44

Our office did a big empathy training which was this kind of amazing. It really felt like group therapy for our office. It was great. But that was in her first two weeks. It was offsite, it was this big two day thing and it was really amazing,

I think, cause. Not only did it showcase that our office is trying to do better, both personally and professionally, you know, to understand how we work together, to understand how we work together, and it also was a great learning experience because in that room our whole office was there and people expressed opinions on a variety of topics as a group, as a whole. So you got to know people much more than dropping from cube to cube every day like hi, this is our new intern, you know. So that was really good because she understood the personalities and a lot more than your standard. You know, wander around the office and say hi.

Brandi Ann Willard: 15:42

You know well. One thing I love that you've talked about is really this idea of immersing your intern within the office culture and within the position itself. I think one of the key aspects of a successful internship that we're looking for is really getting the students involved in every aspect of public procurement, including having a good mentor, including that professional development that you're talking about, and not just doing administrative work. So it sounds like this student, um, really benefited your office but was also able to have um a great summer and really just got a lot of different takeaways.

Will Camp: 16:26

Yeah, I think so too. I think we we tried to do a job you know, a good job of immersing people that way and then at the same time, yeah, you're only here for a summer, but that's fine, you're coming in, you know, every day, just like we do. So there's no, no real delineation there and there is a sense of what else can we show you Kind of, what else can I show you kind of, what else can I show you that we do, um, that's, you know, interesting and maybe cool, you know, for the intern to experience. But also I want us, I want you to understand or at least see, every piece of what we do. So that happened, um, with our sourcing team asking for a little help on stuff. You, you know, we evaluated a contract, so did all of that and then did an award, all this stuff that just kind of happened to come up. It was like, great, you're here, let's do this, let's do this. So that was really helpful.

Kevin Minor: 17:26

Will. Do you have any advice or suggestions for prospective interns, those that are interested in or applying, or maybe they need a little bit of encouragement.

Will Camp: 17:40

I think I mean especially the NASPO internship. It's taken care of pretty well. You know NASPO does a bit of the administrative work, help getting it set up. You know NASPO will pay your living stipend for you to stay in in town for the summer. You know those kind of those fundamental things. But also state government's really interesting. Um, it really helps understand the world around you a little bit more. I mean, I drive by a roadside park on my commute and I now think differently, like I wonder who cleans their bathroom. That's one of our contracts. State government's fascinating in its own kind of nerdy way, so I encourage that.

Will Camp: 18:23

The state's also. At least Michigan's a great place to work. I mean our benefits, everything is really great and we have a governor who is very committed to state employees. Her parents were state employees, so we feel the love for lack of a better word. You know that's. That's really nice and I think that can be unique at times. Um, so I really do encourage people. I mean public service loan forgiveness still exists. Hopefully I will be the beneficiary within another two years, so it's a big draw. Yeah, I can't say enough for kind of how great state employment is. Honestly.

Kevin Minor: 19:04

I'm sold. Where do I sign up? Send me an application.

Will Camp: 19:08

It is a long application and hiring process, but we'll see what we can do Cool.

Kevin Minor: 19:14

Will thank you so much for speaking with us today.

Will Camp: 19:17

You're welcome. Glad to be here.