



Sustainable Funding for Paid Internships

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What are Young People Telling Us?

13 Communities around New Mexico

2,000 Data Points Collected from Young People

3 Themes that Drive Our Policy Agenda:

- Learning with purpose
- Care for their wellbeing
- Mentorship to become a responsible adult

Policy Solution—Sustainable Funding for Paid Internships through a public Private Partnership

Quotes

Employers:

- *“We get a better idea of current trends, technologies, and software.”*
- *“The clients we work with were better served by the addition of our interns...”*
- *“I have always loved the impact this program has made on youth, but after seeing it first hand, I strongly believe more young people should try internships.”*
- *“It's easy to underestimate their abilities and impact... My views have been strengthened by this experience.”*

Students:

- *“The internship that I was matched with was very much in line with my interests and helped me become more convinced that the career pathway I was going into is truly something I am passionate about.”*
- *“This program has solidified my desire to pursue a career in medicine.”*
- *“It made me more interested in government jobs and policies... I used to want to do finance.”*
- *“FFE gave me an opportunity when I felt discouraged after being turned down for jobs.”*
- *“Critical thinking, self-confidence and being independent — I feel more confident about my goals.”*



Innovation Zone Programs

**Growth in Paid
Internship
Placements
IZ Year after year**

In year 3 Innovation Zone

- 94% of LEAs implemented internships.
- Internship participation increase by 336% since Year 1 (SY 2022-2023).
- 88% of Internships were paid, up from 70% in Year 2.
- 79% of Internships used IZ funding.

Innovation Zone Data

Figure 14: Total number of paid and unpaid internships in Innovation Zones 2022-2025*

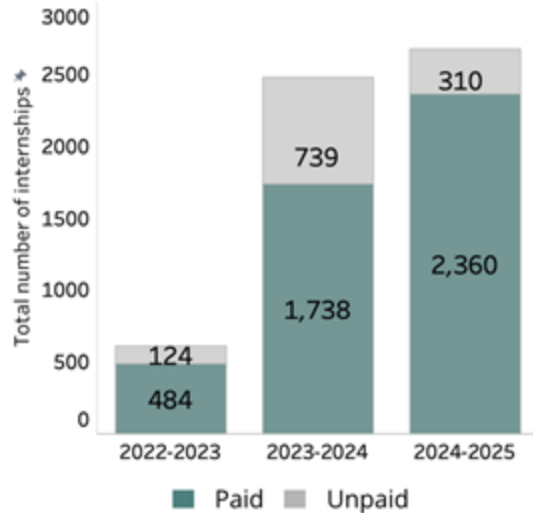


Figure 14: Between 2022–2023, 80% of internships were paid (484 of 608). In 2023–2024, that dropped to 70%; by 2024–2025, that figure had risen to 88%, reflecting a deliberate effort to ensure equitable access to compensated WBL experiences.

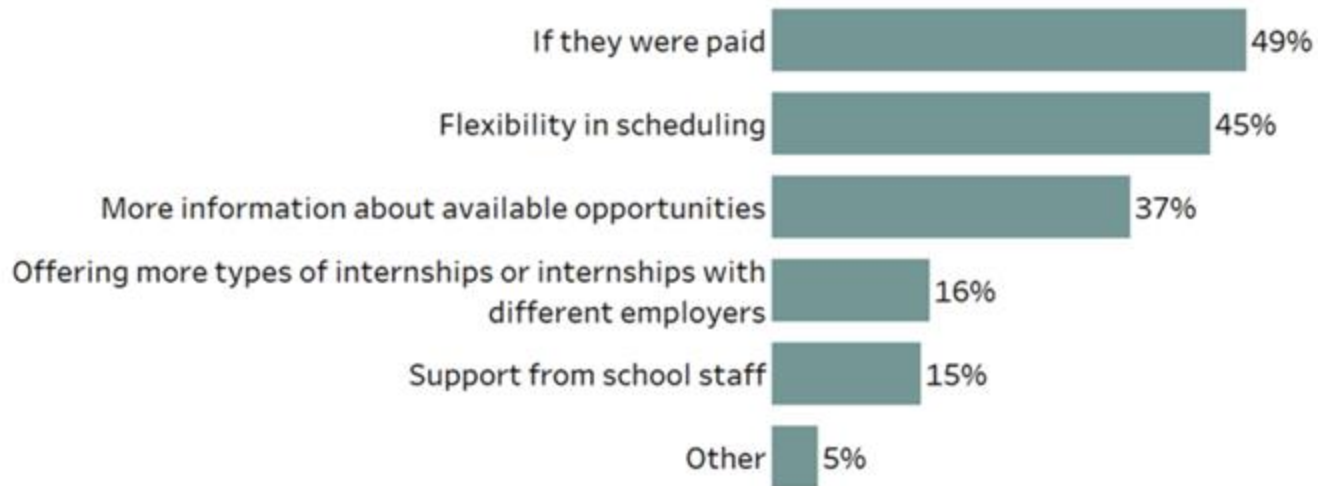
Figure 15: Among the 49 IZ awardees, 94% (n=46) offered at least one internship during the 2024–2025 school year (Figure 15). Notably, most paid internships were supported by IZ funding. Of the 2,360 paid internships for which funding source information was available, 79% (n=1,864) were fully or partially funded with IZ dollars.

Figure 15: Percentage of Innovation Zone LEAs with internships



For students not currently participating in an internship, the most common suggestions for increasing internship participation were being paid (49%), scheduling flexibility (45%), more information about available opportunities (37%), more variety in internships (16%), and support from school staff (15%) (Figure 23).

Figure 23: What would encourage you to participate in an internship? (Choose the top 2)



Innovation Zone Findings

Participants named sustainable funding for paid internships as the most important WBL policy priority.

Working group members included:

- Zuni Public Schools
- ACE Leadership High School
- Santa Rosa Consolidated Schools
- Alamogordo Public Schools
- Cuba Public Schools
- Des Moines Public Schools
- Aztec Municipal Schools
- Albuquerque Public Schools Career Connected Learning
- CTECH, Hobbs Municipal Schools

Recommendations

- Recurring Funding Source
- Incentives for Employers to Participate
- Sliding Scale for Employers based on Size or Ability to Pay
- Quality Standards and Support to Meet Them
- Administrative backbone support from the New Mexico Community Trust to administer the program

Representative Cristina Parajón will carry legislation to appropriate \$10 million, to be administered by the Department of Workforce Solutions, with the funds eligible for employer matching. This bill will be modeled on House Bill 528, introduced in 2025.

Thank you!