



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Survey of Employers Indicates Help Needed to Get Interns *WMSA Responds with Employers Internship Toolkit*

WEST MICHIGAN—January 19, 2009—A survey of employers in West Michigan revealed that more of them would have interns if they could get help developing an internship program. The West Michigan Strategic Alliance, which conducted the survey as part of its [internship initiative](#), is responding with a toolkit for employers.

The internship initiative is a statewide effort intended to create 25,000 additional internship opportunities. WMSA is working closely with employers throughout the region to generate an additional 3,000 internships in West Michigan by the end of 2011. Talent retention is critical to improving our region's economic success – expanding internships opportunities is one way to achieve this objective.

The survey yielded responses from 508 members of the West Michigan Chamber Coalition and the Association for Human Resource Management of Greater Grand Rapids. Respondents represented a great variety of different businesses, including business services, education, legal, financial, manufacturing and public services. The results, which will serve as baseline data for the ongoing internship initiative, provide a snapshot of how regional businesses use interns:

- 49% of the respondents are from businesses employing 1-50 employees 18% were from businesses employing 51-200 and 32% are from businesses employing more than 200 employees.
- 69% have used interns in the past 24 months.
- 44% of respondents indicated they had a need for interns or more interns; the most interest expressed was from the business services, nonprofit and healthcare sectors. The most frequent reasons given for not having college internship programs were lack of money (30%) and lack of a program in place (27%).
- 117 employers (23% of the total respondents) requested information to assist them in developing or enhancing their current internship program.

“Aid in developing an internship program will help employers create additional opportunities for internships in the West Michigan region, said Cindy Brown, WMSA Internship Initiative Project Manager. “The Employers Internship Toolkit that we are developing will have information on how to develop and enhance current internship programs.”

The Employers Internship Toolkit includes information and resources that will assist employers in creating internships that meet the needs of their particular organization. The toolkit includes descriptions of the different types of internships that can be offered, information about the importance of internships, a list of benefits to an organization for having an intern, information on legal issues and international students, and templates for job descriptions and other documents needed for an internship program. The toolkit also outlines five key steps to developing a quality internship program:

- Step 1-Setting Goals and Policies for the Internship Program
- Step 2 Writing a Plan for the Internship Opportunity
- Step 3 Recruit a Qualified Intern
- Step 4 Manage the Intern
- Step 5 Conduct Exit Interviews and Follow-up

The toolkit was developed with the input of various businesses and career services professionals from universities and colleges in the region. When completed, the Employers Internship Toolkit will be available online at www.wm-alliance.org under the Internship Initiative link.

About the West Michigan Strategic Alliance

The West Michigan Strategic Alliance serves as a catalyst for regional collaboration among the businesses, institutions and governmental units serving more than 1.4 million people living in a eight-county region including: Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo and Ottawa. WMSA works to encourage a regional mindset, which will foster collaboration on critical issues that impact how we live, learn, work and play. Additional information is available at www.wm-alliance.org

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