



OPERATION INTERN

Background

Internships provide a valuable way for students to make connections with businesses while identifying career options in North Dakota. Operation Intern is a grant program, designed to expand the number of internships, work experience, and apprenticeship positions with North Dakota employers. The focus of the program is the creation of new internships and apprenticeships within the state's targeted industries and in-demand occupations.

Effective 2025-2027 program year 1; starting May 1, 2025.

Employers can access up to \$5,000 of matching funds for each student, with a maximum of 5 interns per year.

Business Eligibility

The primary focus of the Operation Intern program is private sector businesses in one of the targeted industries: Energy, Advanced Manufacturing, Value-Added Agriculture, Tourism and Technology-Based Businesses, and Autonomous Systems. Funding may also be granted for other in-demand occupations, such as healthcare. In-demand occupations are determined using the [Workforce Development Council's listing](#). Government entities and non-profit organizations do not qualify for the program. Non-profit organizations in tourism and healthcare may be considered on a case-by-case basis, pending eligibility on the in-demand occupations list.

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Targeted Industries

Energy: Includes establishments operating in the renewable and non-renewable energy sectors as well as energy industry support service companies.

Advanced Manufacturing: Includes establishments that integrate innovation with technology-based processes and systems in the production of products.

Value-Added Agriculture: Includes establishments that, through the utilization of manufacturing processes and/or systems, transform an agricultural commodity or product from its original state into a more valuable product.

Tourism: Includes establishments whose operations are capable of attracting visitors from outside of ND for at least one overnight stay, and who offer physical or cultural features, recreation or services, utilized by all types of visitors; must have the ability to attract a visitor 50 miles (one-way) and retain a visitor in the area for at least three hours.

Technology-Based Business: Includes establishments that rely upon applied science and technology-based knowledge, principles and systems to produce goods and services of high value.

Autonomous Systems: Includes establishments that support the growth in uncrewed aircraft systems in the agricultural and energy industries, commercializing intellectual property, and operationalizing federal requirements.

Business Requirements

All internship, work experience, and apprenticeship experiences should provide opportunities for the student to develop patterns of professional behavior and skills, apply academic knowledge to work situations, and be related to the student's field of study or career goals. Positions must be related to the student's program of study to qualify unless they are a high school student. Specific learning objectives must be listed on the application to help determine the eligibility of the internship positions. These objectives should be tied to a specific project or workforce skill to be mastered during the internship. The intern's work must also be performed in North Dakota.

The employer is responsible for selecting and hiring the student. To qualify for the program, employers must select a student who is:

- a) enrolled in a college or university taking at least 6 credits during the internship, or the semester prior to the internship, or
- b) a high school junior or senior, or
- c) enrolled in a registered apprenticeship program; and

Interns must perform the duties of their internship in North Dakota.

Business Recommendations

Commerce recommends posting internships on the following websites:

- Job Service North Dakota - www.ndworkforceconnection.com, and
- Local colleges and university career services office

Commerce recommends the student be:

- a United States citizen or have permanent legal immigration status,
- in a program of study at least two years in length (if attending college), and
- working in an experience that corresponds with academic major or career goals.

Business Responsibility

Commerce requires employers to:

- sign and return to Commerce within two weeks of the intern's start date:
 - one signed copy of the Letter of Agreement, and
 - Student Application Form.
- register with the Office of Management and Budget to receive payment:
<https://www.nd.gov/omb/vendor/vendor-payments>
- If you have previously registered but have not received any state payments within the past 18 months, please contact OMB to be re-activated at 701-328-2773.
- verify and maintain records that the student is enrolled in a North Dakota college or university, is a high school junior or senior, or enrolled in a registered apprenticeship program, and
- maintain documentation of wages paid and/or other compensation and provide to Commerce upon request.
- submit a completed Request for Funds form once work has been completed. Employers may choose to submit this form for incremental payments throughout the internship or once the internship is completed. Failure to submit the Request for Funds form by the end of the program year may result in loss of access to the funding.

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About 10% of participating businesses are reviewed annually for fiscal and student verification. If a business is selected, documentation of expenses and verification of student enrollment must be provided or funding will need to be returned.

Funding

The maximum amount of Operation Intern funds an employer can receive is \$25,000 per funding round or \$50,000 per biennium. Employers will be limited to a maximum of 5 interns each funding round. Each biennium will have two funding rounds. The funding will start on May 1 of every year of award. Any funds not used in this time frame will be released and added to the funding for the second round. The second funding round will also start on May 1. Companies may apply for the maximum number of interns each round.

Applications will be accepted on February 1 (or the following business day if the 1st falls on a weekend) of each funding year.

Application reviews will be completed by the Work-based Learning Program Coordinator and the Director of the Workforce Division of the North Dakota Department of Commerce. Applications will be reviewed in the order received. A company's eligibility will be based on qualifying industry and internship criteria. Funding will then be obligated to the companies that have met all guidance eligibility. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the annual funding will be reserved for new companies that are applying and have not received Operation Intern funding within the past 5 years. Once the Operation Intern funding is obligated to the respected year's funding allocation, all remaining applicants will be notified of the funding window closure and placed on a waitlist.

Match

A one-to-one match or more of compensation to the student is required. Examples of compensation are wages and stipends, tuition and fees, books, housing assistance, or tools and equipment.

The one-to-one matching funds are provided after work has been performed and can be requested monthly or at the end of the experience. Documentation of wages paid and/or other compensation provided must be maintained by the employer and made available upon request. Commencement of funding as outlined in the terms of the Letter of Agreement.

Application Process

Applications must be submitted via the portal. For any questions related to the Operation Intern Program, please contact Kerri Kraft, Work-based Learning Program Coordinator at the North Dakota Department of Commerce at 701-328-7263 or opintern@nd.gov.

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