



NEW ENGLAND BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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The Learn and Earn Challenge – Emerging Strategies Summary

There are three emergent strategies at the core of the Learn and Earn Challenge. These detail how NEBHE and its partners can engage key stakeholders across the New England states to achieve the primary aim of expanding paid internship and work-based learning opportunities. Stakeholders include:

- State policymakers
- Employers and their respective sector/industry associations
- Leaders of public higher education systems and institutions, as well as leaders of independent institutions
- Intermediary and third-sector organizations

Strategy I – The Challenge and Casemaking

NEBHE will elevate awareness of a critical need and commitments to a shared goal.

The Challenge has three parts:

First, it proposes a specific **goal** of creating 10,000 new, high-quality paid internships over three years in the region.

Second, it challenges states to **commit** to:

- A goal, priority areas and a coalition of stakeholders
- Expand the supply of paid internships and work-based learning opportunities
- Reduce barriers for students and increase readiness

Third, NEBHE and partners will engage in **casemaking** with relevant research to educate stakeholders about the need to expand such opportunities—and the benefits to learners, employers, postsecondary institutions, and our regional economy.

This will include a forthcoming report by the Burning Glass Institute (Fall 2025), a nation-leading economic research organization. It will analyze the availability of internships in New England and nationally—including who participates, where gaps are evident, and what the economic benefits are. It will expand baseline knowledge of internship and work-based learning provision in the region and how it compares to the nation.

Strategy II – State Policy Perspectives

NEBHE will support effective state policies and programs that support the scaling of learn and earn opportunities.

Policy actions are needed at multiple levels (i.e., state, postsecondary systems, institutions, and others) to aid expansion of paid internship and work-based learning opportunities.

Informed by innovative policy strategies and statewide initiatives in leading states (including Virginia, Indiana, and Colorado) NEBHE will assess key aspects of the policy environment and identify examples of effective state programs, initiatives and investments. These will include policy dimensions such as:

- Goals and interagency alignment
- Employer incentives
- Programs and initiatives
- Legal and regulatory issues
- Data and measurement

Strategy III – Development of Shared Resources to Build Capacity

NEBHE will collaborate with stakeholders to identify opportunities to develop collaborative working groups, shared tools, and resources to expand capacity for scaling internships and work-based learning.

The goal of this strategy is to build the capacity of employers, postsecondary institutions, students, and others to engage in paid work-based learning. It will identify specific opportunities to collaboratively develop innovative toolkits, training, support services, and consulting resources to be leveraged across stakeholder groups and states.

Drawing from examples in leading states, it seeks to address resource gaps and the inefficiency of stakeholders working in isolation to create proprietary resources. Examples include tools, resources, curricula, and professional development to facilitate:

- Employer internship expansion
- Institutional capacity for employer engagement
- Improving internship quality, supervision, and support
- Reducing student barriers and increasing skills and workplace readiness

As funding and other resources will continue to be limited across the New England states, it is imperative to lower barriers and build capacity for scaling work-based learning opportunities in collaborative ways.