



Interning at the Institute of Cultural Affairs

About ICA

The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) promotes a just and equitable society by catalyzing sustainable communities and demonstrating sustainable practices to reverse the negative human impact on the planet. ICA believes that culture is the key to social change. ICA began its internship program during Accelerate77, a multiyear sustainability initiative to identify and complete 900 sustainability initiatives in each of 77 of Chicago's communities. ICA designed the program in 2012 and worked with 250 students from 5 Chicago universities to complete the initiatives through 2014.

ICA has sister organizations in over 30 countries and regions around the world, but ICA in the United States is headquartered in the GreenRise, an eight-storey sustainable building in the Uptown neighborhood of Chicago. The GreenRise building is a unique demonstration of a vintage building striving to continuously lower our carbon energy use through historic renovation and innovative energy efficient approaches to sustainable architecture and urban design.

Marking its centennial in 2024, the GreenRise serves many purposes in the Uptown community and Chicago. It is the largest nonprofit and social services hub in the Midwest, housing the ICA-USA offices, a conference center and social service center with over 20 nonprofit agencies and religious communities. The building provides affordable housing to several intentional communities, such as long-term residents affiliated with ICA throughout its 60+ year history, and newly-arrived asylum seekers from Venezuela. Together, we are building a sustainable and inclusive community in Uptown.

About You

ICA seeks dedicated and driven students currently enrolled at higher education institutions (or who have graduated within two months of the start of their internship) taking coursework in the sustainability field(s) and with a professional and/or personal interest in community and human development. Special attention is paid to candidates with documented experience or keen interest in facilitation, global affairs, community organizing, economic development or cross-cultural dialogue.

Intern Opportunities

Currently, ICA has offerings of up to four interns from various Chicago-area universities and colleges. Depending on their home institution's requirements, interns receive compensation and/or course credit as applicable. Intern applications are accepted on a rolling basis. ICA is committed to working with the career services on your campus for appropriate and attainable deadlines. ICA is an equal opportunity employer and we do not discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristic. Students from nontraditional and/or underrepresented backgrounds, or who are the first in their family to attend college, are particularly encouraged to submit an application to us.

Shared Responsibilities

All interns will participate in active on-the-job learning and will have extensive opportunities to shape the experience to their course of study, academic interests and post-graduation job desires. ICA is focused on the hyperlocal level, evinced by programs like the Uptown Decarb Buildings Collaborative, a consortium of 13 building owners and managers committed to getting to net-zero greenhouse emissions.

ICA intends to expand the engagement of Uptown residents—representing such groups as community associations, block clubs, schools, racial and ethnic groups, and housing-insecure residents of Uptown—to lead in community-wide education and engagement. Uptown volunteers will be trained to educate the general population of Uptown about the climate crisis and the practical options available. All interns will share responsibility for the success of developing these Uptown-centric programs.

Specialization Opportunities

At this juncture in the ICA's strategic plan, we have some specific opportunities that interns could fill, provided there was a match between the applicant and the role. For applicants in honors programs or other capstone projects, these may be of specific interest:

Communications

With a focus in strategic communications, ICA is building out a sophisticated media strategy. We have overhauled our social media presence and will be rolling out 2 podcasts in the next 12 months. We are also in frequent contact with local journalists and growing our media list in Chicago.

Grants and Development

ICA has retained an external consultant to position ICA for a range of local philanthropic and grant-making opportunities. Students with a concentration in nonprofit management or grants administration can gain real experience applying to and/or reporting on grants.

Analytics

Two of ICA's core programs generate and ingest large amounts of data: the Technology of Participation course offerings from across the country, and the Uptown Decarb Building Collaborative. The former has information regarding courses, profit centers, trainer feedback information and marketing opportunities. The latter involves energy, water and waste metrics, as well as IoT connected building sensors. Numerous STEM projects are available for students.

Outreach

Students with interests in local movement work and community organizing can work in a more outward-facing and on-the-ground way with our coalition partners and constituent organizations here in the Uptown neighborhood.

Internship Outcomes

Goals

1. Be trained in ICA's group process methods of conversation and community planning for use in various community activities;
2. Become storytellers about the global crisis and provide solution scenarios and resources currently available;
3. Plan, execute and debrief events (several per semester) in collaboration with ICA staff and other partner organizations;
4. Plan for inspiring Uptown residents to move towards becoming carbon-free. This could include:
 - a. gathering data and documenting resident stories about what is needed, what is being done and the challenges,
 - b. hosting tables at various community events and
 - c. scheduling formal conversations with community groups;
5. Engage the community and publicize what was learned through social and legacy media;
6. Contribute to ICA's ongoing contact with government officials.

Additional goals that are specific to the four specialization tracks will be co-created with students at the start of their internship. ICA staff and interns will work collaboratively on completing those goals in an authentic, accountable, and career skills-oriented manner.

Potential for Sustained Impact

In the next twelve months a Climate Action Forum will be held to create a one-year action plan with teams designated for implementation. As everything is connected, this plan will go beyond climate change to include such areas as safety, health, education, affordable housing, transportation, walkable neighborhoods, environmental justice, etc. As action plans evolve, ICA will focus implementation on the people with the greatest needs in the community.

Several former interns remain connected to ICA and continue to volunteer or draw other benefits from their experience here. We encourage our intern "alumni" to network with us and stay connected with our community members.

For more information on our internships, please contact **Rory Gilchrist**, Programs Coordinator at ICA: rgilchrist@ica-usa.org.

If you're ready to send a CV and (optional) cover letter, please include that in your email.