

## **internNE powered by Aksarben Program Guidelines**

The internNE *powered by Aksarben* initiative, a collaborative effort between the Aksarben Foundation and the Department of Economic Development, aims to connect students and employers statewide by reimbursing eligible internship expenses. This initiative provides students with valuable work experience while helping Nebraska businesses shape their future workforce. Focusing on 11th and 12th-grade students, college students, and students who recently graduated, its goal is to retain local talent and attract new workers to the state.

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## Section A: Eligibility

To be eligible, the applicant, internship and student must meet all of the following requirements:

### Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are businesses with physical operations facilities in Nebraska, including for-profit businesses and non-profit organizations. State and federal government entities, governmental subdivisions (including counties, cities, villages, school districts, metropolitan utilities districts, or any other subdivision of the state, which receive revenue raised by taxation), and public and private colleges and universities are not eligible to apply for funding from the InternNE program.

### Eligible Internships

1. An internship is the employment of a student in a professional or technical position for a limited period of time, by a business in Nebraska, in which the student (a) gains valuable work experience, (b) increases knowledge that assists with career decision-making, and (c) assists the business in accelerating short-term business objectives.
2. The internship must have a mentor. The mentor serves as a resource by sharing insights and providing guidance about the workplace, careers and education.
3. The internship position must be held by a new intern who is hired on or after the date of application.
4. The internship must be completed within a period of no more than twelve (12) months and for a sufficient duration to allow the student to gain significant valuable work experience and knowledge. Sufficient duration will be determined individually for each application and internship description. (Internships that are of a sufficient duration are typically at least 240 hours.)
5. The internship must pay at least the current state minimum wage. Applicants who are providing a competitive wage for their internships will be prioritized.
6. The internship must be completed within the State of Nebraska.
7. The internship must not result in internships constituting more than 50% of the company workforce in Nebraska. InternNE is not intended to be support for indefinite or part-time employment. Internship positions may not take the place of permanent full-time positions.
8. An intern may be allowed to telecommute if the business is located more than 30 miles from the college or university in which the intern is enrolled, and if the college or university is in Nebraska. The business must receive written preapproval from the Department to hire an intern that will telecommute or for an intern to transition to a telecommuting internship.

### Eligible Students

An eligible student is any person who:

1. Is in eleventh or twelfth grade in a public or private high school; or
2. Is enrolled in a college, university, or other institution of higher education; or
3. Is hired and begins their internship within twelve months following graduation from a college, university, or other institution of higher education.

Students employed by the business must start on or after the business' application date. Students who start before the business' application date are not eligible for InternNE positions.

## Section B: Grant Amounts

### Level of Grant

A business may request up to \$7,500 per internship and will be required to provide a match equal to the grant amount per Internship.

### Maximum Number of Internships

A business will be limited to a maximum of 25 awarded internships in a 12-month period. A business may apply for no more than two consecutive grants for the same student.

## Section C: Eligible Use of Funds

### Eligible Reimbursements

Eligible reimbursement costs are wages, tuition reimbursement, internship housing, transportation expenses relating to the internship, and internship recruitment or administrative costs of the eligible intern. Any activities not specifically authorized in the contract are ineligible for reimbursement.

**Wages:** Businesses with less than 50 full-time equivalent employees are eligible to be reimbursed for wages paid to the intern.

**Tuition Reimbursement:** Businesses may be reimbursed for tuition paid for a student at a college or university.

**Internship Housing:** Businesses may be reimbursed for internship housing paid for by the business. The student must reside in Nebraska. Potential reimbursable costs in this category would include, but not limited to student housing at a Nebraska college or university, rental costs, short-term hotel stays.

**Transportation Expenses:** Businesses may be reimbursed for transportation costs related to the internship. All costs must be direct costs. Potential reimbursable costs in this category would include, but not limited to mileage reimbursement, airfare, cost of a car rental, cab rides, or bus passes.

**Internship Recruitment Costs:** Business may be reimbursed for costs associated with recruiting out of state students to their internship positions. All costs must be direct costs associated with recruiting the student to the business' internship position in Nebraska. Potential reimbursable costs could include, but not limited to travel costs for the recruiter and intern.

**Administrative Costs:** Business may be reimbursed for administrative costs associated with hiring an eligible student. Examples of qualifying costs: career fairs, support services from organizations who specialize in providing resources/assistance for internships, internship networking events, participation in a local young professional's group/conference, etc.

## Section D: Application, Review and Contract Date and Criteria

### Application, Review and Contract Schedule

Applications will be accepted during the Application Dates below and evaluated based on the information provided in the application and internship job posting, plus information obtained by Department staff. The Director of the Department or a Designee maintains the discretion to award grants at any time. InternNE Grant timeline:

Application Date	Application Deadline	Date of Notice of Awards/Denials	Contract Start Date (1 year contract)
October 1	November 30	December 15 - 31	January 1 – December 31
January 1	February 28	March 15 - 31	April 1 – March 31
April 1	May 31	June 15 - 31	July 1 – June 31
July 1	August 31	September 15 -30	October 1 – September 30

- **Application Date:** Applications and internship postings must be submitted during this timeframe to be considered for a grant award. This is, also, the date that the business submitted the application on InternNE.com and eligible students must start on or after the Application Date to be eligible for internNE *powered by Aksarben* funds.
- **Application Deadline:** In order for an application to be included in the review cycle the internship description(s) **and** application must be submitted utilizing the [Grant Management System \(GMS\)](#) on or before the Application Deadline. Applications received after the Application Deadline will not be considered for funding.
- **Contract Start Date:** If the applicant is awarded an InternNE grant, the contract will begin on the Contract Start Date for one year. Only costs incurred on or after the Contract Start Date may be eligible for reimbursement.
- **Contract End Date:** Only costs incurred on or before the Contract End Date may be eligible for reimbursement. All forms and reimbursement requests must be submitted utilizing the [GMS](#) on or before 30 days after the Contract End Date.

### Application Review Criteria

The Department of Economic Development and the Aksarben Foundation will evaluate applications competitively; approval and the amount granted per internship will be dependent on the availability of funds. The Department reserves the right to fund internships at its discretion.

Internships with these attributes will receive additional points:

- Provides a competitive wage in their occupation/major.
- Internship is within the STEM field.
- Internship is an H3 (high wage, high skill, high demand) occupation in Nebraska.
- Internship is located outside of Lancaster, Douglas or Sarpy Counties (the importance of state support for economic development in rural and economically distressed areas will be taken into account).

## Section E: Forms and Documentation Required

### Timing of Disbursements

Grants are disbursed on a reimbursement basis. Reimbursements are upon completion of an internship by an intern and within 30 days of the completion of the internship, within 30 days of incurring the maximum grant allowance, or within 30 days of the Contract End Date.

### Forms and Documentation Required

No funds will be disbursed until all three forms and reports from the intern and business are received. Please follow the steps outlined above and detailed in the contract.

- a) **Executed Contract:** the authorized individual must sign the contract; the contract must be emailed to the Department ([rose.baker@nebraska.gov](mailto:rose.baker@nebraska.gov) or [lori.shaal@nebraska.gov](mailto:lori.shaal@nebraska.gov)).
- b) **ACH Form:** completed by the business and required by the State to reimburse your business account directly; please submit form to [rose.baker@nebraska.gov](mailto:rose.baker@nebraska.gov) or [lori.shaal@nebraska.gov](mailto:lori.shaal@nebraska.gov).
- c) **Student Verification Form:** this is completed on the [GMS](#) by the student at the beginning of their internship.
- d) **Student Evaluation Form:** this is completed on [GMS](#) by the student at the end of their internship.
- e) **Internship Completion Form/Reimbursement Request:** this form is completed on [GMS](#) by the business at the end of each student's internship. After submitting this form, email Lori Shaal at [lori.shaal@nebraska.gov](mailto:lori.shaal@nebraska.gov).
  - **Supporting Documentation:** Documentation is required with each Reimbursement Request. The Department requires a source document that contains the details of the business transaction and proof of payment for the transaction.

## Section G: Contract Time of Performance

### Contract Period

Student Verification Forms must be submitted within the 12-month period and must be received by the Department no later than 30 days after the Intern's first day of employment with the business. All costs must be incurred within the 12-month contract time of performance.

### Contract Amendments

A business may request a contract amendment. Amendment requests should be submitted using the [InternNE powered by Aksarben](#) GMS to the Department.

## Section H: Performance Requirements and Non-Compliance Penalties

### Performance Monitoring

The Department will review progress on the project as needed, with at least one monitoring prior to final grant reimbursement. The monitoring may be desktop or in person. The review will confirm the following:

- a) Positions for which InternNE funds were granted were actually created.
- b) An eligible intern was hired for the internship positions.
- c) The intern was paid at least the state minimum wage and the wages agreed in the contract.
- d) All costs were eligible.
- e) The internship position and duties meet required criteria.

### E-Verify

The business will be required to use the E-Verify Program to verify the employment eligibility of the intern and all employees the business hires during the contract period.

**Non-Compliance**

If the business is found to be non-compliant, the Department may revoke funding commitments and/or seek repayment of funds granted. If the business relocates or abandons its site during the grant disbursement period, the future disbursements are deemed invalid and the contract is canceled.

**For Information & Resources**

For additional information and resources on best practices or how to create an internship program for your organization go to [www.internneb.org](http://www.internneb.org) or contact Shonna or Grace with the Aksarben Foundation.

## Definition of Terms

Full-Time Equivalent (FTE): Full-time workers are those who work 40 hours a week at their sole or principal job.

H3: High wage, high skill and high demand jobs as defined by the Nebraska Department of Labor. More information: <http://h3.ne.gov/>

Internship: The employment of a Student in a professional or technical position for a limited period of time, by a business in Nebraska, in which the Student (a) gains valuable applied work experiences, (b) increases knowledge and develops connections that assist with career decision making, (c) has the opportunity to match with an employer seeking talent to evaluate, develop, and retain, or (d) receives credited or certified training for skilled positions that will help resolve skilled workforce shortages and create talent pipelines for Nebraska industries

Mentor: The mentor serves as a resource by sharing insights and providing guidance about the workplace, careers and education.

Net New Internship: An Internship position that is filled on or after the date of application.

Proof of Payment: A copy of the check, confirmation of the credit card or debit card payment, confirmation of wire or automated clearinghouse transfer, and any other information required to demonstrate that payment has been made in the amount due and identified with the organization name.

Student: Any person who: (a) is in 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade in a public or private high school; or (b) enrolled full-time in a college, university, or other institution of higher education; or (c) applies for an internship within twelve months following graduation from a public or private high school or a college, university, or other institution of higher education.

STEM: The definition of STEM according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics is Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) occupations include computer and mathematics, architecture and engineering, and life and physical science occupations.

Source Document: the original document that contains the details of the business transaction. A source document contains the key information about a transaction, such as names of the parties involved, amounts paid, the date, and the substance of the transaction.

Telecommute: A business may allow a student to telecommute if the business is located more than thirty miles from the college, university, or other institution of higher education in which the student is enrolled and if the college, university, or other institution of higher education is in Nebraska.