



Powered by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation

STEAM Ahead is a statewide program administered by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)’s Talent Solutions. The program aims to foster meaningful, hands-on career experiences for students interested in STEAM-related positions and to support companies in Michigan – of all sizes – with building their talent pipeline.

STEAM Ahead provides financial support to qualifying companies by matching employer contributions up to \$4,000 for full-time interns and up to \$2,000 for part-time interns.

This handbook serves as a living document and provides an overview of the program for employers who are participating, or interested in participating, in STEAM Ahead.

Questions? Please visit the [STEAM Ahead website](#) or email steamahead@michigan.org.

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II. How to Participate as a Company

- **STEP 1: Complete the one-time Company Application**

This online form takes approximately 5 minutes to complete and can be found on the [STEAM Ahead website](#).

Once the form is successfully submitted, a MEDC staff member will reach out within 5 business days to confirm your company's participation in the program and provide next steps for submitting internships for program funding consideration. See [Appendix A](#) for a copy of the application form.

Once your company has an approved application on file, this step can be skipped.

- **STEP 2: Submit internship(s) for program funding consideration each semester.**

If the internship is approved, a MEDC staff member will reach out within 5 business days to notify the employer and ensure your company is enrolled in the payment portal. See [Appendix B](#) for a copy of the application form.

The internship submission form must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the intern's start date on the form.

- **STEP 3: Submit requests for payment from our vendor.**

STEAM Ahead is now a reimbursement-based program. You'll onboard the intern and pay them directly as you typically would and then request repayment from the MEDC (via the payment vendor) for MEDC's contribution towards your intern's wages.

See [Program Funding](#) & [Payment Process](#) for further information.

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III. Program Qualifications

Companies

Companies applying to participate in STEAM Ahead will be evaluated according to several key criteria, including the following:

- The company's **ties to Michigan**: Companies must be Michigan-based or have a strong operational presence in Michigan.
- Any size company is eligible — from enterprise organizations to startups — so long as it is a **legal entity** (e.g., C-Corp, S-Corp, LLC, LLP, B-Corp, nonprofits)
- **Technology-focused** businesses are preferred.
- A company's previous experience **working with interns**. This means that even if a company has an approved company application on file, a company's experience working with interns will be taken into consideration each time a company submits interns for program funding consideration.
- The company must be **in good standing** with the program since its inception.

Internships

Internships will be evaluated on several key criteria, including the following:

- The position description and **its relevancy to STEAM** (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) fields.
 - Internships could be STEM or STEM + Arts focused. Examples of STEM + Arts would be sound or architectural engineers, graphic designers/illustrators.
- **8 to 12 weeks in length** and take place within the window of the semester.
- **Minimum pay rate of \$15 per hour**. Companies are welcome to set their own wage above that amount with the understanding that, once MEDC's match has been exhausted, the company is responsible for 100% of the cost.
- **On-site work experience** in Michigan for at least one (1) week or five (5) business days – the days do not need to be consecutive to qualify.
- The proposed intern supervisor. Participating companies must provide a **direct supervisor** to the intern that is capable and willing to provide a meaningful work and career experience.

Interns

To be eligible to participate, the intern must:

- Be **attending**, or **recently graduated** from, college or university.
- Have a **Michigan connection** (whether their college/university is here, they live in Michigan, or have family here).

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IV. Program Deadlines

STEAM Ahead Follows a semester schedule. These dates will be updated annually for the upcoming Academic Year.

Important Dates	Summer '24	Fall '24	Winter / Spring '25	Summer '25
Internship Submission Form Opens <i>Approved employers submit internship(s) for funding consideration.</i>	Apr 15	Aug 12	Dec 2	Apr 14
Semester Begins <i>Earliest start date for internship(s).</i>	May 6	Sep 3	Jan 13	May 5
Internship Submission Form Closes <i>No submissions after this date.</i>	Jun 7	Oct 4	Feb 7	Jun 6
Last possible internship start dates for semester	Jun 10 (12 wks.) Jun 17 (11 wks.) Jun 24 (10 wks.) Jul 1 (9 wks.) Jul 8 (8 wks.)	Sep 30 (12 wks.) Oct 7 (11 wks.) Oct 14 (10 wks.) Oct 21 (9 wks.) Oct 28 (8 wks.)	Feb 10 (12 wks.) Feb 17 (11 wks.) Feb 24 (10 wks.) Mar 3 (9 wks.) Mar 10 (8 wks.)	Jun 9 (12 wks.) Jun 16 (11 wks.) Jun 23 (10 wks.) Jun 30 (9 wks.) Jul 7 (8 wks.)
Semester Ends <i>All interns must end by this date.</i>	Aug 30	Dec 20	May 2	Aug 29

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Program Funding

If the intern and internship qualify, the MEDC will match an employer's contribution up to \$4,000 for a full-time intern and up to \$2,000 for a part-time intern.

- Part-time is defined as 20 hours or less and full-time is defined as 21 – 40 hours.
 - Any overtime payment must be paid 100% by the employer.
- MEDC's contribution will be applied to the intern's wages only.
- Companies will pay for their intern directly and then request reimbursement for MEDC's contribution towards the intern's wages only. The MEDC will pay 50% of their wages, alongside the employer, until MEDC's contribution has been met or the internship ends – whichever comes first.
- While the minimum wage for this program is \$15 per hour, companies are welcome to set their own wage above that amount with the understanding that, once MEDC's match has been exhausted, the company is responsible for 100% of the cost.
- Although most internships run over the summer, companies can apply to participate year-round. The final number of internship positions awarded will depend on fund availability and alignment to the qualification criteria.

Funding Example Scenarios

- **Intern A** is paid \$15 per hour for 20 hours/week for an 8-week internship. The maximum possible MEDC contribution for part-time status is \$2,000.
 - Based on the hourly wage, number of hours, and length of internship, the intern should receive a total of \$2,400 in wages only. MEDC's total contribution towards this internship will be \$1,200 and the employer's will be \$1,200.
- **Intern B** is paid \$25 per hour for 20 hours/week for an 8-week internship. The maximum possible MEDC contribution for part-time status is \$2,000.
 - Based on the hourly wage, number of hours, and length of internship, the intern should receive a total of \$4,000 in wages only. MEDC's total contribution towards this internship will be \$2,000 and the employer's will be \$2,000.
- **Intern C** is paid \$15 per hour for 40 hours/week for a 12-week internship. The maximum possible MEDC contribution for full-time status is \$4,000.
 - Based on the hourly wage, number of hours, and length of internship, the intern should receive a total of \$7,200 in wages only. MEDC's total contribution towards this internship will be \$3,600 and the employer's will be \$3,600.
- **Intern D** is paid \$20 per hour for 40 hours/week for a 12-week internship. The maximum possible MEDC contribution for full-time status is \$4,000.
 - Based on the hourly wage, number of hours, and length of internship, the intern should receive a total of \$9,600 in wages only. MEDC's total contribution towards this internship will be \$4,000 and the employer's will be \$5,600.

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I. Payment Process

After an internship submission has been approved, the company will need to register with the payment portal platform, Coupa. This platform is operated by MEDC's payment vendor, OpTech.

The company's invoice / payroll processor will receive a 'Payment Request Template' that must be completed each pay period to detail the payment request being made. It must be attached each time the company puts in a payment request in order for payment to be made. The Template also includes detailed guidance on how to register for Coupa and how to request payments.

Coupa Registration

Registering in Coupa is required for companies to request, review, and receive payment for MEDC's contribution towards intern wages.

Once the company's internship submission form(s) has been approved, the MEDC will provide OpTech with the approved internship information to pre-load the company and internship information into their invoicing structure.

The participating company's invoice/payroll processor, listed on the approved internship submission form, will then receive an email to register for the payment portal. The email will be titled: "Action Required – OpTech US Registration Instructions". Please select 'Join Coupa Supplier Portal' to begin the registration process.

To register, the company will need to create a Coupa account. Please follow the prompts and contact OpTech at steamahead.pay@optechus.com if you are having issues creating an account. If your company already has a Coupa account for other purposes, please contact OpTech for back-end support in accessing the STEAM Ahead Payment Portal.

No documents are required to register, but the company will need to provide OpTech with ACH information for direct payment purposes and to confirm the company's mailing address in case a check(s) will need to be issued.

Coupa Payment Request & Payment Cycle

The company's payroll/invoice processor will login to Coupa each pay period to submit payment requests and attach the completed 'Payment Request Template'.

Payment requests will be due on a biweekly basis. Companies should expect to receive payment within 10 business days of submitting the request within Coupa. If the request is not submitted to Coupa by the due date, the employer will be paid by the following payment date.

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The reimbursement cycle for calendar year 2024 will be:

Pay Period – Start	Pay Period – End	Request Due By in Coupa	Company Paid By
5/5/2024	5/18/2024	5/21/2024	6/4/2024
5/19/2024	6/1/2024	6/4/2024	6/18/2024
6/2/2024	6/15/2024	6/18/2024	7/2/2024
6/16/2024	6/29/2024	7/2/2024	7/16/2024
6/30/2024	7/13/2024	7/16/2024	7/30/2024
7/14/2024	7/27/2024	7/30/2024	8/13/2024
7/28/2024	8/10/2024	8/13/2024	8/27/2024
8/11/2024	8/24/2024	8/27/2024	9/10/2024
8/25/2024	9/7/2024	9/10/2024	9/24/2024
9/8/2024	9/21/2024	9/24/2024	10/8/2024
9/22/2024	10/5/2024	10/8/2024	10/22/2024
10/6/2024	10/19/2024	10/22/2024	11/5/2024
10/20/2024	11/2/2024	11/5/2024	11/19/2024
11/3/2024	11/16/2024	11/19/2024	12/3/2024
11/17/2024	11/30/2024	12/3/2024	12/17/2024
12/1/2024	12/14/2024	12/17/2024	12/31/2024
12/15/2024	12/28/2024	12/31/2024	1/14/2025

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II. Frequently Asked Questions

How does a company participate in the program?

The first step is to submit a Company Application form – this online application is linked to the [STEAM Ahead website](#).

What if the company isn't in the STEAM field – does it still qualify?

The company itself does not need to be in the STEAM field to participate, but the internship position must be STEM / STEAM-focused.

What if I have an internship that starts before / ends after the semester? Does it qualify?

To qualify for MEDC funding, the internship must (A) start on or after the first day of the current semester and (B) end by or on the last day of the current semester.

Can I extend an intern's internship if we would like to keep them on?

There are case-by-case scenarios which may qualify – for example, if the contribution has not been met, there is still time within the semester, or the maximum number of weeks has not been met.

Is there a limit on the number of interns I can submit to STEAM Ahead?

The program is first come, first serve. There is no maximum on the number of interns the employer can submit, however the number of awards will depend on fund availability and whether the intern/internships qualify.

How many times can an Intern participate in STEAM Ahead?

A company can submit the same intern to STEAM Ahead up to two times in an academic year.

What if I need to submit an internship but it's not two weeks before the start date?

Internship submission forms must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the intern's start date on the form – this provides us with time to review and approve the internships and ensure the company is registered in Coupa and ready to go for payment. If the internship is not submitted with at least two weeks' notice, the internship will not be accepted unless the start date is moved.

What if I have an internship with a higher hourly rate? Can the internship be <8 weeks?

Employers are encouraged to pay interns higher than the \$15 minimum hourly wage, but the internship must still meet the qualifying minimum number of weeks (8 weeks).

Where do Interns need to be enrolled or recently graduated from?

An intern must be attending or have recently graduated (within 12 months or less) from an accredited 2- or 4-year institution (e.g., community college, university) to be eligible.

I have an intern who is not currently in school – can they participate?

Recent graduates can participate in STEAM Ahead, but the internship must begin within one year of the student's graduation date. For example, if the student graduated on May 17, 2023, the internship must start on or before May 16, 2024.

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How long must the on-site work experience be in Michigan?

The on-site work experience must be for at least one week or five business days long, but the days do not need to be consecutive.

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Are international students eligible?

Yes! International students are eligible – and encouraged – to participate, so long as the program qualifications are met.

How many interns can a company submit for consideration?

There is no maximum number, but the final number of positions awarded will depend on fund availability and alignment to the qualification criteria.

Can high school students participate in STEAM Ahead?

Currently, only university / college students – or recent graduates – can participate in STEAM Ahead.

If you are interested in hiring a high school student for an internship experience, check out Digital Lakes' micro-internship program: [Programs - Digital Lakes \(digital-lakes.org\)](https://digital-lakes.org).

Do co-ops or apprenticeships qualify for internship funding?

If the co-op meets the program criteria, then it could qualify as internships and co-ops are similar in nature and provide an opportunity for the student to learn and earn before being hired by an employer. Apprenticeships do not qualify, however, there is other funding (e.g., state, federal) to support [apprenticeships](#) if your company is interested.

Can any Art internship qualify?

While we allow internships that involve the arts, those internships must still support Michigan's S, T, E, M talent pipeline; the arts can play a crucial role in this, especially with positions including (but not limited to): graphic designers, scientific illustrators, marketing & communications analytics, CGI artists, 3D artists, video game art design, etc.

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III. Appendix A: Company Application Form

This is an overview of the online form.

SECTION 1: Thank You for your interest in STEAM Ahead!

SECTION 2: About Your Company

1. Company Name (*open text*)
2. Company Description (*open text*)
3. Company Website (*open text*)
4. Company Email Address (*open text*)
5. Company Phone Number (*open text*)
6. Please indicate which North American Industry Classification System ([NAICS](#)) Code aligns with your industry sector (*numbers*)

SECTION 3: Company Contact

Who can we reach out to if we have questions about your company application form?

1. Contact's First Name (*open text*)
2. Contact's Last Name (*open text*)
3. Contact's Email Address (*open text*)
4. Contact's Phone Number (*open text*)

SECTION 4: Qualifying Questions

1. Is your company a legal entity? (e.g., C-Corp, S-Corp, LLC, LLP, B-Corp, nonprofit) (*Y/N*)
2. Is your company Michigan-based or does it have a strong operational presence in Michigan? (*Y/N*)
 - a. If Y:
 - i. Company Headquarters: Building No. and Street Address (*open text*)
 - ii. Company Headquarters: City (*open text*)
 - iii. Company Headquarters: State (*open text*)

END OF FORM: Link to Certification Form

Note: based on the applicant responses, some questions may not appear.

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IV. Appendix B: Internship Submission Form

This is an overview of the online form.

SECTION 1: Acknowledgement

1. Company Name (*open text*)
2. Acknowledgement language (*Y/N*)

SECTION 2: Basic Internship Qualifications

1. Does the position have a strong STEM or STEAM focus? (*Y/N*)
2. Which category or categories of STEAM apply to this internship? (*multiple choice*)
3. Please provide a brief description of how the position has a strong STEM or STEAM focus (*open text*)
4. Does the internship provide at least one (1) week of onsite experience at a worksite in Michigan? (*Y/N*)
5. Does the internship provide a director supervisor to the intern that is capable and willing to provide a meaningful work and career experience? (*Y/N*)

SECTION 3: Intern Information & Qualifications

1. Intern's Full Legal Name (*open text*)
2. Intern's Email Address (*open text*)
3. Intern's Phone Number (*open text*)
4. Is the Intern attending or recently graduated from college or university? (*select an option*)
 - a. When did the Intern graduate? (*date*)
 - b. Does the Intern have a connection to the state? (*Y/N*)
5. Name of college/university? (*open text*)
6. Is/was the Intern an international student or require sponsorship? (*Y/N*)

SECTION 4: Intern Information & Qualifications

1. Internship Position Title (*open text*)
2. Position Description (*open text*)
3. Internship Start Date (*date*)
4. Hourly Wage? (*number*)
5. Length of Internship (number of weeks) (*select an option*)
6. Full-time or Part-time internship? (*select an option*)
7. Number of hours per week? (*number*)
8. Michigan Worksite Address: Street Name and No., Suite No. (*open text*)
9. Michigan Worksite Address: City (*open text*)

SECTION 5: Company Contact for Payroll/Invoicing

1. Contact's Full Legal Name (*open text*)
2. Contact's Job Title (*open text*)

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3. Contact's Email Address (*open text*)
4. Contact's Phone Number (*open text*)
5. How often does your company typically handle invoicing? (*multiple choice*)
6. Is this individual also the Intern's Supervisor? (*Y/N*)
 - a. Note: If Y, the next section can be skipped.

SECTION 6: Contact Information for Internship Supervisor

1. Supervisor's Full Legal Name (*open text*)
2. Supervisor's Job Title (*open text*)
3. Supervisor's Email Address (*open text*)
4. Supervisor's Phone Number (*open text*)

Note: based on certain responses, some questions may not appear.