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MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR

No. 13
Series of 2024

SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES OF THE YOUTH INTERNSHIP PROGRAM ON ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Section I. Rationale

Section 2 of Republic Act (RA) No. 10068, as amended by RA No. 11511, mandates the National Organic Agriculture Program (NOAP) to promote community-based organic agriculture systems together with a nationwide educational and promotional campaign for its application and processing.

In the Philippines, aging farmers is a concern that requires immediate attention as this threatens the food security of the country. The average age of Filipino farmers ranges from 55-59 years old. The youth are no longer interested in agriculture.¹

To contribute in addressing this situation, the NOAP, in collaboration with the DA-Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), implemented the Youth Scholarship Grant on Organic Farming through DA Memorandum Circular No. 40, series of 2022, entitled, "*Implementing Guidelines for the Provision of Youth Scholarship Grant on Organic Farming*," in 2023. This Memorandum Circular is an improvement of the Youth Scholarship Grant on Organic Farming and is now renamed as "Youth Internship Program on Organic Agriculture". This Memorandum Circular provides the requirements, guidelines, and processes for obtaining the internship grant. The contents have been approved by the National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB) through Resolution No. 3, series of 2024.

Section II. Scope of Implementation

This Memorandum Circular shall apply starting from the second batch (2024-2026) of beneficiaries onwards of the Youth Internship Program on Organic Agriculture.

Section III. Goals and Objectives

The program aims to encourage, develop and train the youth to become organic farmers and practitioners. Specifically, it aims to:

¹ <https://www.searca.org/press/aging-farmers-could-add-food-insecurity#:~:text=With%20the%20average%20age%20of,in%2010%20to%2012%20years.>
(1December 2023)

- equip the youth with knowledge and skills in organic agriculture practices so they can lead the promotion and expansion of the industry in the near future;
- increase organic agriculture practitioners and organic agriculture-related businesses/enterprises for the development of local economy;
- increase organic agriculture areas; and
- increase adopters of organic agriculture practices.

Section IV. Program Description

The Program is a 21-month internship program meant to attract the youth in organic agriculture. It consists of: a) nine (9)-month on-farm internship with the chosen farm partner whose operation matches the proposed organic enterprise of the intern, and b) 12-month enterprise implementation.

The program targets 150 youth annually including women, out-of-school youth, and degree holders, and 75 farm partners coming from different provinces practicing chemical-free and/or organic farming systems, as beneficiaries.

For the first nine (9) months, both the interns and the farm partners will receive an amount of PhP5,000.00 each as monthly stipend and mentoring fee, respectively. At the end of the 9-month internship and upon the approval of the business plan, the interns shall receive PhP150,000.00 as start-up support to help them carry out their proposed organic business or enterprise under the guidance of the farm partners. The start-up support shall be utilized to cover all or part of the interns' costs and needs for his or her business operation, including site rental, equipment, facilities, labor and agricultural supplies.

At the end of the second year of implementation, incentives will be awarded to every intern who successfully implemented their business venture as well as to the farm partner for every successful intern. The success of the business implementation shall be evaluated based on the financial plan of the enterprise.

Section V. Eligibility Criteria and Corresponding Documentary Requirements for Application

A. Farm Partners

Eligibility Criteria	Documentary Requirement
1. Farm operator/owner certified organic by Participatory Guarantee System or Third-Party or chemical-free farm; preferably organic LSA-certified farm	PGS or Third-Party organic certification; or Notarized Affidavit as owner/operator of an organic and/or chemical-free farm; or Learning Site for Agriculture (LSA) certification, if applicable
2. Must be in operation for at least one (1) year	Farm journal; and Financial statement for the previous year's operation

3. Has farm activities within the value chain either production, value-adding, processing or marketing	Farm layout; Photos of the farm and its facilities including accommodation areas; and List and biodata of resource persons/trainers
4. Has basic farm tools, equipment, or facilities needed for its operation	
5. Has accommodation facility for at least two (2) interns	
6. Can provide food for the interns during the 9-month intensive training program	
7. Has an Internship Program Plan (IPP) for nine (9) months	Internship Program plan and design including performance evaluation and post-internship assessment
8. With good community standing and has no proven derogatory record	At least two (2) recommendation letters from a community leader (e.g. barangay captain, parish priest, school principal, civil society organization, farmers' cooperative, or association)
9. The farm area is not part of conflict zones	Certification from the respective Philippine National Police Offices
10. Others	Letter of intent addressed to the DA-ATI Regional Director
	Bank account details, preferably Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP)

B. Interns

Eligibility Criteria	Documentary Requirement
1. Aged 18 to 35 years old at the time of application, preferably single	Clear scanned copy of any valid government-issued ID (i.e. PSA Certificate, PRC, National ID, Voters ID, etc.), indicating the date of birth
2. Natural-born Filipino citizen	
3. Interested in venturing into the agriculture industry, especially in practicing organic agriculture	Notarized Sworn Statement as proof of willingness and commitment to undertake organic agriculture-related activities/enterprises after the training; and Business/Enterprise Plan (BEP)
4. Willingness to undertake a 21-month internship and hands-on practice contract	
5. Physically and mentally fit	Medical certificate indicating "Fit to work" and no underlying health condition or history of psychological disorder.

	The following test results have to be submitted: ECG, Drug Test, and Chest X-ray
6. Has good community standing or moral character	At least two (2) recommendation letters from a community leader (e.g. barangay captain, parish priest, school principal, civil society organization, farmers' cooperative, or association)
7. Others	Bank account details, preferably LBP
	Certificate of related trainings attended, if any
	Has no overdue obligations from the DA or ATI at the time of application
	Proof of land for the establishment of the business/enterprise plan (i.e. owned, leased, rented, or donated); or Certification of land availability for the planned business/enterprise from the LGU/ATI RTC based on validation
	Accomplished application form

Section VI. Committees

Committees shall be established at the national and regional levels to facilitate orderly screening of applicants and selection of eligible farm partners and interns, as well as to recommend actions on issues and concerns that arise during the implementation of the Youth Internship Program. These committees shall be composed of the following:

A. National Steering Committee (NSC)

Chairperson	: Director, ATI
Co-Chairperson	: Director, NOAP
Vice Chairperson	: Assistant Director, ATI
Members	: Chief, ATI - Partnerships and Accreditation Division (PAD) Chief, NOAP - Advocacy and Policy Division Chief, ATI - Career Development and Management Division (CDMD) Chief, ATI - Information Services Division (ISD) Chief, ATI - Policy and Planning Division (PPD)

Functions of the NSC:

1. Evaluate the applications endorsed by the RSSC;
2. Approve the list of interns and farm partners;
3. Conduct on-the-spot monitoring of the Youth Internship Program;
4. Recommend actions on issues and concerns that arise during the implementation of the Youth Internship Program that are outside the scope of the guidelines; and

5. Prepare an annual report on the program implementation.

Secretariat : ATI – PAD

Functions of the NSC Secretariat:

1. Review the documents submitted by RSSC including the recommendations for cross-matching;
2. Inform the respective ATI-RTCs of the approved list of eligible farm partners and interns;
3. Draft communications for the signature of the Committee Chairperson; and
4. Coordinate the conduct of NSC monitoring, meetings, and consultations and prepare minutes of meetings.

B. Regional Screening and Selection Committee (RSSC)

Chairperson: Regional Executive Director (RED), DA-Regional Field Office*

Co-Chairperson : Center Director, ATI-Regional Training Center (RTC)

Members : Chief, ATI-RTC Partnerships and Accreditation Section (PAS)
Chief, ATI - RTC Career Development and Management Section (CDMS)
Organic Agriculture Focal Person, ATI-RTC
Organic Agriculture Focal Person, DA-RFO
Representative from Banner Programs (Rice, Livestock, High Value Crop, Corn, Fisheries)
Representative from Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Divisions (AMAD)

* *The RED may designate his/her representative*

Functions of the RSSC:

1. Review the completeness of submitted documentary requirements;
2. Select qualified applicants based on the result of the initial screening;
3. Conduct field validation of the selected qualified applicants;
4. Recommend qualified applicants to the NSC;
5. Assess the viability of the proposed enterprise and farm site of the interns;
6. Assist interns in the preparation of their business enterprise plan;
7. Conduct monitoring of the youth internship program;
8. Endorse to the NSC issues and concerns that arise during the implementation of the youth internship program that are outside the scope of the guidelines; and
9. Perform such other functions as may be required by the NSC.

Secretariat : ATI-RTC PAS

Functions of the RSSC Secretariat:

1. RSSC secretariat shall review the completeness and authenticity of the submitted documents; and
2. RSSC secretariat shall conduct the field validation of applicants for both farm partners and interns.

Section VII. Mechanics of Implementation

A. Application

The ATI-RTCs, in coordination with DA-RFOs, shall conduct an information caravan including quad media engagement (TV, Radio, Print and Social Media). Applications from interns and farm partners, along with the necessary documents shall be submitted to the ATI-RTCs.

B. Screening and Evaluation

The RSSC Secretariat shall review the completeness and authenticity of the submitted documents and shall also conduct field validation among the applicants for both farm partners and interns. The RSSC and farm partners shall visit the intern's proposed site for his/her enterprise implementation to assess its viability.

The RSSC shall evaluate the applicants based on the prioritization matrix.

B.1 For Graduates of a 4-year course

Criteria	25 points	20 points	15 points	10 points
Educational/training background in agriculture	Graduate with a Bachelor's degree majoring in Organic Agriculture	Graduate of any Bachelor's degree related on Agriculture	Graduate of any Bachelor's degree	
Farm Experience	More than 3 years	2 to 3 years	More than a year	Less than a year
Simplified Business Plan on the preferred production area (crop, livestock and poultry, fishery, and processing)	Complete operation, human resources, marketing, and financial plan	Complete operation, marketing, and financial plan	Complete operation and marketing plan	Complete operation plan
Availability of site for planned project	Site under the name of the immediate family of the trainee	Site under the tenancy of the family	Site with written commitment for rent/usufruct to the trainee	

B.2. For Out of School Youth

Criteria	25 points	20 points	15 points	10 points
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Educational/training background in agriculture	Graduate of any vocational courses on organic agriculture from either TESDA, SUCs, or DepEd	With NC II certification, ATI Training of Trainers, Season Long Training on organic agriculture	At least a high school graduate and/or training certificate on organic agriculture	High school level
Farm Experience	More than 3 years	2 to 3 years	More than a year	Less than a year
Simplified Business plan on the preferred production area (crop, livestock and poultry, fishery, and processing)	Complete operation, human resources, marketing and financial plan	Complete operation, marketing and financial plan	Complete operation and marketing plan	Complete operation plan
Availability of site for planned project	Site under the name of the immediate family of the trainee	Site under the tenancy of the family	Site with written commitment and/or certification letter either from the proponents, LGUs, or RTCs for rent/usufruct to the trainee	

B.3. For Farm Partners

Criteria	25 points	20 points	15 points	10 points
Farm operator/owner of the certified organic or chemical-free farm, preferably LSA certified farm	Certified Organic or chemical-free farm, preferably LSA-certified farm			
Farm Operations Experience	More than 3 years	2 to 3 years	More than a year	Less than a year
Internship Program Plan and Performance Evaluation and Post-internship Assessment	Complete Internship Program Plan with performance evaluation and post-internship assessment	Complete Internship Program Plan with no performance evaluation and post-internship assessment		

Availability of tools, equipment, and facilities for the internship program	Complete facilities such as tools, and equipment's facilities including accommodation for the Interns			
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The RSSC shall then review and assess the viability of the organic business/enterprise plan of the interns and facilitate cross-matching of interns and farm partners based on the planned organic business/enterprise of the interns and operations of the candidate farm partner. The evaluation result and cross-matching recommendation shall be endorsed by the RSSC to the NSC.

C. Selection

The NSC secretariat shall review the documents endorsed by the RSSC and the NSC shall approve the final list of qualified farm partners and interns.

The NSC secretariat shall then inform the respective RSSC of the official list of eligible farm partners and interns. The ATI-RTCs shall notify the qualified applicants in their regions and organize an orientation for the selected farm partners and interns.

D. Pre-Internship Program

The interns and farm partners shall undertake a two (2) week pre-internship program to try out their tasks and compatibility. Compatible farm partners and interns shall proceed with the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and internship program contracts, respectively.

E. Deployment

Deployment shall commence within March of every calendar year. The farm partners shall involve the interns in every aspect of their organic enterprise and may assign them additional tasks that will further develop their knowledge, abilities, and outlook on organic agriculture. The interns and farm partners shall submit monthly reports to ATI-RTCs using the forms developed by ATI-PAD.

During the internship period of nine (9) months, the ATI-RTCs shall release the monthly stipend and mentoring fee every end of the month.

F. Internship Monitoring

The ATI-RTCs shall conduct monthly monitoring or "Kamustahan" either online or face-to-face. The members of the National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB), NSC, RSSC, and Secretariat may conduct an on-the-spot monitoring of the youth internship program.

G. Organic Business/Enterprise Implementation

The ATI-RTCs shall release the PhP150,000.00 start-up support to the interns at the end of the nine (9)-month on-farm internship and upon approval of the enterprise plan by the RSSC. Within the one-year period of enterprise implementation, the farm partners shall continue to mentor and oversee their respective interns' organic enterprise.

H. Incentive

The interns who successfully implemented their organic enterprise and their respective farm partners shall receive incentives amounting to PhP120,000.00 and PhP60,000.00, respectively. The success of the organic enterprise implementation shall be evaluated based on the financial plan stated in the interns' organic enterprise implementation plan.

In case of force majeure, the success of the enterprise shall be evaluated based on the latest monitoring report prior to the incident.

Section VIII. Roles and Responsibilities

The following are the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder:

A. Interns

1. Open a new bank account, preferably with the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), or use an existing bank account;
2. Issue an Acknowledgement Receipt or Official Receipt upon release of the grants including monthly stipends and enterprise start-up fund, whatever is available;
3. Identify the site where his/her organic enterprise project will be established;
4. Allow visitation to his/her proposed farm site for organic enterprise for the assessment of its' viability;
5. Cooperate and participate actively in the youth internship program of their farm partner;
6. Accomplish a daily farm journal and submit monthly accomplishment reports to the ATI-RTC;
7. Participate in monthly "*Kamustahan*" and other activities related to the Program;
8. Report emergency situations that occur during his/her deployment at the farm to the ATI-RTC;
9. Report situations that will affect the implementation of the business enterprise plan to the farm partner;
10. Notify in writing and seek approval from the ATI-RTC in case of any changes, delay, or any concern affecting the establishment of the business/enterprise;
11. Mobilize other personal resources and/or agencies and institutions to ensure the success of his/her organic enterprise; and
12. Ensure the availability of documents and other information relevant to the monitoring and evaluation of the internship and hands-on practice.

B. Farm Partners

1. Submit a proposed internship program plan;

2. Open a new bank account, preferably with LBP, or use an existing bank account under the name of the farm enterprise or owner/operator where the funds will be transferred;
3. Issue an Acknowledgement Receipt or Official Receipt upon release of the grant including monthly mentoring fees and incentives, whatever is available;
4. Visit the planned farm site of the interns to assess its' viability;
5. Conduct the youth internship program based on the approved internship program plan of the DA-ATI;
6. Provide suitable accommodation and food for the interns and other materials needed during the internship;
7. Mentor and supervise the interns during their hands-on practice and organic enterprise implementation;
8. Assist the interns in the preparation of their business enterprise plan;
9. Allow farm visitation by NOAB, NSC, RSSC and secretariats for the purpose of monitoring;
10. Allow the interns for a four (4) days-off per month;
11. Submit monthly reports to the ATI-RTCs;
12. Participate in the activities related to the Program;
13. Notify in writing and seek approval from the ATI-RTCs in case of any changes, delays, or any concerns affecting the conduct of the internship program;
14. Report any emergency situations and/or issues at the farm and the Interns to ATI-RTCs; and
15. Ensure the availability of documents and other information relevant to the monitoring and evaluation of the program.

C. DA-ATI Central Office

1. ATI-PAD shall maintain a list and profile of organic or chemical-free farms that can serve as farm partners;
2. ATI-PAD shall develop evaluation tools and monthly reporting forms of interns and farm partners;
3. ATI-PAD, in coordination with NOAP-NPCO shall develop information materials to be distributed to ATI-RTCs and DA-RFOs;
4. Assist ATI-RTCs in the information caravan, when needed;
5. Evaluate the performance of every ATI-RTC;
6. Mobilize workforce from both regional and Central Office to provide technical support and linkage with other possible partners to ensure the success of the Intern's organic enterprise;
7. Lead the investigation in case of reported misbehavior or abuse among the farm partners and Interns;
8. Take custody of all records, undertake proper data management, and maintain the information system; and
9. Oversee the overall implementation of the program.

E. ATI-RTCs

1. Conduct information caravan;
2. Receive applications from interns and farm partners, along with the necessary documents until February 15 of every calendar year;
3. Notify the qualified applicants in their regions and organize an orientation for the selected farm partners and interns;
4. Prepare a report on the two (2) week pre-internship program and submit to NSC;

5. Facilitate the signing of MOA and internship program contracts;
6. Facilitate deployment of interns to their respective farm partners;
7. Visit the intern's proposed site for his/her enterprise implementation to assess its viability;
8. Conduct monthly monitoring or "*Kamustahan*" either online or face-to-face and administer quarterly evaluations of every intern and farm partner;
9. Facilitate the conduct of on-the-spot monitoring of the internship program;
10. Lead the conduct of training on BEP development, and Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) certification;
11. Assist the interns in the preparation of their organic enterprise plan;
12. Extend technical, operational and administrative assistance to the Interns to ensure the success of their organic enterprise;
13. Lead the review and assessment of BEPs;
14. Lead the monitoring of farm partners' and interns' activities through site visitation;
15. Facilitate the release of the monthly stipend and mentoring fee every end of the month, the PhP150,000.00 start-up support to the interns upon approval of the enterprise plan by the RSSC and the incentives for the successful implementation of the organic enterprise;
16. Take custody of all records, undertake proper data management, and maintain an information system;
17. Assist interns on their application for PGS certification and LSA accreditation;
18. Assist NSC in the investigation in case of reported misbehavior or abuse among the farm partners and Interns; and
19. Prepare annual report on the regional program implementation.

E. DA-RFOs

1. Assist in the conduct of the information caravan;
2. Submit a database of certified organic and/or natural or chemical-free farms to ATI-RTCs for onward transmission to ATI-PAD;
3. Participate in the validation of all the documents submitted by the farm partners and interns;
4. Participate in the review and assessment of BEPs submitted by the interns;
5. Provide assistance from other DA banner programs which can contribute to the success of the Interns organic enterprise;
6. Assist in the monitoring activity of the Program;
7. Participate in the investigation in case of reported misbehavior or abuse among the farm partners and interns;
8. Invite interns and farm partners in the Regional Organic Agriculture Congress (ROAC) and other related activities; and
9. Assist the interns and farm partners to form or be a member of Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) groups after the program.

F. NOAP – National Program Coordinating Office (NPCO)

1. Review and approve briefing materials for the information caravan;
2. Participate in the information caravan as a resource speaker, when needed;
3. Join and participate in the site visitation of farm partners and interns' organic enterprise, and in the monitoring activity;

4. Aid in the investigation in case of reported misbehavior or abuse among the farm partners and Interns; and
5. Provide recommendations for the improvement of the internship program plan of the farm partners;
6. Review program implementation and recommend actions for the improvement of the youth internship program; and
7. Include the youth internship program report in the NOAP annual report.

Section IX. Termination

If any of the interns and farm partners decide to discontinue their participation in the internship program, all financial assistance shall be immediately cut off upon receipt of the written notice of their withdrawal. All allowances or fees received from the program shall be reimbursed by the party who withdrew. The RSSC shall assess the interns based on the internship program guidelines, to be endorsed to the ATI CO as the basis of action of the NSC. The intern shall submit a notarized Affidavit of Undertaking where the scheduled of payment and corresponding amount due are clearly stated, within 30 days upon the receipt of the demand letter. Prior to notarization, the interns proposed schedule of payment shall be endorsed by the ATI RTC to the ATI CO, subject to the recommending approval of the NSC to the ATI Director.

Upon payment of the full amount, the ATI RTC shall issue a clearance or certification of full settlement to the intern.

The NSC may decide to adjust the amount to be reimbursed depending on the merits of the justification provided. Alternatively, the intern may opt to render a service obligation upon internship termination as an Agricultural Extension Worker (AEW), volunteer leader, and/or other agriculture or fisheries-related services within the Philippines for a period of equivalent to the number of days/months of his/her internship. A notarized Affidavit of Undertaking to this effect shall be submitted by the intern to the ATI. The number of days of service shall be computed based on the regional agricultural wage.

In the case of farm partner withdrawal from the Program, the intern shall be reassigned to the next-in-line farm partner or any of the existing farm partners whose operation matches the intern's enterprise plan.

In case of reports of abuse or misbehavior on the part of either farm partners or interns, the RSSC and NSC shall investigate. Those found to be at fault after the investigation shall be severed from the program and will be blacklisted in all NOAP programs for five (5) years.

The following are also grounds for termination of the internship program, but shall not be subjected to refund:

1. Poor health conditions as certified by a government physician;
2. Mental illness or instability certified by a psychometrician;
3. Other justifiable grounds which prove the inability of the intern to complete the internship program (i.e. disability, death).

Section X. Monitoring and Evaluation

The RSSC secretariat shall monitor the implementation of the internship program monthly through an online or face-to-face "*Kamustahan*." They shall also collect the monthly reports of the interns and farm partners and submit them to the respective ATI-RTC Accounting Office/Unit as one of the requirements for the release of the monthly stipend and mentoring fees. Likewise, the RSSC shall conduct quarterly farm visits to check on the situation of the interns and accomplish quarterly evaluation forms for both interns and farm partners.

The NOAB, NSC, and its secretariat may conduct on-the-spot monitoring. Likewise, the NSC shall conduct an annual program evaluation to assess the success of the implementation and identify areas of improvement.

Section XI. Fund Source

All expenses to be incurred in the implementation of this program shall be charged against the DA-NOAP Regular Fund released to ATI, subject to existing government accounting and auditing rules and regulations and in compliance with the Commission on Audit (COA) Circular No. 2012-001 and COA Circular No. 2016-002.

Section XII. Supplementary Guidelines and Amendatory Provisions


The ATI Director is hereby authorized to issue supplementary guidelines in support to the implementation of the program, provided that such are consistent with the provisions of this Memorandum Circular.

Amendments to this Memorandum Circular may be made after prior consultations with all stakeholders and upon approval of the National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB).

Section XIII. Effectivity

This Memorandum Circular shall take effect immediately upon publication in the Official Gazette, DA and NOAP websites and its filing with the University of the Philippines Law Center - Office of the National Administrative Register (ONAR).

Done this 8th day of April, 2024 in Quezon City.


FRANCISCO P. TIU LAUREL, JR.
Secretary

