Evidence-based Strategies for Successful Internship Programs

Your Name



Introduction



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Educate Maine

PROGRAMS THAT BUILD MAINE'S FUTURE

From early learning to career readiness, our initiatives connect education, workforce, and community across every corner of the state.

- WORKFORCE PATHWAYS
- MAINE MOBILE BIOLAB
- EDUCATION LEADERS EXPERIENCE
- PROJECT LOGIN
- TEACH MAINE CENTER
- MAINE TEACHER OF THE YEAR

“I believe that there is a possible future career path for me in Maine, where before I would have never thought that.”

“I realized there are spaces for people of color within the workforce in Maine that isn’t just a place on a company’s DEI committee. It nice to see people of color in all different industries with a variety of positions and career paths.”

“I didn’t think I had a future in Maine… until this internship.”

“I used to think Maine wasn't a hub for computer science, but I've learned there are actually great technology companies here.”

“There are many opportunities for growth and overall happiness in Maine and seeing confident employees living their lives the way they want to, is inspiring to me as a Maine Resident.”

Why this Matters

- Workforce shortages are real
- Retaining young talent is critical
- Internships are one of the most effective tools we have



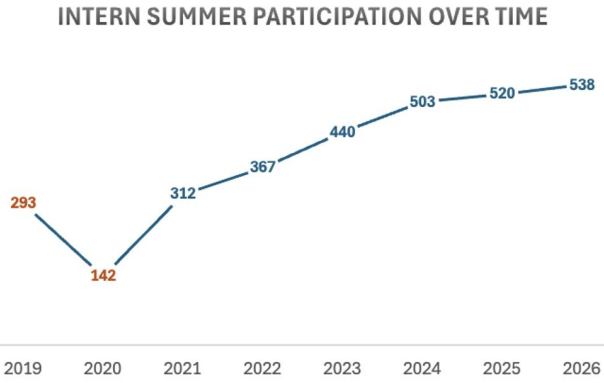
Maine Career Catalyst (MCC)

- Run by Educate Maine (with support from Focus Maine and employer partners)
- Networking, skill-building, and social events for interns statewide
- Goal: improve perceptions of Maine and increase talent retention



2026 by the numbers

- 538 interns (highest ever, +3%)
- 141 employer organizations (68 partners)
- 19 events (13 in-person, 6 virtual)
- 92% ages 18-24; 23% people of color

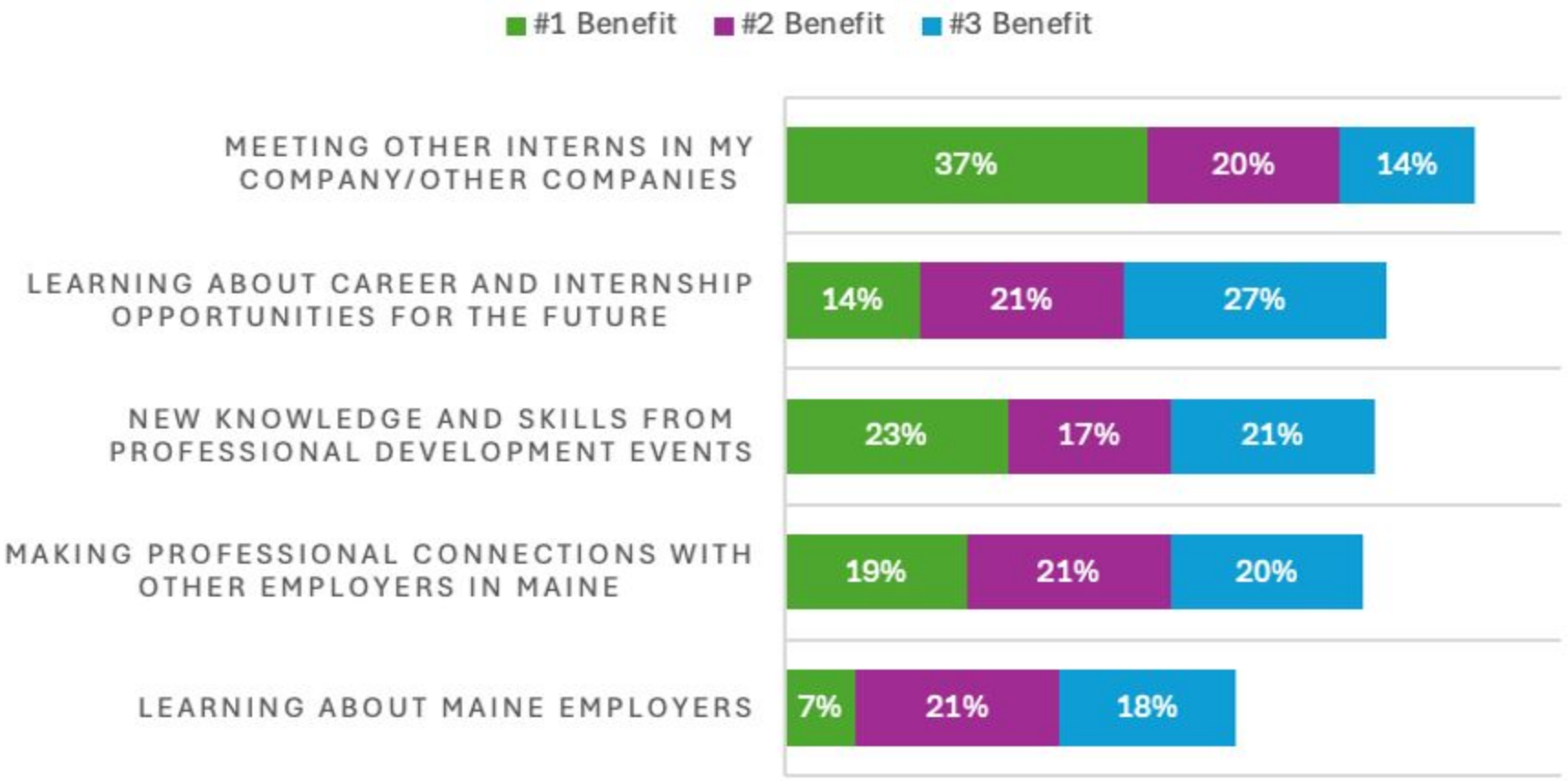


Note: participation was tracked differently from the participant registration form prior to 2021. Participation low in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

MCC Video



TOP 3 BENEFITS OF MCC PROGRAM

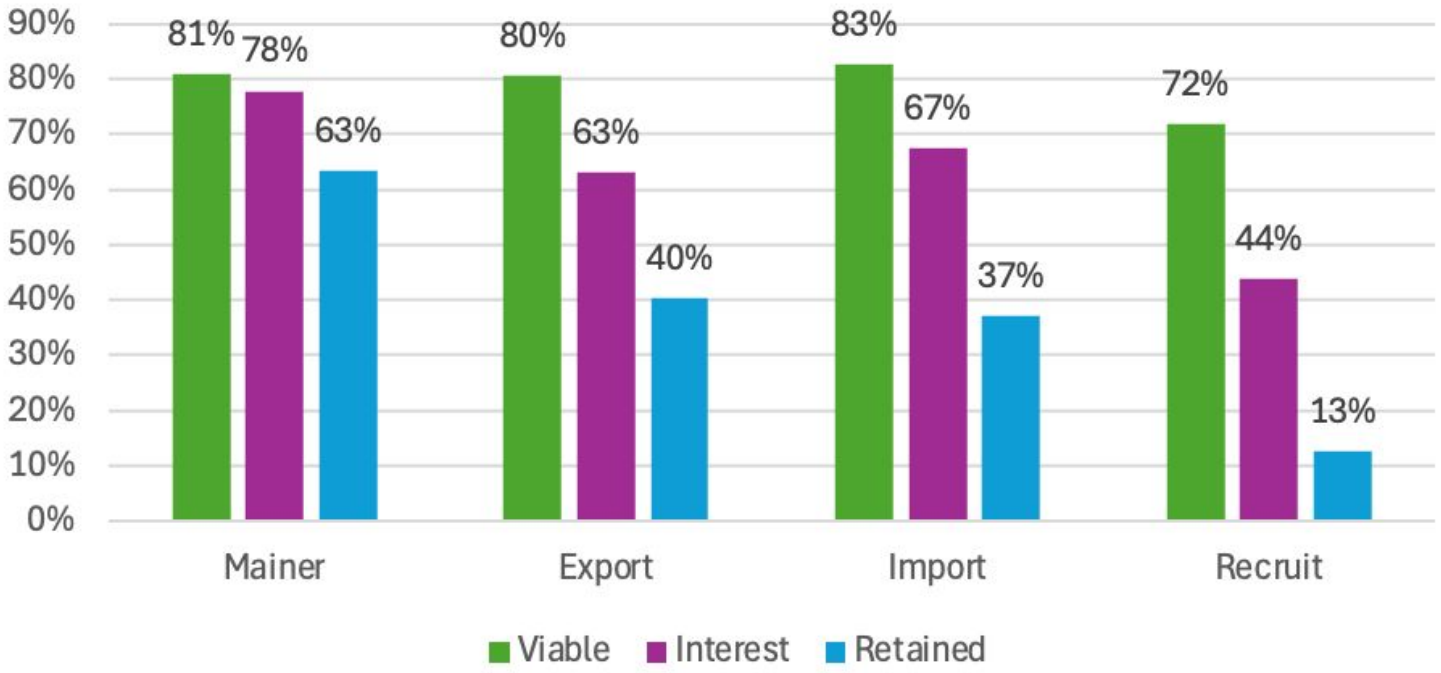


Who interns in Maine?

	College – *in Maine*	College – *outside of Maine*
Hometown – *in Maine*	"Mainer" 29% n=155	"Export" 22% n =121
Hometown – *outside of Maine*	"Import" 16% n =87	"Recruit" 33% n =175

- **Mainers: Nearly 1 in 3 (29%) of students grew up in Maine and attend college in Maine.**
- **Exports: Just over 1 in 5 (22%) grew up in Maine and attends college elsewhere.**
- **Imports: About 1 in 6 (16%) grew up elsewhere and attends college in Maine.**
- **Recruits: One-third (33%) did not grow up in Maine and does not attend college in Maine.**

Participant Perception, Interest, and Retention in Maine by Background



Perceived Barriers

Perceived Barriers

The survey asked respondents an open-ended question, "Are there barriers to you staying in Maine for employment?" Only 11% of respondents indicated barriers. These were coded:

- Lack of career opportunities (insufficient industries, employers, wages) – 46%
- High cost of living/housing – 28%
- Weak professional network/connections – 19%
- Maine-specific factor: e.g. related to diversity, transportation, weather, no large cities – 12%
- Family/friends live elsewhere – 9%
- Work visa issues/challenges – 7%
- Want to try living somewhere else – 2%

The Opportunity

Successful internships change how people see Maine:

- Career opportunities
- Industries
- Community

Connections/Networking

"I think when you are in an internship role, because it is so quick, just try and make as many connections as possible, because that's really what's going to be lasting – the relationships and the conversations that you're having. And so I think that was the biggest takeaway from my internship - those 30 minute check ins with a bunch of different people in a bunch of different roles, I was able to gain more from that than from anything else." – Former Intern, Now Full Time

Interns Value:

- Relationships with supervisors and teams
- Access to industry professionals
- Mentorship and career guidance

Employer Insight:

- Facilitate structured networking opportunities
- Encourage interns to meet across teams

Experience/Skills

"So honestly, coming into it, I didn't know I had many analytical skills at all, and especially not any kind of confidence in wanting to go into an analytical role. But coming out of it, I really saw a new side of myself, and that not only did I have those skills, but I actually enjoyed employing those skills, which was a nice thing, and just really got me thinking about what other jobs I could see myself doing in the future." – Former Intern, Now Full Time

Interns Value:

- Hands-on, practical exposure
- Applying academic knowledge in real settings
- Understanding workplace expectations
- Building credible resume experience

Employer Insight:

- Provide meaningful, task-based experiences
- Allow interns to apply and stretch their skills

Confidence/Growth/Career Clarity

"One of the best parts of my internship was getting to learn about every part of the business—from accounting to marketing to fundraising. I could ask questions, attend extra meetings, and really understand how everything works."

— Former Intern, Now Full Time

Interns Value:

- Confirm career interests
- Discover new pathways
- Identify what they don't want to pursue
- Exposure to roles and industries

Employer Insight:

- Provide context about career paths
- Encourage interns to explore different functions

Internship Coordinators Programming Goals

- Providing a high-quality learning experience – ~91% of responses
- Building a talent pipeline for the future – ~78% of responses
- Adding capacity to existing workforce – ~48% of responses
- Creating brand ambassadors – ~30% of responses

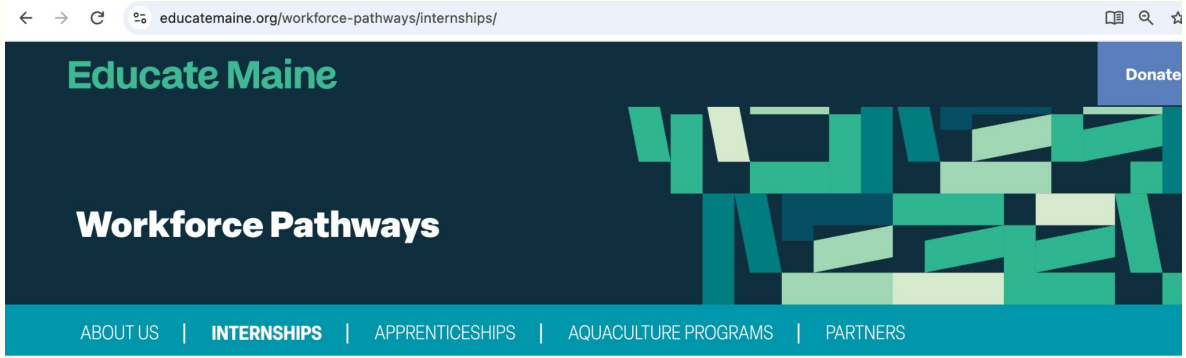


Internships are a two-way street

- Employers want: Competent interns, productivity, exposure to future talent
- Interns want: Meaningful work, skill growth, mentorship, career clarity
- Goal: everyone succeeds!

Reach out!

- Have an internship and want to connect with MCC?
- Looking for support to get your program started?



Internships

Supporting high-quality internships through the Maine Career Catalyst program.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Maine Career Catalyst (MCC) summer program, launched in 2017, provides professional development, networking, and social opportunities for interns and experiential learners working in Maine.

Each summer, Maine Career Catalyst hosts 18 to 20 events that interns working for Maine-based employers can attend free of charge. Events range from "lunch and learn" webinars

