



Northeast Pennsylvania Case Study

Overview

The Internship Institute – a non-profit, non-partisan public charity (501(c)3) – was awarded \$375,000 of the \$15 million Workforce Investment Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grant designated for the 10 counties in Northeast Pennsylvania. These comprise the cities of Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, Allentown, and Reading. WIRED is an initiative by the U.S. Department of Labor Employment Training Administration.

This regional grant targeted talent development as the key driver of economic development strategies to fulfill the need for skilled workers in evolving business sectors. The grant sought to implement an industry-driven approach that would promote sustainability and scalability to build capacity with a college-educated workforce.

Creating Quality Internship Opportunities

A one-year post-implementation analysis validates the Internship Seeding Initiative (ISI) to be a highly effective means to accomplish these goals by providing a consistent model for engaging employers, training supervisors, administering programs and readying students for gainful employment.

The core purpose of the ISI program is to standardize internship quality by implementing a blueprint of best practices including by training and certifying managers to effectively develop students' workplace skills and through the "Experience Management" of one-on-one internship relationships.

By forging a direct connection between employers and the future workforce, the ISI program also cultivates sustainability by leveraging local strategic partnerships and integrating efforts among other such regional initiatives. Enlisting stakeholders created collaborative synergies among higher education institutions, workforce agencies, economic development leaders and private industry to contribute respective value in their collective pursuit of achieving regional recovery.

Defining Characteristics

What distinguishes the ISI internship development program is its highly strategic, industry-driven approach to promote long-term program sustainability and opportunity expansion. Many such initiatives focus on supply-driven strategies and/or rely on automation to connect students and employers. This tactical approach is incomplete and has, thus far, proven ineffective elsewhere.

Achieving desired outcomes requires hand-on program construction and ongoing technical assistance. ISI involves pre-qualifying employers and preparing managers first by utilizing a specialized training curriculum and program administration tools.

Expanding the ISI Program

The ISI pilot program implemented through the NE Pennsylvania WIRED grant initiative provides a transferable model for a sustainable workforce solution. It may be implemented in any region or attached to similar type economic regional recovery initiatives. Beyond enabling future graduates to gain essential work experience, ISI also counteracts talent migration ["brain drain"] and promotes pathways to employment.

ISI FUNDING PROFILE

\$375,000 (Pilot Program)

- 1/3rd intern compensation
- 1/3rd materials, training & recruiting
- 1/3rd program administration, outreach, partnership collaboration

ISI GOALS

- Standardize internship quality
- Improve students' career exposure, work experience and development
- Fulfill industry demands for highly skilled workers
- Increase graduate retention
- Enhance business-education linkages

ISI OBJECTIVES

- Partner with all 10 counties in region
- Seed 50 pre-qualified employers
- Enlist 30 post-secondary institutions
- Recruit, place and pay 50 students
- Seed more host sites via colleges
- Secure & leverage matching funds
- Expand industry sector participation

ISI METRICS (Initial Outcomes)

- Total saturation of region
- 67 host sites enlisted
- All 30 institutions participated
- All 50 students recruited & placed
- 120 additional seeding opportunities
- \$200,000+ in-kind donations
- Broad-based industry involvement
- 80 business leaders attend recap

LONGITUDINAL OUTCOMES

(1-year Post-ISI Employer Survey)

- Program Sustainability Rate: **90%**
 - Expansion: **22%**; Contraction: **8%**
- Job Opportunity Creation Rate: **56%**
- Program Quality Enhancement: **88%**
- Processes/Materials Utilization: **85%**
- Reflective Satisfaction Levels:
 - Extremely Satisfied: **70%**
 - Very Satisfied: **15%**
 - Adequately Satisfied: **11%**
 - Less than Satisfied: **4%**

The Internship Institute is a non-profit organization assuring the quality, integrity and value of internships to empower and enable individuals, organizations and economies to prosper.