

internNE powered by Aksarben Program Guidelines: Effective July 1, 2024

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 a physical facility operation 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 net 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 of \$12/hr. Applicants who are providing a competitive wage for their internships will be prioritized.

**Effective January 1, 2025 the state minimum wage increases to \$13.50 per hour.*

6. The internship must be completed within the State of Nebraska. To complete the internship within the State of Nebraska, the student must reside in the state while completing the internship.
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 positions.
8. An intern may be allowed to telecommute if the business is located in Nebraska and the college, university, or other institution of higher education in which the student is enrolled 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. Begins their internship within twelve months following graduation from a high school, college, university, or institution of higher education.

Students employed by the business must start on or after the business' application date to be considered net new. Students who start before the business' application date are not eligible students 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. The grant is structured as a 50% reimbursement, up to the grant amount awarded 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: Effective July 1, 2024 businesses with less than 150 full-time equivalent employees (FTE) are eligible to be reimbursed for wages paid to the intern. This applies for contracts with a start date of July 1, 2024 and after.

Businesses with a contract start date prior to June 30, 2024: Businesses with less than 50 (FTE) 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: Businesses 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 intern.

Administrative Costs: Businesses 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, external networking events, participation in a local young professional's group/conference, etc.

Proof of Payment & Source Documents

- All costs must be supported with payroll, invoices, proof of payment, and/or appropriate documentation.
- Payroll submitted as supporting documentation should include the student's name, the number of hours worked during the pay period, hourly wage, etc.

- Receipts and/or invoices submitted for eligible costs must be itemized. Costs incurred prior to the Contract Start Date are not eligible for reimbursement.

Ineligible Costs

Ineligible costs include, but not limited to are indirect costs, equipment costs (laptops, swag, merchandise, etc.), internal events, training costs with internal managers/supervisors/peers, food, alcohol, and other costs deemed unallowable by DED.

Section D: Application, Review and Contract Date and Criteria

Application, Review and Contract Schedule

Applications will be accepted during the Application Cycle Dates below and evaluated based on the information provided in the application and internship job post form(s), 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 Cycle Start Date	Application Cycle Deadline, 5PM CT	Date of Notice of Awards/Denials	Contract Start & End Date (1 year contract)
January 1	February 28	March 15 - 31	April 1 – March 31
April 1	May 31	June 15 - 30	July 1 – June 30
July 1	August 30	September 15 -30	October 1 – September 30
October 1	November 27	December 15 - 31	January 1 – December 31

- **Application Cycle Start Date:** The Department will begin accepting applications on this date. An application and internship job post form(s) must be submitted during this timeframe to be included in the review cycle and considered for a grant award.
- **Application Cycle Deadline:** This is the last day the Department will accept applications. In order for an application to be included in the review cycle the application and the internship job post form(s) must be submitted on or before the Application Deadline. Applications received after the Application Deadline will not be considered for funding. Applications must be submitted by 5PM, CT.
- **Date of Notice of Award/Denials:** This is the timeframe when the Department will email all applicants a notice of award or a notice of denial.
- **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:** This is the last day of the Contract Period for an award recipient. Any costs incurred after the Contract End Date will not be reimbursed.

Application Review Criteria

The Department of Economic Development 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 an additional point(s):

- 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 a one-time reimbursement for each internship position and may be submitted at the completion of the internship or within 30 days after the Contract End Date. The business will not be reimbursed for students who do not meet the eligibility requirements, required forms have not been submitted, or for expenses incurred outside the contract period.

Forms and Documentation Required

No funds will be disbursed until all items below have been submitted.

- Executed Contract:** Contracts will be emailed to award recipients 4-8 weeks after the notice of award. The authorized individual for the organization must sign the contract using DocuSign.
- ACH Form and Verification Document:** This form is completed by the organization and required by the State to reimburse your organization's business account directly. This form can be found on our [InternNE webpage](#).
- Student Verification Form:** this is completed in the [GMS](#) by the student at the beginning of their internship. The student must register for an InternNE Student account at www.InternNE.com, in order to access the student forms. Please note, if the student does not submit this form, the student will not be linked to your business for their internship and the Employer Final Eval/Reimbursement Form will not populate in the system.
- Student Evaluation Form:** this is completed in the [GMS](#) by the student at the end of their internship.
- Employer Final Evaluation Form:** this form is completed in [GMS](#) by the business at the end of each student's internship. After submitting this form, email ded.internne@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.

The Department may also request documentation verifying the intern meets the student eligibility requirements, verification of meeting the state minimum wage requirement, or other appropriate documentation.

Section F: Contract Time of Performance

Contract Period

All forms, including the student verification form, student evaluation form, and the employer final evaluation must be submitted during the contract period. All costs incurred must be incurred during the contract time of performance.

Contract Amendments

A grant recipient may request a contract amendment to their existing contract. Amendment requests should be submitted using the GMS to the Department.

Section G: 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:

- 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. For more information, questions, or concerns on E-Verify contact [Nebraska Department of Revenue](#).

Non-Compliance

If the business is found to be non-complaint, 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

Aksarben actively engages employers, students, and education partners to facilitate quality candidate connection opportunities. By fostering these connections, Aksarben strengthens community ties and shapes Nebraska's future by empowering students, supporting employer, and fostering growth. For additional information and resources go to www.internneb.org or contact Shonna Dorsey 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 11th or 12th 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 in Nebraska and the college, university, or other institution of higher education in which the student is enrolled is in Nebraska.