



2026 NASPE Awards Program

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Submission Deadline: April 17, 2026

Submission Method: Submit via the 2026 NASPE Awards Nomination Form.
Upload this completed template and the required one-page summary within the form.

Nominations from dues-paying states are considered for eligibility. Nominated programs should have a positive effect on the administration of state human resource programs. A state's central human resource department or line agency human resource operations may administer nominated programs.

Programs and projects must have been operational for at least six months prior to nomination and must be transferable to other states. Selection criteria are based on the questions asked on the award application. Included in this packet are the specific criteria for each award and their categories. Nominations are encouraged in all areas of human resource management administration.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program Title: The Team Kentucky Internship Program (TKIP) (website: teamkyintern.ky.gov) State: KY

Contact Person: Jamie Caldwell

Contact's Title: Commissioner

Agency: Kentucky Personnel Cabinet

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E-mail: Jamie.Caldwell@ky.gov

NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Nominator: Mary Elizabeth Bailey Title: Secretary

State: KY Agency: Kentucky Personnel Cabinet

Telephone: 502-564-6619

E-mail: Marye.Bailey@ky.gov

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

- Meet all eligibility requirements
- Be submitted via the nomination form by April 17, 2026
- Include a complete nomination template and one-page summary
- Conform to all copyright laws



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DETAILS

Please attach a one-page summary of the program. Narrative responses should generally not exceed 4–6 pages (based on regular 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper, double-spaced in 12-point font). The 4–6 page guidance does not include the required one-page summary.

1. Please provide a brief description of this program.

The Team Kentucky Internship Program (TKIP) is an exclusive internship program developed with students in mind! TKIP is intended to provide students with the opportunity to gain meaningful experience and employment in state government. In addition to developing practical workplace skills in a variety of professional areas, interns are effectively introduced to the exciting career options in public service. The program strives to provide opportunities for students to gain first-hand experience, knowledge and understanding of governmental processes through various fields. This internship opportunity gives students insight into considering a future career within state government. In addition to paid work at a state government agency the program includes a series of professional development courses aimed at further developing the interns in the areas of managing work relationships, resume writing, financial literacy, networking and more. Further, tours are scheduled at various state agencies so the interns can be exposed to the various types of agencies included in state government, outside of the agency they are currently employed. Guest speakers are scheduled for each of these events and have included the agency heads of the cabinets they are visiting, the Governor's chief advisor, the Lieutenant Governor, and even the Governor. Upon the successful completion of the program the interns earn interview preference, giving them a step ahead to get in the door to interview for a permanent full-time job after graduation.

2. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

October 28, 2024

3. Why was this program created? (What problem[s] or issues does it address?)

TKIP was intentionally designed to address a critical workforce need: attracting, developing, and retaining talented early-career professionals in public service. By offering students meaningful, paid work experiences within state agencies and interview preference upon program completion, TKIP creates a direct pipeline of skilled, motivated candidates who are already familiar with government operations, culture, and mission.

4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

This forward-thinking model not only enhances workforce readiness but creates a pool of public service-focused talent.

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5. What were the startup costs? (Provide detailed information about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology, and staff already in place.)

There was no cost for the initial creation and start of the Team Kentucky Internship Program. Program activities were created, coordinated and executed by existing staff and resources. Because TKIP is foundationally built on the idea of an enhanced internship, with specific work-related experiences and exposure to a wide variety of public sector functions and operations, additional resources and materials were not necessary.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

There are nominal costs associated with the operations of this program.

7. How is this program funded?

Funds for the payment of student salaries must come from the agency's budget, or from funds provided for work-study by the educational institution involved. The employing agencies may have paid travel expenses if the intern's attendance of program events and activities required travel outside their regularly assigned work county.

8. Did this program originate in your state? Yes ☒ No ☐

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, how does this program differ?

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

10. How do you measure the success of this program?

TKIP measures success through a strategic combination of workforce outcomes, agency impact, and participant experience—ensuring the program strengthens both student career pathways and the Commonwealth's ability to deliver high-quality services.

A primary measure of success is the program's effectiveness as a talent pipeline into state government. The Commonwealth tracks the number of interns who return to state government for additional internships and those who transition to full-time roles, using the interview preference received as a benefit of successful program completion. The program helps address critical workforce shortages and reduces hiring timelines across agencies.

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The program also evaluates impact on service delivery. State agencies report on how interns contribute to key projects, reduce administrative backlogs, and increase operational capacity. Interns play a meaningful role in supporting essential government functions, enabling agencies to respond more efficiently to Kentuckians' needs.

Equally important is the quality of the intern experience. Through surveys and structured feedback, the program measures whether participants gain relevant, hands-on experience aligned with their academic and career goals. High satisfaction rates demonstrate that the program is not only attracting talent, but also preparing students for successful careers in public service.

The Commonwealth also tracks reach and accessibility, including the number of participating students, partnerships with Kentucky colleges and universities, and representation from diverse and underrepresented populations. Expanding access to public sector opportunities ensures a more inclusive and representative future workforce for Kentucky.

Finally, the program measures cost-effectiveness and long-term workforce value. By developing talent internally, Kentucky reduces recruitment and onboarding costs while building a workforce that is already familiar with state systems, policies, and culture.

Together, these measures demonstrate that the Internship Program delivers measurable improvements in workforce readiness, operational efficiency, and the Commonwealth's capacity to serve its citizens.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

For the first year session of the TKIP, in the summer of 2025, the program received 1,030 applications for 51 positions. Forty-two interns successfully completed the program in 2025. As of this date, the program has received 2,021 applications for more than 60 positions for the 2026 session. With the second session of TKIP about to begin, in May 2026, the applicant interest has doubled, and agencies have increased the number of internship positions dedicated to TKIP. We know this is a result of the success of the initial 2025 program session. Kentucky has also enhanced some of the program activities by adding additional days of professional development and agency visit opportunities for interns. By offering students meaningful, paid work experiences within state agencies and interview preference upon program completion, this program offers a more thorough public sector experience additional benefits, when compared to a standard internship. This model not only enhances workforce readiness but also creates a pool of public service-focused talent.

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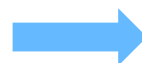
Team Kentucky
Internship Program

Program Overview

The Team Kentucky Internship Program is an exclusive internship program that was developed with students in mind! It is intended to provide students the opportunity to gain meaningful experience and employment in state government.

In addition to developing practical workplace skills in a variety of professional areas, interns are effectively introduced to the exciting career options in public service. The program strives to provide opportunities for students to gain first-hand experience, knowledge and understanding of governmental processes through various fields. An internship opportunity gives students insight into considering a future career within state government.

Read more about the program



Interns who successfully complete the program guidelines throughout the duration of the program will be eligible to receive interview preference for future employment within the executive branch.

Eligibility Requirements

- Applicant must be enrolled at an accredited post-secondary school.
- Applicant must be in good standing with the school with at least a 2.5 grade point average at hire.

*Graduating high school seniors enrolled in college courses with a 2.5 GPA may also qualify and apply to participate in the program. Candidates must be 18 years of age by the program start date.

Application Requirements

Students must apply on the careers website to the specific Co-Op/Intern position they are interested in, or they can apply to the Team Kentucky general requisition if they need assistance matching their area of interest. Applicants must upload a copy of their unofficial transcript with the submission of their application. The document will be reviewed to ensure all requirements are met before students are approved for the program.

International Students

The Personnel Cabinet does not have a role in visa sponsorship decisions. Those decisions are made by hiring agencies in accordance with United States federal law. You should direct any questions you have about visas to the employing agency at issue.

Program Benefits

- Paid hands-on job experience to add to your resume.
- Professional development opportunities offered exclusively to Team Kentucky interns to help you grow personally and professionally.
- A professional headshot.
- Receive a letter of recommendation upon successful completion of the internship.
- Networking opportunities with other interns, mentors, and state employees.
- Have a positive impact on Kentuckians in an internship in public service.

Program Requirements

- Attend TKIP Orientation
- Attend at least 1 Professional Development Day
- Attend at least 1 Agency Tour
- Complete 300 working hours throughout the program
- Submit the final project
- Attend TKIP Reception

Intern Responsibilities

- Comply with all agency rules, regulations, policies, and safety procedures. If you are unsure about what to do in a situation, it is best to consult with your supervisor.
- Ask questions when unclear about a project or task.
- Show initiative! You bring value to our state agencies and can provide fresh ideas and perspectives.
- Be receptive to feedback from your supervisors. They are there to help you grow throughout your internship.

Questions?

Email angie.hilen@ky.gov for more information.

