

## OPERATION INTERN 2021-2023 PROGRAM GUIDANCE

### 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.

Employers can access up to \$4,000 of matching funds for each student with a maximum of 5 interns per program funding year. Total maximum award per intern is \$8,000, for the lifetime of the program.

### 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, to include Cybersecurity. Funding may also be granted for other in demand occupations, will be determined using the [Workforce Development Council's annual listing](#). Government entities and non-profits do not qualify for the program, with the exception of the tourism and healthcare industry.

### 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, principals and systems to produce goods and services of high value.

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

Commerce may, on a case-by-case basis, approve the subsidization of a student enrolled in a college or university located outside of the state. Reasons for approving an out-of-state student may include the course-of-study not being provided by a North Dakota college or university or a North Dakota high-school graduate that is attending an out-of-state school. Employers interested in hiring an out-of-state student must contact the Operation Intern coordinator **prior** to submitting the student application to ensure the student qualifies for the program. These instances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The majority of a company's interns cannot be attending an out of state college or university even if they meet the above listed two exclusions.

### **Business Recommendations**

Commerce recommends posting internships on the following websites:

- Job Service North Dakota - [www.ndworkforceconnection.com](http://www.ndworkforceconnection.com), and
- Local colleges and universities 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),
- have an overall GPA (Grade Point Average) of at least 2.5, 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 intern's start date:  
one signed copy of the Letter of Agreement, and Student Application Form.  
**Student Application forms received after the two-week deadline will not be accepted.**
- Register with 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, 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.
- Request for Funds form is to be sent in **within 8 months from the date of the Letter of Agreement**. The Request for Funds form does not need to be for the full amount but must request some of the funding after the work is performed. Failure to do so may result in funds being reallocated to other companies.

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 \$20,000 per funding round or \$40,000 per biennium. Employers will be limited to a maximum of 5 interns each funding round. This biennium will have two funding rounds. The first round of funding will be from May 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022. Applications will be accepted from February 1, 2021 until all year one program funds are obligated. 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 be from May 1, 2022-June 30, 2023. Applications will be accepted from February 1, 2022 until all year two program funds are obligated. Companies may apply for the maximum number of interns each round. Students cannot receive more than \$8,000 through this program.

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. Any application for consideration must be received and approved 6 weeks prior to an internship starting. 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. In addition, the funding application will be deactivated from the Operation Intern webpage, until the next funding program year.

A one-to-one match or more of the 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. Funding begins on the date referenced on the Letter of Agreement.

### **Application Process**

Applications must be submitted via email to [opintern@nd.gov](mailto:opintern@nd.gov). 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](mailto:opintern@nd.gov).