



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.

**Question?** Check out our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section. If you don’t see your question or if you need further information, please email us at [steamahead@michigan.org](mailto:steamahead@michigan.org).

## I. Table of Contents

|      |  |    |
|------|--|----|
| I.   | Table of Contents .....                      | 1  |
| II.  | How to Participate as a Company .....        | 2  |
| III. | Program Qualifications .....                 | 3  |
|      | Companies .....                              | 3  |
|      | Internships .....                            | 3  |
|      | Interns .....                                | 3  |
| IV.  | Program Deadlines .....                      | 4  |
|      | Program Funding .....                        | 5  |
|      | Funding Example Scenarios .....              | 5  |
| I.   | Payment Process .....                        | 6  |
| II.  | Frequently Asked Questions .....             | 8  |
| III. | Appendix A: Company Application Form .....   | 10 |
| IV.  | Appendix B: Internship Submission Form ..... | 10 |

# STEAM AHEAD

## 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 5-7 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 a reimbursement-based program. You'll onboard the intern and pay them directly as you typically would and then request repayment on a bi-weekly basis from the MEDC (via our payment vendor) for MEDC's contribution towards your intern's wages.

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

# STEAM AHEAD

## 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, an accredited 2-year or 4-year college or university (community colleges included).
- Have a **Michigan connection** (whether their college/university is here, they live in Michigan, or have family here).

*Last updated August 8, 2024 | 3*

**Questions?** Visit the [STEAM Ahead website](#) or email [steamahead@michigan.org](mailto:steamahead@michigan.org).

# STEAM AHEAD

## IV. Program Deadlines

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

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

\* We recognize that your intern's *official* start and end dates may be outside of these semester windows, however, you can only receive reimbursement between these program semester dates.

Last updated August 8, 2024 | 4

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# STEAM AHEAD

## 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.

- 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.** The MEDC will pay 50% of the wages, alongside the employer's 50%, until MEDC's contribution has been met or the internship ends – whichever comes first.
- **Part-time is defined as 20 hours or less and full-time is defined as 21 – 40 hours.**
  - Any overtime payment (above 40 hours per week) must be paid 100% by the employer.
- 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 number of internship positions awarded will depend on fund availability and alignment to the qualification criteria. Companies can also submit the same intern to us for **up to two** semesters between September – August each year. Wages outside of the two semesters are the sole responsibility of the employer.

## 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.

*Last updated August 8, 2024 | 5*

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# STEAM AHEAD

## 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.

When the internship submission form is submitted to MEDC, you are asked to provide contact information for someone at your company who processes invoices / payroll. **This individual will become the main point of contact for MEDC and OpTech once the intern/internship has been approved.** Their first step will be to register in Coupa.

### ▪ STEP 1: Coupa Registration

Registering in Coupa is required for approved companies to request, review, and receive payment for MEDC's contribution towards intern wages. **If you've already participated in STEAM Ahead, you will not need to re-register and may skip this step.**

Once the company's internship submission form(s) has been approved, MEDC will pass the information along to OpTech. If this is your company's first time participating in the STEAM Ahead program, your company will receive an email notification from Coupa to register.

The Coupa registration 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](mailto: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. For the purposes of this program, your company's tax ID is not required as this is a reimbursement program and OpTech will not be issuing 1099s.

### ▪ STEP 2: Coupa Payment Request & Payment Cycle

The company's payroll/invoice processor will login to Coupa each pay period to submit payment requests.

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.

**If you are having trouble accessing Coupa, requesting payments, or receiving payments, please contact OpTech at [steamahead.pay@optechus.com](mailto:steamahead.pay@optechus.com).** OpTech also offers 1:1 or group sessions if you need to set up a phone or video conference.

*Last updated August 8, 2024 | 6*

**Questions?** Visit the [STEAM Ahead website](#) or email [steamahead@michigan.org](mailto:steamahead@michigan.org).

# STEAM AHEAD

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       |

Last updated August 8, 2024 | 7

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# STEAM AHEAD

## II. Frequently Asked Questions

- **How does my 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 my company isn't in the STEAM field – does it still qualify?**

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

- **Once my company is approved, how do I submit interns for program funding consideration?**

Once your company is approved, you'll receive a link to the online Internship Submission Form. The program is semester-based and, each semester, a new link will be provided to submit interns/internships for program funding consideration.

- **What if the internship my company is offering starts before / ends after the program semester dates listed for STEAM Ahead? Will it still qualify?**

We understand that the *official* start and end dates may be outside of the program semester windows, but the internship will only qualify for reimbursement for the dates which fall within the semester dates.

- **Can my company extend an intern's internship and still receive MEDC funding for the semester?**

There are case-by-case scenarios which may qualify – for example, if MEDC's contribution has not been exhausted, if the semester has not yet ended, or if the maximum number of weeks (12) has not been met yet.

- **Is there a limit on the number of interns my company 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 my company submit the same Intern to participate in STEAM Ahead?**

A company can submit the same intern to STEAM Ahead up to two times in an academic year. An academic year takes place between September – August.

- **What if my company needs to submit an internship but it's not two weeks before the start date in the Internship Submission Form?**

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.

*Last updated August 8, 2024 | 8*

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# STEAM AHEAD

- **What if my company is offering an internship with a higher hourly rate? Can the internship be less than the minimum number of 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).

- **From where do Interns need to be enrolled or recently graduated?**

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.

- **My company would like to hire an intern who is not currently in school – can they participate in STEAM Ahead?**

Recent graduates are eligible to 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, 2024, the internship must start on or before May 16, 2025.

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

The on-site work experience must be for at least one (1) week or five (5) business days, but the days do not need to be consecutive.

- **Are international students eligible?**

Yes! International students are eligible – and encouraged – to participate.

- **How many interns can my 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?**

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. So long as the co-op follows the program requirements, it could qualify. 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.

*Last updated August 8, 2024 | 9*

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# STEAM AHEAD

## 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: This form must be completed and signed before your company application can be approved.

Based on the applicant responses, some questions in the Company Application may not appear.

## IV. Appendix B: Internship Submission Form

This is an overview of the online form.

### SECTION 1: Acknowledgement

Last updated August 8, 2024 | 10

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# STEAM AHEAD

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 an accredited 2-year or 4-year 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 the Intern an international student or require sponsorship? (**Y/N**)
  - a. Note: international students are eligible for this program. This is not a qualifying question.

## SECTION 4: Internship 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 in Weeks (**select an option**)
6. Part-time or Full-time? (**select an option**)
7. Michigan Worksite Address: Street Name and No., Suite No. (**open text**)
8. Michigan Worksite Address: City (**open text**)
9. Michigan Worksite Address: ZipCode (**number**)

## SECTION 5: Main Point of Contact for Payroll/Invoicing

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

Last updated August 8, 2024 | 11

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# STEAM AHEAD

5. Would you like to add a secondary point of contact? *(Y/N)*

## **SECTION 6: Secondary Contact Information?**

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

## **SECTION 7: Contact Information: Internship Supervisor**

1. Have you already provided the supervisor's contact information? *(select an option)*
  - a. Note: if the response is 'yes', the following questions will be skipped.
2. Supervisor's Full Legal Name *(open text)*
3. Supervisor's Job Title *(open text)*
4. Supervisor's Email Address *(open text)*
5. Supervisor's Phone Number *(open text)*

Based on certain responses, some questions in the Internship Submission Form may not appear.