

MANUFACTURING

in Lehman's Terms

Incentives 101: Operation Intern

As we wrap-up yet another summer and send the college kids off for a year of hitting the books, manufacturers will soon start lining up career fairs in search of college talent to fill a variety of positions. Internships are a great solution to establish a very valuable pool of future potential hires to meet the day-to-day operations or special project needs of manufacturing.

One program which has proven to be very effective in helping manufacturers defray the cost of internships is Operation Intern. Operation Intern is a grant program offered through the North Dakota Department of Commerce designed to encourage internships, work experiences, and apprenticeships with North Dakota companies. The program has been around for quite a while, but the reimbursement has been increased this year from \$3000 to \$4000 (1:1 match) to subsidize the student's employment compensation.



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Manufacturers can utilize the program for up to five students per funding window (twice per biennium), for a maximum reimbursement of \$40,000 per biennium. Priority will be given to private sector businesses in targeted industries: energy, advanced manufacturing, value-added agriculture, tourism, and technology-based businesses. In demand occupations may also be granted. Government entities and charitable non-profits are not eligible.

To qualify, the student must be:

1. Enrolled in a North Dakota college or university taking at least six credits during the internship, or the semester prior to the internship.
2. A high school junior or senior, or
3. Enrolled in a registered apprenticeship program, or
4. In very limited cases, Commerce may approve students from a course of study not being offered in N.D. or a N.D. high school graduate attending an out of state school.

Operation Intern is a flexible program and can be used in a variety of ways:

1. **Example 1:** One way in which companies can utilize the program is by entertaining work experiences for high school juniors or seniors. Now that company scholarship programs are becoming more popular, a work experience can be good way for employers to get to know the student and see how they fit in prior to investing in the scholarship. It also gives the students a chance to see if it is the right career choice for them.
2. **Example 2:** A popular way manufacturers have been utilizing internships has been through recruiting engineering students. A great way to put this to use, would be to couple the internships with the manufacturer's lean initiatives. These project-based internships are a great way to utilize the program, initiate your lean objectives, and get the student valuable education.

3. **Example 3:** The program can be used to subsidize apprenticeships as well for in demand occupations as identified by North Dakota Job Service. With respect to manufacturing, this could be for welding, maintenance mechanics, etc. This can also be a great way to re-skill your current employees!

Regardless of how you plan to utilize Operation Intern, please keep in mind the position must be aligned with the student's career aspirations or field of study. To request a paper application or for additional questions and assistance, contact Jennifer Dahl, Youth Office/Operation Intern Coordinator at the North Dakota Department of Commerce at 701-328-7268.

For additional information regarding incentives programs or general manufacturing inquiries in North Dakota please feel free to contact me, and best of luck during the during the career fair season!

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