

Practice Experience

The practice experience is an opportunity for students to demonstrate public health competencies within a public health practice organization. All students must demonstrate at least 5 competencies during their practice experience 3 of which will be foundational and 2 (or more) will be selected by the student. Students will demonstrate competency attainment using a portfolio approach in which they work with a public health practice organization to develop at least two products that will be mutually beneficial to the student and organization. Examples of products include written assignments, projects, videos, multi-media presentations, spreadsheets, websites, posters, photos or other digital artifacts of learning.

Finding an Organization

The process of finding an organization to complete the practice experience will look unique for each student. To begin students should reflect on questions such as:

- *What public health problems am I passionate about?*
- *Which communities do I want to impact the most?*
- *What type of organization would I like to work for?*
- *What skills would I like to enhance as a practitioner?*
- *How does this experience fit into my career interests and goals?*
- *Where do I want to build my network?*
- *When am I planning on completing my experience?*

This list of questions is certainly not comprehensive but are emblematic of the thinking that is required to identify an organization.

Practice experiences may involve governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industrial and for-profit settings or appropriate university-affiliated settings. To be appropriate for practice experience activities, **university-affiliated settings must be primarily focused on community engagement**, typically with external partners.

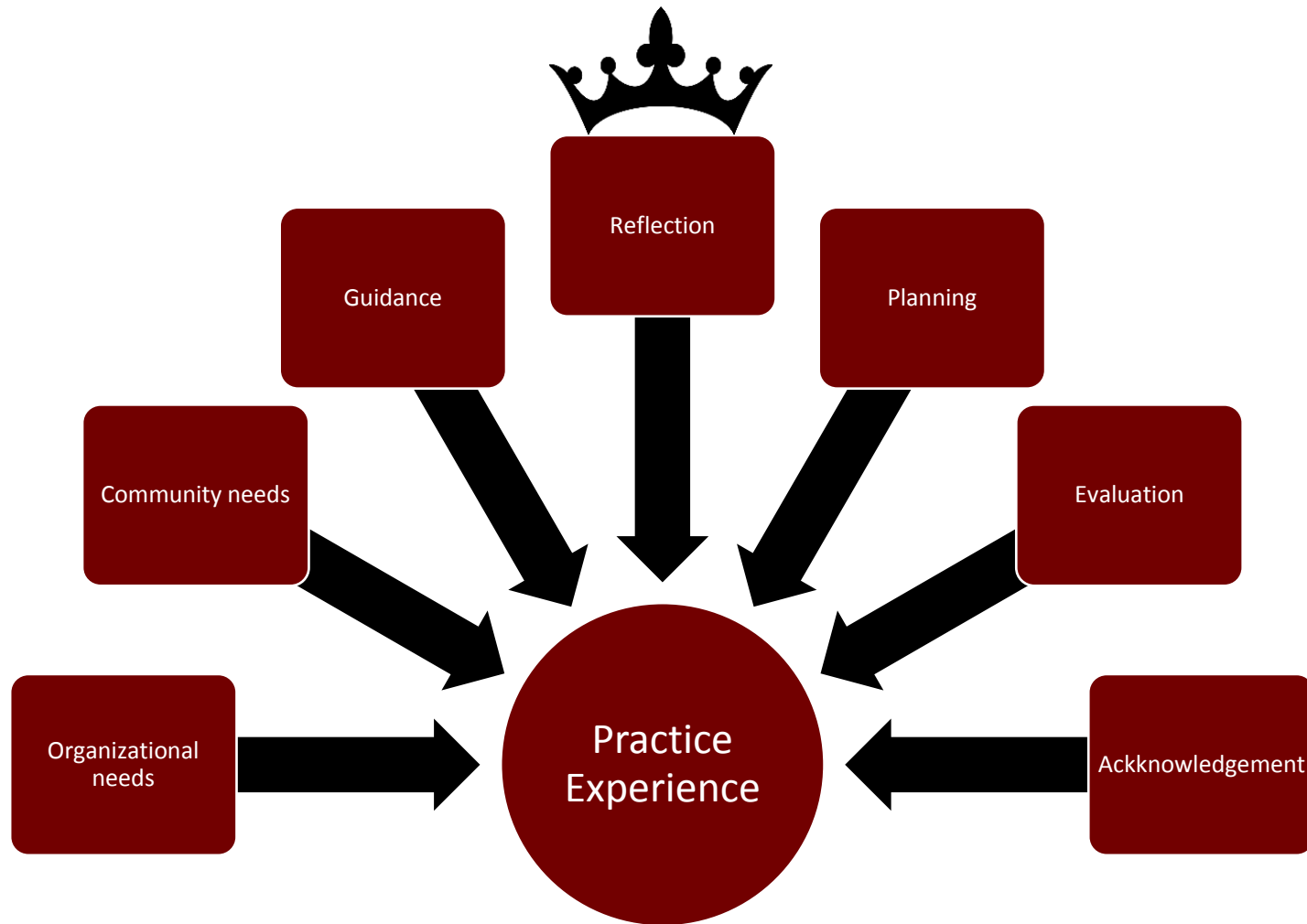
Another great way to explore potential practice experience opportunities is to see what has been in the past. Below are resources to assist in finding an organization. If any of these sites spark student's interests reach out to the practice coordinator for next steps.

Searchable database: <https://mysph.sc.edu/training/table/>

Success Stories: <https://mysph.sc.edu/practice-placement/experience-showcase/success-stories>

Practice Experience Framework

As demonstrated in the figure below, there are many factors that go into the practice experience. Being familiar with all the moving pieces is crucial to creating a meaningful practice experience.



Reflection:

Reflection is the element that transforms simple experience to a learning experience. This reflective process is integral to all phases of experiential learning, from identifying intention and choosing the experience, to considering preconceptions and observing how they change as the experience unfolds. Reflection is also an essential tool for adjusting the experience and measuring outcomes.

Guidance:

The two primary guides during the experience are the **preceptor** and **faculty practice experience advisor**. The preceptor is the practitioner who serves as supervisor and mentor during a student's time at the organization. The faculty practice experience advisor is a faculty member in the student's respective department that has discipline specific expertise centered around the practice experience. Students will have to locate a faculty advisor that is willing to serve as advisor based on the needs of the experience.

Planning:

All parties (the student, preceptor, and faculty practice experience advisor) must be clear from the outset how the learning will take place and how the knowledge will be applied and demonstrated. This is done by completing a practice experience proposal which is the blueprint for the goals, objectives, and activities that define the practice experience. Extensive feedback from all parties is required for a meaningful proposal.

In addition to the proposal, each practice experience will require a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the organization before fieldwork can begin. This is a university requirement to ensure that students are protected legally when interacting with organizations. This process can take **up to 3 months to complete** therefore students **must be proactive in establishing a MOA**. Check the list found in the [searchable database](#) to see if the organization has an MOA with the Arnold School. If you are unsure if an MOA exists, please email jenki275@mailbox.sc.edu as soon as possible so one can be established.

Community and organizational needs:

The products that students create should meet the needs of the organization and community that the organization serves. This is ensured by developing the practicum proposal.

Evaluation:

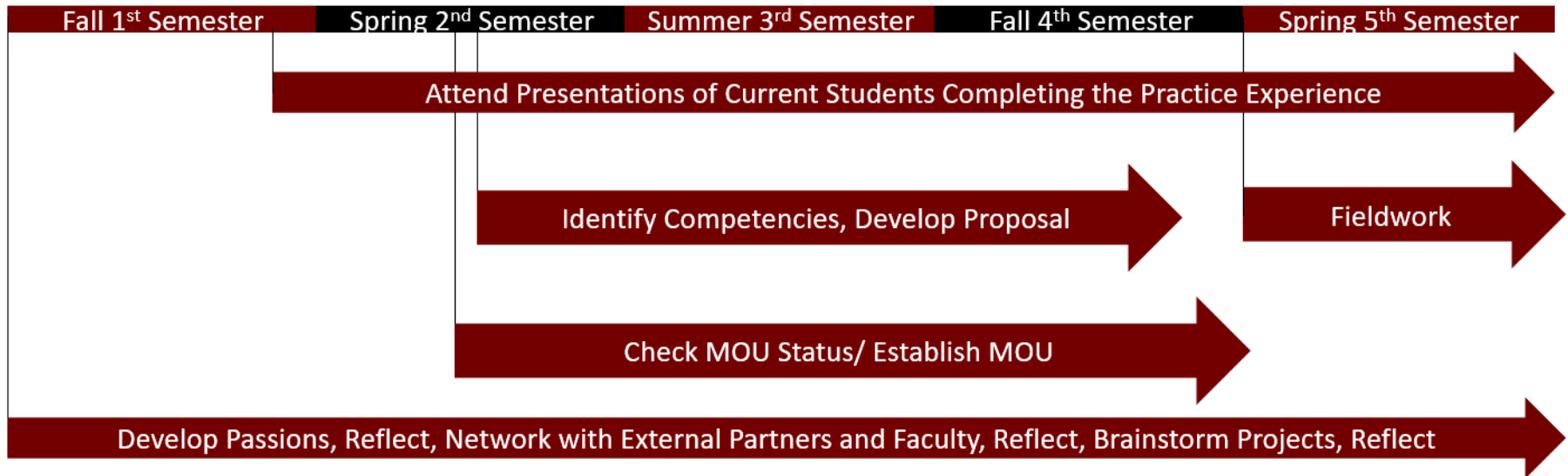
All parties (student, preceptor, and faculty) will complete an online evaluation of the experience approximately two weeks before the end of the experience.

Acknowledgement:

All students will complete a presentation and final report documenting the findings, products and reflections on the experience.

Timeline

Students should be thinking about where they want to complete a practice experience throughout the program, but the process should intensify approximately 1 year prior to the start of the experience. Below is a timeline with suggestions.



This document is only an introduction to the practice experience from the viewpoint of all MPH students. If there are questions or concerns feel free to make an appointment to discuss the practice experience more in depth by emailing jenki275@mailbox.sc.edu.