

*North Dakota*  
LEGENDARY

# INTERNSHIP GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES



**Internships are an excellent way to gain additional workforce and foster future employees while helping North Dakota's youth gain practical work experience. The State of North Dakota offers programs and assistance to help businesses create or expand internship programs in their organization.**

## What is an Internship?

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An internship is on-the-job learning that gives practical experience related to a chosen career field. This experience can help students decide if a career is right for them and also enhance their skillset. Most interns are sophomores, juniors and seniors in college.

## Why Use Internships?

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Internships have many benefits to both the student and employer, including fresh perspectives, increased productivity and enthusiasm. Interns are a resource for potential full-time employees, helping to reduce hiring times. Interns also help with additional workforce for special projects or filling gaps during peak work seasons. Internships are beneficial to companies, large and small.

## Employer Internship Benefits

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- Increase productivity
- Gain short-term talent
- Encourage students to stay in the community
- Provide full-time employees more time to focus on important tasks
- Market your company via word of mouth
- Remain competitive within your industry
- Satisfaction in mentoring a student during learning experience

# Student Internship Benefits

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- Applying college coursework to the career world
- Exploration of different career options
- Exploration of companies
- Develop new and define existing skills
- Growth of professional network and experience
- Potential source of full-time employment
- Potential source of income
- Potential source of college credit

## Getting Started

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### **Selecting the Best Time to Recruit Intern Help**

Internships typically coincide with a school semester (September-December, January-April, May-August). Summer internships are more common as students can commit to them full-time. Other decisions to consider:

- What will be the duration of the internship?
- How many interns does the company need?
- Is there enough meaningful work to assign?
- Do you have the physical and financial resources for an intern?
- Will there be requirements such as a minimum GPA?
- Is there potential to hire the intern full-time?
- Will the position be paid or unpaid?

### **Assign Meaningful Tasks to the Intern**

Interns want to be challenged and apply coursework to real life situations. Answering the phones and filing can be a part of their task list but should be seen as secondary and not a main task.

### **Develop a Job Description**

Outline the work to be expected. A job description will give the intern a clear understanding of what is expected and if it matches the work experience they are seeking.

### **Assign a Supervisor**

The supervisor should be someone directly related to the intern's work. This supervisor should be involved in creating the job description and the hiring phase as they will have a better insight into the needed skill set. This person will need to be available throughout the internship to train and orient the employee to company processes and procedures.

### **Assign an Office Mentor**

An office mentor is not a substitute for an internship supervisor, but is someone who would be available to the intern to offer guidance on work environment details, office etiquette, and answer any other general questions. This may include a tour of the workplace, introductions to other staff members, and other ways to help make the intern feel welcome and ensure they achieve success in their position.

## **Finding Interns**

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There are plenty of options for posting open internship positions online:

### **Company Website**

Posting internship opportunities on your organization's website and possible social media is one way to reach interns. Employees may also have potential candidates as someone they know personally that would fit into the culture and work environment.

### **Job Service of North Dakota**

Job Service of North Dakota has created a central location to post or search for internship opportunities. As most organizations already post open work positions on Job Service's website, it would be a simple process to advertise internship positions on the site as well.

When to post openings:

- Spring internships: post in September/October
- Summer internships: post in February/March
- Fall internships: post in March/April (most students plan fall activities during spring semester)

Career fairs and colleges are also helpful resources in finding interns.

### **Career Fairs**

High schools and colleges hold career fairs at various times of the year. These fairs are great opportunities to recruit interns and promote your organization to a large audience of students. The face-to-face interaction may also be used to pre-screen potential candidates. Most career fairs require that organizations purchase booth space to advertise available positions and distribute marketing materials. A current list of career fairs can be found at [NDYouthForward.com](http://NDYouthForward.com).

### **College Career Centers**

Career centers at colleges and universities offer assistance to students in finding both internships and full-time employment. Developing relationships with university professors also helps locate interested interns. Professors can pass on internship positions to their classes and promote interest in the industry by pairing it with required classes for the degree.

## Selecting an Intern

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Selecting an intern should follow a similar process to selecting any other employee. The intern should be required to fill out an application and/or submit a resume. Identifying the student's college major will help define if the internship is appropriate or if a more suitable candidate can be found.

The interview process will give you a chance to find strengths, review any job experience, coursework, time management and potential abilities of each candidate. Schedules and pay, if applicable, should also be discussed. Remember most students are replacing part-time work with their internships so a competitive wage may help with securing the best candidate.

# The Intern, Your Employee

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Once you have hired the intern, some preparation and coordination will be needed. Start with a short orientation meeting with the intern's mentor and supervisor, clearly outlining responsibilities and expectations. A tour of the company and work space will get the intern comfortable and ready to work. Knowing small details such as where to park and how to work the phone system help alleviate some of the stress and allow the intern to concentrate on their tasks. Since some interns may not have much experience, a thorough explanation of policies, dress code and office hours should not be overlooked.

Developing a checklist will help ensure consistency in internship orientation. A checklist should contain information such as location of parking spots, copiers, fax machines, supply rooms, rest rooms and break rooms. It should also include office policies such as Jeans Day, coffee fund, etc.

Supervisors should schedule periodic reviews to check on the status of assigned tasks and projects, as well as provide feedback to help the intern identify their strengths and opportunities for improvement. This review may also be used to gauge the type of projects assigned to interns against the academic learning in the classroom. The intern's feedback will help the company improve or maintain their internship program successfully.

## Programs and Incentives

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The State of North Dakota offers programs and incentives to help businesses create and expand internship programs.

### **Internship Employment Credit**

The Internship Employment Credit allows companies a state income tax credit for interns. The credit is equal to 10 percent of the compensation paid to the intern. This credit is allowed for up to five interns employed at the same time. An employer is allowed no more than \$3,000 of credits for all tax years. Visit [ND.Gov/tax](http://ND.Gov/tax) for more information.

## Operation Intern

Operation Intern is designed to expand the number of internship, work experience and apprenticeship positions with North Dakota employers in selected targeted industries:

- Energy
- Advanced manufacturing
- Value-added agriculture
- Tourism
- Technology



Employers can access \$3,000 of matching funds for each student. The maximum amount of matching funds an employer can receive per biennium is \$30,000. For more information and to apply, visit [OperationIntern.com](http://OperationIntern.com).

“Since BNI Coal began participating with the Operation Intern program, three student interns have been hired into full-time positions and several student interns have returned for a second year of interning, resulting in reduced recruiting costs.”

- Chris Blowers, Human Resources Manager, BNI Coal

The North Dakota Department of Commerce helps businesses develop successful internships, including more information on tax incentives and business grants for internship program development.

**For more information:**

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**NDCommerce.com**

A photograph of a young woman with long blonde hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is in an office environment. Behind her, there are two computer monitors; the one on the right displays a map. To the left, a large map is pinned to a wall. The scene is lit with soft, indoor lighting.

*January 2015, 500 copies*