

Engineering Employer Guide: Develop a Quality Internship Program

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Introduction

This guide is designed to assist in the process of developing an internship program specifically for engineering and technical employers. It provides structure and answers frequently asked questions regarding offering internships to Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering students. Fulton Schools Career Center (FSCC) works with employers to create and maintain quality internship programs that meet the internship qualifications at Arizona State University. Together, it is our goal that all internships provide a mutually beneficial experience to students as well as our employer partners.

Section one

Getting started - The goal of an internship is to allow students to:

- implement classroom knowledge into a professional work environment
- understand multiple aspects of an organization
- acquire industry knowledge
- develop career competencies critical to advancing in their careers

This guide has been established to assist our employer partners with developing meaningful internship programs and avoid offering poor internships. Poor internship experiences affect an organization's ability to attract top talent in the future. A common mistake is hiring an intern before the employer is fully ready. Before you begin intern recruitment, consider the following questions:

Questions to consider before hiring an intern

What is your goal in creating an internship program at your organization?

What is the duration of the internship and how many hours per week will the intern work?

How will you compensate the intern for their time? If unpaid, does your internship satisfy all requirements of the Fair Labor and Standards Act (FLSA) for unpaid internships? Engineering and technical students are usually paid competitively.

What orientation, training and resources will be provided to set the intern up for success?

Do you have an individual who has been identified as a supervisor or mentor for the intern who has direct knowledge and experience in the intern's duties? If so, does this person have the time and resources to commit to training, and mentoring the intern for the duration of the internship?

Have you readied solid, industry-related work projects for your interns? Have you estimated the duration of each product and do you have enough to keep your intern productive?

Know ASU's recruitment policies:

Please note, we require employers which are using ASU systems or physical/virtual locations to recruit students and alumni to abide by [these policies](#). Moving forward with your recruitment program at ASU is an agreement to these terms.

How ASU defines an internship:

An internship is more than a part-time job or volunteer position, but rather a short-term, hands-on, supervised work experience with a professional organization that is designed to increase a student's knowledge of a professional career field through significant learning objectives. The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides opportunities for applying classroom concepts in the workplace setting. It must not be simply staff augmentation for the employer and interns cannot displace regular employees.

Generally, the outlined criteria below must be met to qualify as a professional internship:

The intern will receive quality training by a supervisor/mentor who possesses expertise directly related to the intern's responsibilities.

The experience will provide exposure to the professional career field, internship organization, or industry.

A job description will be provided that includes a detailed explanation of duties and/or projects, required skills, qualifications and minimum number of hours per week.

Clerical or nonprofessional tasks will comprise no more than 20% of the intern's responsibilities.

The intern will be provided with an appropriate workspace and resources required to complete assignments. If the internship is virtual, the intern must be provided the resources to complete assignments.

Section two

Important factors: Paid vs. unpaid internships

The majority of internships are paid positions. Almost all engineering and technical internships are compensated based upon the scope and complexity of the position. An intern's skills and industry demand can dictate a more competitive range.

For example, especially desired skills like security clearances or work in cybersecurity can add to the compensation. The accepted formula of intern pay is 80% of the hourly, starting pay of a newly graduated senior. The rate decreases fractionally for junior or sophomores. Of course, at ASU the rate of pay needs to be at least federal, state, or local minimum wage (calculated over any time scale - hourly, weekly, semi-monthly, monthly, or annually).

Courts have used the “primary beneficiary test” to determine whether an intern or student is, in fact, an employee under the FLSA. In short, this test allows courts to examine the “economic reality” of the intern-employer relationship to determine which party is the “primary beneficiary” of the relationship. Courts have identified the following seven factors as part of the test:

FLSA requirements for unpaid internships
The extent to which the intern and the employer clearly understand that there is no expectation of compensation. Any promise of compensation, express or implied, suggests that the intern is an employee—and vice versa.
The extent to which the internship provides training that would be similar to that which would be given in an educational environment, including the clinical and other hands-on training provided by educational institutions.
The extent to which the internship is tied to the intern’s formal education program by integrated coursework or the receipt of academic credit.
The extent to which the internship accommodates the intern’s academic commitments by corresponding to the academic calendar.
The extent to which the internship’s duration is limited to the period in which the internship provides the intern with beneficial learning.
The extent to which the intern’s work complements, rather than displaces, the work of paid employees while providing significant educational benefits to the intern.
The extent to which the intern and the employer understand that the internship is conducted without entitlement to a paid job at the conclusion of the internship.
Source: https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm

Generally, a for-profit institution would not meet the requirements of the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), unless the internship is structured more as a “job shadow” experience. The employer must not gain any immediate advantage from the unpaid work of the intern. The employer spends a significant amount of time preparing and training the student before the intern contributes to the organization, if at all.

Can I offer an internship for credit?

Fulton has over 65 degreed programs, some require an internship, and some do not. It is up to the student to work with their academic advisors to determine if an internship experience is eligible for credit for their degree program. An employer who offers internships to students that seek academic credit for the experience must sign a required [Student Placement Agreement](#) (SPA) outlining the internship and includes terms of the learning agreement. The SPA can be done in advance and is not tied to a specific student. It is advisable that employers do not guarantee internship credit for their positions, as this is determined by the academic unit of the student's major.

International student considerations

Arizona State University (ASU) is home to more than 10,000 international students representing over 135 different countries. This makes ASU the #1 public university for international students in the United States and it means that your organization can quickly access global talent to meet your business needs.

The most common visa type employers will see when recruiting international students for internships is the F-1 visa. International students holding this visa are eligible to work in any unpaid internship if the internship qualifies as a trainee experience by [FLSA standards](#). To become eligible to work in a paid internship, international students must apply for one of the following types of work authorization listed below and there are different processing times associated with the application. Please note that as an employer, you have minimal paperwork to complete and there is no greater financial commitment to hire an international student than a domestic student for an internship.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a type of off-campus employment authorization for F-1 students who must complete an internship course in order to graduate from their current degree program. General information is available through [ASU's International Student and Scholars Center \(ISSC\)](#). The processing time of CPT applications is between 10-14 business days. However, there is other paperwork students must submit to their academic department which may take an additional to 14 days. As such, please allow enough time between offer date and start date.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) allowing international students in F-1 status to gain off campus work experience in their field of study before or after completion of studies for a

maximum of 12 months. F-1 students who received a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering or Math) field may apply for a single 24-month extension of their 12-month OPT period. The purpose of OPT is to complement the student's academic work. USCIS processing time is approximately 90 days for all OPT applications, after which students receive their Employment Authorization Document (EADcard) which states the dates the student is eligible to work in the United States. Detailed information is available through [ASU's International Student and Scholar Center](#).

For more information on these and other legal issues from the [National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\)](#). Also refer to the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#).

Section three

Creating and implementing your program

Robust internship programs and their corresponding job descriptions create great word of-mouth advertising for your company and attract students more effectively. Below is a helpful internship posting template, program implementation suggestions and informative feedback from past interns to help you create a highly attractive intern opportunity for students.

Internship description template

Position Description and Overview

This is an opportunity to attract the right student. Use industry-related, keywords to attract students with those skills and interests. Be sure to identify who they will report to for the duration of the internship.

Learning Objectives

Effective learning objectives to describe what you want the student to be able to do when they begin and by the end of the internship.

Primary Responsibilities

The core duties which will be completed.

Minimum Qualifications

The required skills and experience.

Desired Qualifications

The preferred skills and experience.

Start and End Date

Internships have clearly defined start and end dates.

Hours per Week

Desired hours per week depending on organizational need.

Unpaid or paid?

Identifying paid status in the job description helps attract the right candidates. Also indicate details regarding any housing, relocation or other financial assistance that might apply.

Location and Logistics

Identifying city and state sources provided for on-site internships or logistics surrounding virtual internships including technical and computer requirements.

Intern Perks

Add information of any extra learning experiences your company offers like volunteering, lunch and learns or external networking events.

Here is a link to a successful intern job posting to refer to as an [example](#).

Implementing a successful internship program

Pre-Arrival:

- Give interns arrival information, where they go, where to lunch, mention dress code and have swag to share.
- Have email, phone information, desk with software and contact list set up in advance.

Orientation:

- Provide a thorough onboarding and orientation process for your interns. Make sure all expectations, guidelines and goals are clearly established at the beginning of the internship.
- Educate the intern about policies/procedures and how your organization operates to set them up for success in their new role.
- Introduce the intern to their mentor and the team they will be working with.
- Communicate to the team the responsibilities of the intern to facilitate success for all.

Supervision:

- Maintain an open channel of communication with the intern. Plan regularly scheduled meetings with an agenda to touch base. Not every intern will need the same type of support and supervision. It's important to ask the intern what motivates them and how they prefer to be recognized and receive feedback.
- Be flexible with the intern's schedule and needs; interns are still students who may be taking courses during the day or evenings, holding other jobs on the weekend or have family needs.
- Have additional projects ready to go, interns often get assignments done quickly.

Professional Development:

- Provide professional development opportunities for the interns, including participation in trainings, workshops and meetings that help them learn about the industry and profession.
- Provide opportunities for the intern to network and conduct informational interviews with other members of the organization.
- Host events for interns to also get to know each other.

After the internship:

- Perform an internal evaluation and facilitate a formalized exit interview process. This allows interns to provide feedback to help assess the effectiveness of the program and provides you an opportunity to make changes that will enhance the experience for future interns.
- If you are willing to be a reference for the intern, provide contact information. Consider connecting with them on LinkedIn for additional professional networking opportunities.
- Complete an intern final evaluation which reflects their learning objectives and can be shared with their academic department. Here is an [example](#).

- Provide copies or files that link the projects they worked on so that they continue to build their work portfolio, if releasable.

Advice from past interns

Defined expectations-

- Once onboard, clearly define parameters of projects for interns. They will readily take ownership, improvise or problem solve independently if they are made aware, they have this autonomy. The first work experience is when interns are most unsure. So far, their learning has happened in class to mostly defined instruction. Be clear on their level of independence, the project directions, your expectations, deadlines and be sure to provide them with an accessible supervisor for questions. All these steps make interns more confident and lead to better outcomes.

Build a community-

- Have interns work together and live close to each other (if hosting a relocation program). Preplanned social activities are also great teambuilders but more important, is the experience of working on team projects with cohorts and established employees. Having real, career-related responsibilities and collaborating with teammates generates a professional level of expectation and quality learning experience.

Leadership exposure-

- Ensure your interns have opportunities to meet the company leadership and interact. Plan “lunch & learns” or have them meet one-on-one. Upper-level professionals have much to teach and interns feel engaged by a company that is invested in their development. They perform better with one-on-one mentors and having an accessible supervisor is key.

Schedule performance reviews-

- An honest critique is desirable. Provide consistent feedback, not just at the end of the internship. This is where they can learn, understand what needs improving and helps them identify what they do well.

Keep interns busy-

- Over prepare the number of projects you have set to go for interns. Lack of quality work or career-related projects leads to less involvement and interest in the company. It also increases the chance of bad-word-of-mouth.

Relocation assistance-

- Ranks high in attractiveness for out of state potential interns. It also lends itself to continuing to build the community.

Rotational Programs-

- Create transparency and shows potential growth avenues to your interns.

Section four

Recruit interns through Handshake

The Fulton Schools of Engineering Career Center at Arizona State University is here to help you connect with our engineering students. Take a look at the [enrollment stats](#) of our nearly 25,000 engineering students, representing 25 undergraduate and 43 graduate programs.

When your internship program is finalized, the next step is to register and post the positions to Handshake. Handshake is ASU's online career platform to post job and internship opportunities, view and register for upcoming events, schedule on-campus recruiting visits, host live or virtual events for your company, and connect directly with students. To begin, you will need to register for a Handshake account and then request to connect with ASU. To do this visit <https://app.joinhandshake.com/register> and choose Employers. Here is a [Handshake Support Article for Creating a User Account](#), should you need more information.

This website is accessible to students of all majors and degree programs as well as alumni who may be seeking career opportunities. Students will view and apply to the position per your directions on the posting. All interviewing, hiring, and onboarding is conducted between you and the student.

In addition, your Fulton Schools Career Center Employer Relations representative can help you boost your marketing to engineering students through emailing academic units, sharing with industry-related student organizations, and posting to our official social media channels.

Posting all positions/events to Handshake helps ASU and your company meet Equal Employment Opportunity Law requirements.

Beyond Handshake, The Fulton Schools Career Center (FSCC) can connect you directly with the student population you are seeking. Companies can work with student teams by sponsoring senior capstones or eProjects. Recruiters can meet incoming engineering students by mentoring at early pipeline events. Work directly with targeted student organizations on industry-related projects or contribute as a mentor or advisory board member. The FSCC combines both in-person and online resources that serve as a single point of contact to connect industry recruiters and job seekers. For assistance with creating your on-campus recruiting strategy, contact Cher Stevens or Lauren Majure at engineering.industry@asu.edu.

Section five

Fulton Schools Career Center recruitment tips for engineering & technical employers

Post better job descriptions.

Make your post well-written, clear, and as detailed as possible. Titles and keywords help students find you through thousands of other postings. Also, more descriptive job postings allow candidates to understand if the position is a good fit for them and increases potential for the best qualified applicants to apply. It also helps to add company videos or social media links that help them understand your company's culture. Lastly, set a posting deadline of 1 to 3 months, even if the position is cyclical. This sends the message to candidates that you are actively recruiting.

What's your major?

Include all potential engineering majors that qualify for the position in your Handshake posting. It's a good idea to cast to a wide net of engineering majors as many engineering skills are overlapping. If a variety of engineering majors will be considered, take the time to add in each specific major or major groups. However, do not default to selecting "any major" in your description. Engineering students are typically looking for opportunities within their major. Many view "any major" as a more generic or non-engineering related position.

Be proactive.

To form relationships and drive candidates to your jobs and events, you can be the first to reach out to them. You can message up to 100 students per each recruitment cycle, the first is January 1st - June 30th and the second is from July 1st - December 31st. Find

students that fit your qualified criteria by using search filters and personalized outreach. To ensure established employers are connecting with students, your company must have a Handshake trust score higher than 80.

Early pipeline

Competition for diverse, technical, and engineering talent is high. Find more candidates by building relationships earlier in the pipeline with first year students. The Fulton Schools Career Center is always looking for employer mentors for résumé reviews, educational events, or employer panels. Student organizations seek out employer relationships for sponsoring projects or finding guest speakers. Early consistent, engagement is key to more sustained branding and STEM recruitment.

Utilize the Fulton Schools Career Center

For more intentional advertising and branding, remember to reach out to your Fulton Schools Career Center Employer Relations team about our Corporate Affiliate Program (CAP). Members enjoy a distinct connection with the Fulton Schools Career Center, which fosters more in-depth contact with students and alumni, supports industry/academia collaboration, and raises branding profiles. Supported by corporate membership fees, the CAP program provides industry-funding for student career development programs while increasing a company's access and visibility to Fulton students.

Section six

Virtual internship considerations

Limited workspace, relocation costs and health concerns, have increased industry desire for remote internships. When hiring virtual interns, many best practice principles that apply to physical internships still apply to a virtual internship. Please refer to **Section one** of this guide regarding ASU's definition of an internship and our policies. See **Section two** for information pertaining to hiring international students, requirements of the FLSA and information on paid vs. unpaid internships.

To create a virtual internship program, in addition to meeting the criteria noted above, the suggestions that follow will provide the intern an experience that will support their academic requirements and build upon their professional experience.

Plan the virtual learning experience.

Virtual internships are an effective way for engineering and technology companies to enhance existing programs and feed their early pipelines. It is important to select projects that can be completed in a short amount of time and be performed entirely remotely or as a hybrid model of remote work plus onsite visits. With planning, these opportunities offer students a credible and authentic work experience.

Technical projects lend themselves well to virtual or “micro-internships”. Many of the software platforms and tools can be used remotely as they are at work. Providing the technological tools and secure work channels will be your main consideration. Positions that involve a manufacturing or lab-based experience, can also be done as a virtual internship. As an example, an additive manufacturer had interns work remotely on a project designing product components. The employer then assigned designated hours in which students could use the facilities to manufacture their designs. Another idea is to assign simulated industry-related projects. Simulating work tasks, case studies or client and team interactions gives the student a chance to actively participate and produce work. This offers a view of what the position entails and the chance for the intern to experience company norms. Once you have your projects planned, you are ready to recruit.

Virtually recruit, interview & hire

Follow ASU Recruiting Policies. Post your open virtual positions on Handshake.

Need help? Here are step-by-step tutorials for how to post and share a job on Handshake, [“How to Post a Job”](#) article and for visual learners: [Video – “How to Post a Job”](#).

Note “allows remote workers”. We recommend including verbiage indicating this in your position description as well. Students can search for positions using keyword search.

Expand your digital outreach. Connect to qualified candidates in new regions and schools without having to travel to them. A key benefit of digital outreach can be accessing a wider audience of talent. Handshake has put together a number of resources to help you navigate this challenging time, from webinars to guides and best practices their webinar [Going digital: Shifting to an entirely online recruiting strategy](#) for more information.

Host virtual events. If you're not coming to campuses, list your virtual events in Handshake. By listing your event, your event will be promoted to students, you can track RSVPs as students sign up and follow up with them afterwards. Use Handshake effectively to promote Q&As, office tours, and employee panels.

Making a virtual event request in Handshake. This much the same process as an in-person event. Here is a step-by-step guide, [“How To Request an Event”](#). For specific best practices in hosting a virtual event, here is a helpful tutorial, Handshake's [“Guide to Hosting Virtual Events”](#).

Use the technology you prefer. Make it your own. Virtual recruiting events, such as information sessions, technical talks, and interviews can happen in Handshake using Zoom, Google Hangouts, or Microsoft Team software.

Invite students to your events. Search students who have public Handshake profiles using the “search students” tab by school year, major, or keyword. Make a candidate feel special by sending them a direct message once you have opened their profile.

Conduct virtual interviews. This will provide the intern with an idea of what a virtual experience will encompass. During the interview, it is important to share the expectations of the internship responsibilities and the requirements of the virtual experience.

Request virtual interviews in Handshake. Here's [“how to request a virtual interview schedule”](#) through Handshake. Again, the practice is much the same as a regular interview request, just be sure to indicate virtual as the “type”.

Include a hyperlink. Add a URL in the medium, office location, room, and interviewer fields. When students click on this link it will open a new window and launch the video conferencing technology you have chosen.

For any other questions about Handshake, please visit [Handshake's Employer Help Center](#).

Organize important hiring documentation. It is important to provide a plan that avoids obstacles in the hiring process. Communicate with human resources about the location of the intern and adhere to state employment regulations for tax purposes. If possible,

create an FAQ document that outlines the expectations of the intern, the paperwork that is required and how to deliver the information to human resources. You may consider having the manager mail them a handwritten note welcoming them to the team.

Host on-boarding & training online

Onboard your intern. Start 4-8 weeks before the beginning of the internship to allow plenty of time to resolve and issues. Onboarding virtual interns through an early, thorough process creates a smoother transition.

Conduct an audit of what technology the intern will need to be successful in the internship. You may consider providing a stipend for WiFi and/or startup costs. It should be expected that the company provides any of the following:

- o Computer (desktop, laptop, webcam, tablet, phone)
- o Software or access to specific platforms and apps that require a license
- o Project management software (Airtable, Monday.com)

Consider providing any technology to interns at least a week before the internship starts. Allow time for an IT meeting to ensure their work tools are operational: o Check security software or protocols appropriately access corporate systems (such as a VPN):

- o Ensure enterprise communication networks are supported by enough internet and bandwidth and to support all the tools and software needed.
- o Conduct pre-training or trial runs on how all necessary technologies operate. This makes for a smoother introduction to project teams.

Facilitate training in an on-line format. Deliver it in a manner that allows the intern to engage and ask follow-up questions if needed. It needs to be inclusive of training of the intern's responsibilities, expectations, and any technology.

Set up regular virtual meetings with team members and supervisors. Team meetings help garner support. It allows existing employees to understand the purpose of the intern and their roles. Consider time zones when scheduling and be sure to also schedule regular one-on-one, follow up meetings with a mentor and/or supervisor for feedback and updates.

Connect them with their peers. To establish connection to the organization and the team, create a buddy system which introduces interns to each other and builds relationships. This also allows them to ask questions that they may not feel

comfortable asking others.

Make the implicit, explicit. Share established workplace norms or company etiquette that will help the intern be successful in your workplace culture. For instance, is it a workplace norm to turn your camera on during a meeting? Explain the company's organizational structure and share tips on best "remote" business practices like work hours and time zone considerations. Impart any tips or resources for remote organizational skills.

Set goals for the virtual internship.

Develop a virtual internship program. Be sure it is inclusive of meeting the needs of your organization and meets the learning requirements of the intern.

Set clear expectations at the onset. Introduce the learning agreement so that both parties understand the projects that will be completed and the learning that will be achieved. Additionally, expectations should also be inclusive of working in the virtual learning environment. Things to consider:

- o What is the schedule of the internship and what happens if the intern is in a different time zone? Is there a set pre-arranged schedule?
- o What formats for communication will be used (phone, Zoom, Slack)?
- o How will expense reimbursement be processed, if needed?
- o How does an intern maintain or document their hours?
- o Will the student have a portfolio of work products to add to their résumé or submit for a grade?
- o What is the outcome that the employer is needing to achieve?
- o What are the specific intern learning outcomes? How will they know that they have been successful?

Supervise and mentor.

Provide oversight and mentorship. Supervisors are integral to the virtual internship experience for the intern. Ultimately, this includes ensuring that the intern is achieving their objectives that are laid out in their learning agreement. Things to consider include:

- o Regular one-on-one meetings which focus on successes, challenges, what is needed, and offering constructive, timely feedback
- o Consistent and clear communication regarding expectations of the role and responsibilities
- o Contextualize assigned projects for a broader understanding
- o Provide access to supervisors for impromptu and immediate questions that

- interns need addressed to continue their work
- o Complete a final evaluation for the intern and, if appropriate, offer to serve as a reference for future opportunities
- o Offer occasional face-to-face meetings to support connectivity if location allows
- o Ensure opportunity for organizational involvement and social events that encourage community building

Train managers. Consistency is important across your organization's internship program. Ask managers to set expectations about blocking out time for lunch, activities, and assignments on the intern's calendar.

Focus on on-line professional development.

Facilitate networking opportunities that allow the intern to meet and host informational interviews with staff members.

Provide on-line access to organization-specific professional development courses or training. If your organization does not offer professional development courses on-line, there are on-line professional development tools that could be suggested (i.e. LinkedIn Learning).

Invite them to join Employee Resource Groups to encourage the exploration of the workplace culture.

After the internship

Complete an internal evaluation. Facilitate a formalized exit interview process. Interns can provide feedback to help assess the effectiveness of your program and provide you an opportunity to make improvements for future interns. Ensure the evaluation reflects their learning objectives.

Leverage your HR team. Ask them to share tips and give best practices advice in demonstrating professional skills, updating résumés and handling interviews.

Be a reference for the intern. Provide contact information that they can include on future applications.

Connect with them. Use platforms like LinkedIn for additional professional networking

opportunities. Encourage them to post a review of your company and their internship experience on Handshake.

Final intern evaluation. Complete a final evaluation for the intern which reflects their learning objectives and can be shared with their academic department. Here is an [example](#).

Provide copies or files. Using links to their projects they worked on so that they continue to build their work portfolio.

Conclusion

ASU values our employers and the role you play in developing our students. Thank you for your valuable contributions, time, and efforts. This guide was prepared by the Fulton Schools Career Center to provide our employer partners with internship development and implementation strategies. It is our goal that both ASU students and employers have a positive internship experience that aids in student's career development and employer satisfaction.

For additional assistance in creating and implementing an internship within your organization, please contact the Fulton Schools Career Center, Employer Relations team. See contact information below.

Helpful Links

- ASU's International Student and Scholars Center (ISSC): ssc.asu.edu
- FLSA Standards: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa>
- Fulton Schools Career Center, Employer Relations Team:
 - Lauren Majure (A-L) lauren.majure@asu.edu
 - Cher Stevens (M-Z) cher.stevens@asu.edu
- Handshake: https://app.joinhandshake.com/employer_registrations/new
- National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE): naceweb.org
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS): <https://www.uscis.gov/>

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