



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

STEM Forward provides financial support to qualifying companies by matching employer contributions up to \$3,000 for full-time interns and up to \$1,500 for part-time interns.

This handbook provides an overview of the program for employers who are participating, or interested in participating, in STEM Forward.

Questions? Please visit the [STEM Forward website](#) or you can email stemforward@michigan.org.

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Program Qualifications

Companies must:

- Be Michigan-based or have a strong operational presence in Michigan.
- Be a legal entity (e.g., C-Corp, S-Corp, LLC, LLP, B-Corp, nonprofits). Companies of any size are eligible — from enterprise organizations to startups — so long as they are a legal entity.

Internships must:

- Have a strong STEM focus.
- Provide at least 1 week (5 business days) of in-person experience at a worksite in Michigan.
- Provide a direct supervisor to the intern that is capable and willing to provide a meaningful work and career experience.

Interns must:

- Be attending, or recently graduated from, college or university. If the intern has recently graduated, the internship must start within one year of their graduation date.
- Have a Michigan home address (whether they live in Michigan, attend school here, or have family here).

Steps for Employers to Participate

STEP 1: Submit a Company Application.

Employers must first complete a one-time online [Company Application](#) to become a participating STEM Forward employer. The application takes approximately five minutes to complete.

Once the form is successfully submitted, a MEDC staff member will reach out within 5 business days to confirm the company's participation in the program. *See Appendix A for a copy of the Company Application form.*

STEP 2: Submit internship(s) for program funding consideration.

Prior to the start of each internship, the participating employer will need to complete a short Internship Submission form, which will be provided in the congratulatory email from the MEDC staff member. This form must be completed for each intern – whether they are a new STEM Forward intern or they are returning. *See Appendix B for a copy of the Internship Submission form.*

For new interns, the form must be completed at least **three weeks prior** to their internship start date to give the payroll processor ample time to enroll the intern.

Returning interns must be requested at least **two weeks prior** to internship start date.

The form will be reviewed by a MEDC staff member who will follow up with the company within 5 business days to confirm the internship qualifies for program funding and that the information has been shared with the third-party payroll processor (Strategic Staffing Solutions).

STEP 3: Enroll in the payroll system.

Strategic Staffing Solutions will then contact the company and the intern to begin the enrollment process into the payroll system. Employers will receive a copy of the Payroll Service Agreement and interns will receive onboarding documentation from Strategic Staffing Solutions staff members (note: the email address will end in @StrategicStaff.com).

To fully onboard interns into Strategic Staffing Solutions payroll system, several tasks must be completed by the intern:

1. Signed offer letter.
2. Onboarding Experience via ADP.
3. I9 Section 2.
4. Registration with Tracker (Payroll Portal) to submit weekly timesheets.
5. *For international students:* I-20 (CPT/OPT) is required, and Strategic Staffing Solutions must be authorized as the employer to legally pay the intern. This form is needed as soon as possible in the onboarding process.

Program Guidelines

MEDC will match an employer's contribution up to \$3,000 for a full-time intern and up to \$1,500 for a part-time intern or until 12 weeks of the internship have passed – whichever comes first. MEDC's contribution will be applied to the intern's wages.

Companies will pay the remaining match contribution to MEDC's payroll administrator via individual payroll intervals. In addition, companies will be charged 12 percent of wages to cover FICA, FUTA taxes, and workers compensation associated with direct wages. In addition, companies will be charged 12 percent of wages to cover FICA, FUTA taxes, and workers compensation associated with direct wages.

Interns will be paid weekly on Fridays by Strategic Staffing Solutions. Strategic Staffing Solutions will also reach out to companies whose interns are nearing the MEDC match contribution. If the MEDC contribution is reached before the internship is over, the company's contribution will shift to 100% for the remainder of the internship. The company can then either keep the intern with MEDC's payroll administrator, which requires an administrative payroll fee of \$3 per payroll hour, or onboard the intern.

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. Please note that a company's previous experience working with STEM Forward interns, as well as the intern supervisor, will be taken into consideration.

Interns can participate in up to three internship positions within a calendar year but, at this time, are limited to one full-time internship within a 120-day period.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does a company participate in the program?

The first step is to submit a Company Application form, which can be found on our website: [Participating Companies | STEM Forward | Michigan Business](#).

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

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

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

Recent graduates can participate in STEM Forward, 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.

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.

Are international students eligible?

Yes! International students are eligible 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.

How many times can an Intern participate in STEM Forward?

Interns can participate in STEM Forward up to three times in a calendar year, however only one of the internships can be full-time (30 hours or more per week). Interns cannot exceed more than 30 hours per week within a 120-day calendar year.

As a participating employer, how many interns can I enroll with STEM Forward?

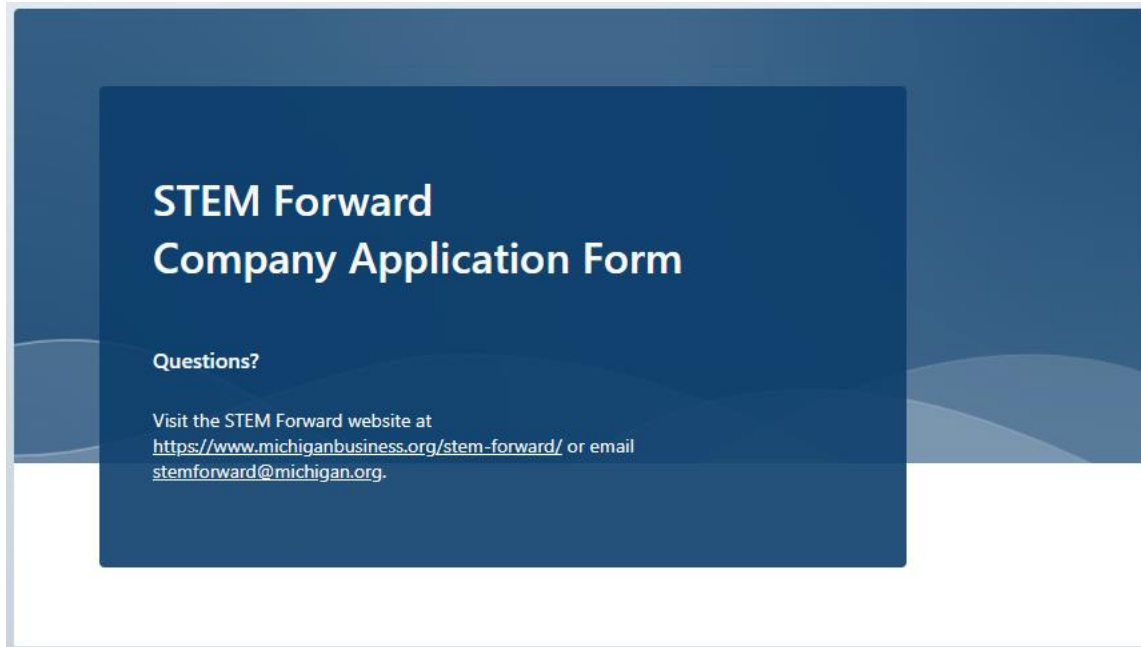
There is no maximum, but the number of awards will depend on fund availability and whether the intern/internships qualify.

Can high school students participate in STEM Forward?

Currently, individuals who are attending – or recently graduated from – university or college (including community college) can participate in STEM Forward. In the future, the program may expand to include high school students.

Appendix A: Company Application Form

This is a copy to help provide insight into the information that will be requested on the online form.



SECTION 1: Thank You For Your Interest in STEM Forward!

To begin participating in the STEM Forward internship program, your company will need to first complete this one-time application form.

Upon successfully submitting the form, a MEDC staff member will reach out within three (3) business days to confirm your company's participation, request additional information if needed, and provide next steps for getting your company's interns enrolled with the STEM Forward program.

Questions? Please visit the STEM Forward website at <https://www.michiganbusiness.org/stem-forward/> or email us at stemforward@michigan.org.

SECTION 2: About Your Company

- Company Name
- Company Description
- Company Website
- Company Email Address
- Company Phone Number
- North American Industry Classification System ([NAICS](#)) Code

SECTION 3: Company Contact

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

- Contact's First Name
- Contact's Last Name

- Contact's Email Address
- Contact's Phone Number

SECTION 4: Qualifying Questions

- Is your company Michigan-based or does it have a strong operational presence in Michigan?
 - Company Headquarters: Building No. and Street Address
 - Company Headquarters: City
 - Company Headquarters: State
- Is your company a legal entity? (e.g., C-Corp, S-Corp, LLC, LLP, B-Corp, nonprofit)

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

Appendix B: Internship Submission Form

This is a copy to help provide insight into the information that will be requested on the online form.

Reminder: For new interns, the form must be completed at least **three weeks prior** to their internship start date to give the payroll processor ample time to enroll the intern. Returning interns must be requested at least **two weeks prior** to internship start date.



SECTION 1: Overview of Internship Qualifications

For each STEM Forward internship, you must complete this form -- whether the intern is new to your company or is returning for another internship experience. While most internships run over the summer, your company can submit internships requests year-round.

The final number of positions awarded will depend on fund availability and alignment to the qualification criteria below:

- The internship must have a strong STEM focus.
- The intern must have at least one (1) week of an in-person experience at a worksite in Michigan
- A direct supervisor must be provided that is capable and willing to provide a meaningful work and career experience.
- The intern must be attending - or recently graduated - from college or university.
- The intern must have a tie to Michigan - whether they live here, attend college or university here, or have family here.

Questions? Please visit the STEM Forward website at <https://www.michiganbusiness.org/stem-forward/> or email us at stemforward@michigan.org.

- Company Name

SECTION 2: About the Internship

- Does the internship position have a strong STEM focus?
 - Please provide a brief description of how the position has a strong STEM focus.
- Does the internship provide a director supervisor to the intern that is capable and willing to provide a meaningful work and career experience?
- Does the internship provide at least one (1) week of onsite experience at a worksite in Michigan?
 - Michigan Worksite Address: Street Name and No., Suite No., City, State, Zip code
- Internship Position Title
- Position Description
- Internship Start Date
- Length of Internships (number of weeks)
- Full-time or Part-time internship?
- Hourly Wage for Internship?

SECTION 2: About the Intern

- Intern's First Name
- Intern's Last Name
- Intern's Email Address
- Intern's Phone Number
- Is the Intern attending or recently graduated from college or university?
 - Does the Intern have a connection to the state?
- Name of college/university?
- Is/was the Intern an international student?
- In which state does the Intern live?
- In which city does the Intern live?

SECTION 3: Company Contact for Payroll Processing

- Contact's First Name
- Contact's Last Name
- Contact's Job Title
- Contact's Email Address
- Contact's Phone Number

If the payroll processor is also the intern's supervisor, the next section can be skipped.

SECTION 4: Contact Information for Internship Supervisor

- Supervisor's First Name
- Supervisor's Last Name
- Supervisor's Job Title
- Supervisor's Email Address
- Supervisor's Phone Number

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