

2023 internship and co-op program pulse survey report



Internship and co-op programs play a critical role in developing an organization's future talent and the company's overall growth. Cartus' 2023 Internship and Co-op Program Pulse Survey provides a valuable snapshot of this year's anticipated program structure, including the key factors likely to impact the approaches being taken.

The survey report highlights data from 29 respondents, representing various industries, including consumer goods, manufacturing, hospitality, retail, insurance, banking/finance, pharmaceutical, and technology.

where & when

We found the majority of respondents (69%) initiate 100 or fewer interns annually, with an additional 17% indicating they move between 101 and 250. Most companies indicate their internship/co-op program is solely based in the US, with a quarter running both domestic and international programs. Of the respondents, 86% said they did not send interns to multiple locations.

When it comes to the time of year to run programs, more than half of respondents (52%) opt for the summer months, with the remainder offering internships throughout the year. Of those who said internships were run in the summer, most began in either May or June and ended in August. A small percentage of respondents indicate that programs are offered in tandem with college and university semesters. It is of note that 38% of respondents have a year long rotational program that begins at different times of the year.

When looking at the length of time for internship and co-op programs, the typical duration is 12 weeks, although nearly a fifth (17%) of organizations had a nine-week run.

Overall, it would be fair to suggest there is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating an internship program. As our survey participants demonstrated, program size can vary widely from company to company, depending on goals and objectives.

69% of respondents initiate 100 or fewer interns annually





post-pandemic

The survey found that the pandemic is no longer the influencer it once was over internships with 62% of respondents planning in-person programs this year, compared to 12% of respondents in our 2021 Internship Program Survey Report. In 2023, one respondent will be holding a fully virtual/remote program.





When asked whether their budget has changed for internship programs post-pandemic, 62% indicate it has not. Those that said their budget has changed cited an increase in both hourly wages and housing costs as the two main reasons.

62% of respondents are planning in-person internship programs this year, compared to 12% of respondents in 2021

benefits and support

Some of the most common benefits for those running a US domestic internship program include offering a salary, housing, lump sum, and travel en route, which reflect similar findings from our 2022 survey.

However, if we compare the percentage of respondents offering these types of benefits, it would appear that overall support has declined somewhat.*

benefit	2023	2022
 salary	86%	93%
 housing	38%	64%
 lump sum	38%	57%
 travel en route	21%	43%

It is not surprising that housing remains a top benefit given the US rental market continues to be highly competitive and rental prices are high. Indeed, the lack of affordable rental properties in the country remains a critical factor for companies rolling-out internship programs this year. When asked what their top exceptions were, respondents cited, "cost of housing" and "finding housing" as the two frontrunners.

Given the number of housing scams present in the US rental market, it is also encouraging to note nearly a quarter (24%) of companies alert their interns should a housing scam become known within the local area.

When it came to international internships, the benefits offered were similar to those provided in domestic programs. Salary topped the list, followed by lump sum incentives, and immigration.

* The 2022 Cartus Internship Program Pulse Survey received 14 respondents vs 29 respondents in 2023

professional support



Monetary benefits or similar incentives aside, we also asked respondents about the level of support interns and co-ops received with regards to the workings of the program itself. For example, do interns receive program objectives? How are they introduced to the internal company culture? Are they provided with information around corporate initiatives?

Overwhelmingly, 97% of interns/co-ops are provided with their internship program's objectives. Although not as many (79%) are provided with information around overarching corporate initiatives, the number remains high. Typical corporate initiatives shared with candidates include:

- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (72%)
- Sustainability (55%)
- Corporate Citizenship (48%)

When it comes to upholding duty of care and corporate social responsibility, organizations are paying close attention to how they can better incorporate DEI principles in their internal and external organizational objectives.

Ways in which companies are introducing their interns/co-ops to their internal culture include:

- Virtual and/or in-person onboarding
- Mentorships
- Peer-to-peer networking
- Leadership meetings
- Facility tours
- Informal luncheons or coffee mornings both on and off site
- Training programs and workshops
- End of internship presentations

However, what happens if the intern becomes a full-time employee for the same company? Does this level of support continue? According to our survey, 45% of respondents provide the same benefits to new hires as they did when the individual was an intern/co-op. Interestingly, although 90% agree that today's generation of interns and college graduates (many of whom lost in-person university classes during the pandemic) would benefit from an introduction to business etiquette or working environment expectations as part of their onboarding, only 41% of respondents currently offer such training.

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return on investment

Understanding the return on investment (ROI) gained from your internship/co-op program is crucial to ensuring its long-term success. If ROI is not achieved (or indeed, proven to be achieved), then HR and mobility professionals responsible for internship/co-op programs could lose buy-in from key internal stakeholders, particularly from company leadership.

79%
survey their
interns

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In this regard, data is imperative to help ascertain the specific ROI gained by implementing intern/co-op programs. Even something as simple as surveying interns at the end of their internship can provide invaluable feedback; to this end, our survey found that 79% of respondents conduct such a poll.

In terms of the specific ROI gained from these program-types, according to our surveyed companies, talent management remains the top benefit (consistent with the findings in our 2022 survey). Other benefits included filling resource gaps and contributing to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).*

In relation to creating a future talent pool, the majority of survey respondents indicate 20% of their interns/co-ops become full-time employees in their organization.

Separate Cartus research that focused on **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Mobility**, found that almost all participating organizations (99%) prioritize DEI, which opens another ROI category to measure going forward, in terms of companies that target more diverse intern/co-op participants as part of their larger recruiting strategy.

While the cost and scarcity of rental housing continue to challenge both the interns and those managing internship and co-op programs, companies are learning how to overcome these challenges in their markets and continue to achieve success.

** Respondents could check all that apply*

find out more about dei in mobility



At Cartus, we help support organizations to develop and implement internship programs. For more information and guidance on your internship or co-op programs, contact your Cartus representative or email: **cartussolutions@cartus.com**.



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