

# Funding Sustainable Paid Internships in NM



## Context:

The new Work-based Learning (WBL) graduation option in House Bill 171 is a significant opportunity to redesign high schools in New Mexico. Paid internships are a proven way of increasing opportunities for those students identified in the Yazzie/Martinez case. Recently, Future Focused Education convened a focus group of nine Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to explore WBL offerings and funding challenges.

## Participating LEAs:

- 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

## Findings:

Representatives from various districts and charter schools highlighted that the biggest gap is funding for paid internships. Schools rely on a mix of non-recurring grants and employer contributions, but recurring state funding for internships is lacking. The healthcare and construction industries have contributed principles for legislation that would provide recurring revenue for paid internships.

## Recommendations:

Collaborate with Representative Cristina Parajón to introduce legislation that would do the following:

1. Establish recurring funding sources for paid internships that leverage public and private funds through the New Mexico State Economic Development Department.
2. Focus on paid internships that are part of the continuum from high school to college and career.
3. Create a mechanism for employers and philanthropy to match funding from the state as part of a public private partnership.
4. Require schools, intermediaries, and employers to demonstrate that they are prepared to participate in internship programs.
5. Allow for different levels of financial support for employers based on their ability to pay.
6. Encourage pre-apprenticeship programs to be used as preparation for paid internship placements.
7. Ensure that liability concerns for employers are dealt with through the program.
8. Prioritize workforce sector priorities defined by the Department of Workforce Solutions, but not exclude other sectors.

**This fall, we convened students, teachers, administrators, school board members, and community members. Here's what they had to say about paid internships:**

*"[We need] equitable access to internship opportunities, narrative shift (sector development) so referring teachers are not concerned with placing a 'bad intern' and damaging a relationship."*

*"It could provide a more inclusive framework for our diverse communities and neurodiverse youth within communities, including language and culture."*

*"HB171 offers the opportunity for more applied learning experiences to take place in our schools -- we know this kind of learning matters to/for our state's young people."*

### Cost Projections:

Providing two semesters of paid internships costs about \$6,000 per student, with employers potentially covering 50%. For 30% of New Mexico's seniors to participate by 2026-27, the state would need to phase in funding for 6,546 students at a cost of \$39 million. Additional funding for intermediaries and technical assistance is recommended.

### Conclusion:

Relevant paid work experience is emerging as a solution to disengagement. While schools are reorganizing to provide the necessary preparation to place young people in internships, the funding for those experiences is not sustainable. A dedicated revenue source that leverages state, employer, and philanthropic funding would be a long term solution to this dilemma.



Scan the code below to learn more about life-changing paid internships that students across the state are participating in.