Aventi Group

EMPLOYER GUIDE

The Micro-Internship Playbook

Hiring Student Interns Without the Overhead

Someone on your team suggests bringing on an intern this summer. A minute later the idea is dead: we don't have the headcount, we don't have the budget, and nobody has time to manage a college student.

We've been in that conversation plenty of times. It almost always ends the same way, and it's almost always wrong.

Done well, a student internship pays off on both sides. The intern gets real experience and picks up skills in a field they care about. You get an extra set of hands and more output than you expected. What kills the idea is the picture people have in their heads of what an internship has to be.

That picture says you need a certain level of personnel, resources, and steady workload to pull it off. It comes from an older model of how an office runs, and it doesn't match how most teams work now. Hybrid schedules and AI have already changed what roles look like on your team. The same is true for an intern.

You don't need an HR department, a consistent workload, or a big budget.

No matter your size, you can run a micro-internship.

WHAT A MICRO-INTERNSHIP IS

A **project-based internship** where the student works **10 to 25 hours a week for 6 to 10 weeks** of the summer. It's the low-lift version of a formal program, it still works for both sides, and it fits the way offices actually run today.

> **You don't need a bigger budget or more time. You need a smaller version of the program you're picturing.**

WHAT'S INSIDE

01
Four Myths, Busted
Budget, workload, supervision, and structure.

02
How It Actually Works
Hours, terms, projects, and funding paths.

03
What Worked for Us
Practices from our own Aventi Group interns.

Four Myths, Busted

1

MYTH ONE

“We can’t afford an intern.”

Picture a summer internship and you’re probably picturing the full-time version: 40 hours a week for most of the summer. That’s roughly what the market looks like, and for a small organization it adds up to real money.

It’s also just one way to do this.

Grants, university funding, and part-time or stipend-based options mean cost usually isn’t the real blocker. A growing number of colleges now fund students to take internships that would otherwise be unpaid, which is the easiest way around the cost question entirely.

This summer, Aventi Group had a student intern who received **just under $4,000** through their university’s guarantee program to work with us, and handled roughly 90% of the paperwork to set it up. A number of schools run guarantee programs or something like them, and some students can also earn class credit for the work.

PAYING DIRECTLY

$20–$30 /hr

Our range for internships, depending on experience and length of engagement — right around the national average

If your only option is to pay the intern directly, that’s still doable part time or on a stipend. Numbers will vary by company.

From there it’s **simple math**: how long can you fund the help, and what can get done in that time?

A FEW EXAMPLES OF UNIVERSITY FUNDING

The Richmond Guarantee (University of Richmond), which funds unpaid or underpaid internships for undergrads

The Mussafer Internship Initiative (Tulane), a dedicated fund supporting student stipends, including unpaid roles

State-run options, including California’s College Corps, Colorado’s State Capitol legislative internship, and Washington’s State Intern Program

2

MYTH TWO

“We don’t have enough work to give them.”

Here’s the best part of a micro-internship: you don’t have to invent work or build a curriculum around it. The goal is to give the intern real experience, and there is always something that needs doing. Interns can own research, documentation, competitive analysis, AI exploration, project management, internal process cleanup, and content creation.

So skip the learning plan. Hire them for a specific project and bring them on part time. If that project runs dry, pull something out of the backlog, either for their manager or for another department, which has the side benefit of showing them different parts of the business. Real examples from our own backlog: blog writing, research decks, proposal support, competitive analysis, and a Canva-built pitch board.

One thing to watch when you pick the project. The work has to be real, or the intern knows it and so does your team. But the projects that pay off twice are the ones with a **question attached to them**.

A competitive tracker they keep current
→ gets you a spreadsheet.

A competitive audit that asks *where our sales team has it wrong*
→ gets you the same spreadsheet, plus a student who had to make a call and defend it.

Same hours, and you get the output either way.

JUST TESTING THIS OUT?

Start with **10 hours a week for a 6 to 10 week term**. You will be surprised how fast you come to rely on that extra set of hands. At the end, have them present what they built, and spend part of that conversation on the decisions behind it rather than the finished files. You will learn more about what the term was worth in twenty minutes of that than in any folder of deliverables.

TRADITIONAL VS. MICRO-INTERNSHIP

Traditional Internship

HOURS PER WEEK 40

- A fixed summer window, usually 10 to 12 weeks
- A formal recruiting cycle, an application pile, and structured onboarding
- A dedicated supervisor and a full-time hiring pipeline at the end of it

Micro-Internship

HOURS PER WEEK 10–25

- One week to a few months, summer or during the school year
- Filled through your own network
- A project brief and a weekly check-in, built around one project instead of a program

3

MYTH THREE

“We don’t have anyone to supervise them.”

This one is fair, and it’s worth thinking through, because supervision is what determines how much the intern gets out of the engagement. Watching people work and learning from people with more experience is a big part of the value. The myth is how much supervision that actually takes.

Fewer hours over a shorter term means there is less to supervise. And a little extra work at the front end cuts down the hands-on support you’ll need later.

Think of the supervisor as the safety net rather than the engine. The intern does the work, and the supervisor is what makes them secure enough to try.

What you’re really building is an intern who can run on their own. Four things make that happen.

1. Put expectations in writing

Both sides should know the scope going in: the term length, the hours, what you want out of the engagement, and who they report to. Put it in a short brief and save it somewhere the intern can pull up on their own. This is the front-end work that prevents confusion later and cuts the need for supervision. Give them what they need to help themselves and keep the supervisor as the backup resource.

2. Book a 15-minute check-in

Same time every week, same person, and it can be the same agenda every time: go over projects, check the workload, revisit expectations, and leave room for their questions. The most important part is feedback. For some interns this is their first office job, and more than learning the field, they are learning where the bar is and how to clear it. Keep these with someone who sees them and their work regularly. Even a quick “good job” tells them they’re on the right track and gives them the confidence to handle the rest.

3. Introduce them around

Introductions matter as much as the work. Once the intern is settled, help them meet other people in the organization. This is easier at a smaller company, where departments already work closely together. If you have other young people in the office, connect them — an intern may feel safer taking a question to that person than to their direct manager, and that pays off over the term. It also gives them a picture of how the organization fits together, so they know who to ask and can do it confidently.

4. Give them a place to ask questions

A Slack channel or standing office hours works. Point them to people and to sources of information so they feel comfortable speaking up. This matters most on a remote internship, where the intern can’t turn to a neighbor or watch the rest of the team work.

4

MYTH FOUR

"You need a formal internship program to succeed."

Students are facing a tradeoff. Chase the big-name company and risk a summer of shadowing, or take the smaller, lesser-known company and own a project outright. You're the second option, and that's a better offer than it sounds.

So skip the program. Give them one specific project, then write down what you want them to walk away with. A short internship still has to feel worth it to them, and that list is how you make sure there's something tangible at the end. Here's ours.

> **Real ownership, fast, beats a polished program most students never get close to anyway.**

WHAT YOUR INTERN SHOULD WALK AWAY WITH

- Ownership of a specific, nameable project
- Connections, meaning people who will remember them
- A skill they didn't have going in
- A strong LinkedIn entry, plus a short endorsement from their supervisor
- Clear compensation, even if it's a stipend
- An end-of-term readout where they present what they built

This Isn't a Hiring Pipeline, It's a Favor Worth Doing

You're probably not going to hire this person full-time, and that's fine. This is about giving a young person a real, low-stakes shot at starter experience, the same way someone probably did for you once. Let them keep taking classes, traveling, or working another summer job while they're with you. That flexibility is part of what makes the whole thing work.

How to Start Your Program

You don't need a formal program, but you do need to think this through. The work is front-loaded, so give yourself about six months.

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

Write the brief

One paragraph covering the project, the hours, and the outcome.

Get buy-in

Confirm the budget or the funding path with whoever signs off.

Share the role

Send it to your network, and add one LinkedIn post if you need more.

Interview and select

Two short conversations are usually enough.

Day 0

Kickoff call, tools access, and the first check-in on the calendar.

How to Actually Find the Intern

No public job posting. No pile of resumes. We fill ours through our own network, and you can too. You don't need another platform to manage, and you don't need hundreds of applications to sort through. Three places to start:

Your own network

Describe the internship in a few sentences and send it to coworkers, partners, clients — anyone who might know a student.

One LinkedIn post

If you need a wider net, a single post usually does it. No new platform, no applicant pile.

A university career center

A local career center can point you to candidates directly if you'd rather have a warm introduction than a cold post.

> **And that's the point. You don't need a bigger budget or more time. You need a smaller version of the program you're picturing.**

The Micro-Internship Playbook

Want to hear how ours went and how we can help with yours? Send us a message. We'd love to talk it through.

Let's connect: www.aventigroup.com/contact

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