Talent Rich, Opportunity Constrained

Why New England's Internship Market Struggles to Scale



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Executive Summary

New England's internship market appears broadly balanced at first glance. The region's aggregate entry-level-to-internship ratio—defined as the ratio of entry-level job postings to internship postings—closely mirrors national norms, suggesting a structurally sound market. Yet this apparent balance obscures a more complex reality. When examined at the state and industry level, a sharper picture emerges: healthy sector averages mask meaningful variation beneath the surface, with specific states and industries showing pronounced divergence from both regional and national benchmarks.

The binding constraint is not student demand or labor market weakness. Entry-level hiring volume is robust across the region. Structural barriers often hinder small and medium-sized employers (SMEs) from standing up formal internship pipelines. Large employers offer the lion's share of internships and have internalized the costs of supervision, compliance, and program design. Smaller competitors—many of which rely on episodic hiring—often struggle to absorb these costs. This challenge is more acute in New England than nationally, due to the region's relatively high concentration of SMEs.

Furthermore, diagnostic tools like the Skills Overlap × Conversion Matrix reveal that even where internships exist, their function varies wildly. While sectors like Retail and Professional Services operate as structured "Auditions for the Job," other major sectors lag. Notably, New England lacks a high-volume "Talent Incubator" industry, and firm-level data shows that successful internship-to-hire pathways depend more on intentional employer execution than broad industry affiliation.

Ultimately, the gaps between early-career hiring demand and developed internship pipelines are rooted in three structural drivers:

- **Firm Size Constraints:** An economy weighted toward SME employers that cannot easily absorb the costs of program design, leading to a reliance on direct, "just-in-time" hiring.
- **Geographic Concentration:** A spatial mismatch where internship postings cluster in major metropolitan hubs (Boston, Providence, Hartford), while New England's higher education infrastructure remains highly decentralized across rural and exurban areas.
- **Anchor Employer Presence:** A lack of massive operational headquarters that absorb interns at scale in other regions. Meanwhile, healthcare and education—the region's major engines of employment—offer strikingly few internships.

Internship expansion in New England will not come from simply asking employers to "do more." It requires targeted interventions to reduce the structural friction in the market. By lowering costs for SMEs through shared intermediary infrastructure, mitigating geographic barriers via hybrid models, and unlocking operational capacity in dominant sectors, regional stakeholders can scale internship access in ways commensurate with the strength of New England's educational institutions and labor market demand.

Section I.
Regional Benchmarks and Aggregate Parity

New England's internship market appears broadly functional overall. The region's aggregate entry-level-to-internship ratio—defined as the ratio of entry-level job postings to internship postings—closely mirrors national norms, with internship availability tracking entry-level hiring across industries much like the national model. Across the 31 industries included in this analysis, New England's overall entry-level-to-internship ratio is 11.1, compared with the national average of 9.9.

At the industry cluster level, internships appear to scale proportionately to entry-level hiring demand throughout much of the regional economy. Even in healthcare and retail, where operational roles often lead to higher ratios, divergence from national norms is moderate. At the aggregate level, there is no evidence of systemic internship failure.

What is the entry-level-to-internship ratio?

This ratio measures how many entry-level job postings exist for every internship posting in a given industry.

- A *lower* ratio indicates internships scale proportionally with hiring demand.
- A *higher* ratio indicates hiring demand exceeds internship demand.

Table 1. Regional and National Internship Utilization Benchmarks (2022-2025)

Industry Cluster	NE Entry-Level-to-Internship Ratio	US Entry-Level-to-Internship Ratio
Finance	9.9	9.9
Healthcare	25.1	20.8
Manufacturing	4.9	5.1
Retail	21.9	17.5
Other	9.4	8.1

Yet beneath this regional-level parity lies a revealing paradox. When entry-level-to-internship ratios are examined at the state level, a sharper picture emerges. Specific state-industry combinations show pronounced gaps.

Consider Nursing Care Facilities in Connecticut. Employers post 2,123 entry-level jobs but offer just 12 internships. That entry-level-to-internship ratio of 176.9 is nearly 10 times lower than the national ratio (18.2). If the state's Nursing Care Facilities offered internships at the same rate as the sector does nationally, they would offer more than 100 additional internships each year.[1]

This is not an isolated case. Across smaller New England states, industries ranging from healthcare support to financial services show high entry-level demand but entry-level-to-internship ratios well above regional and national averages.

Table 2. Entry-Level-to-Internship Ratios Across Smaller New England States, Healthcare to Finance (2022-2025)

State	Industry	State Ratio	National Ratio
Maine	Nursing Care Facilities	449.0	18.2
Connecticut	Nursing Care Facilities	176.9	18.2
New Hampshire	Home Health Care Services	343.0	45.1
Maine	Individual & Family Services	128.0	12.5
Vermont	Employment Services	54.6	7.2
Rhode Island	Other Financial Investment Activities	48.8	16.8

The problem is not a lack of employer demand for early-career talent, but a failure to structure recruitment strategies around internship pipelines. Employers in key regional industries—from Grocery store pharmacy and Convenience Retailers in New Hampshire to Warehouse Clubs in Connecticut—are meeting their entry-level staffing needs through direct hiring rather than internship-to-hire pathways. The examples above are illustrative rather than systematic. The next section moves from the regional aggregate to a state-by-state comparison, measuring how the number of industries that diverge from national benchmarks differs across New England's six states.

Section II. State-Level Divergence

While New England appears aligned with national patterns in aggregate, disaggregating the data across its six states produces a more uneven picture. The regional average combines employer-dense labor markets with smaller, more fragmented ones. When those markets are examined individually, structural gaps emerge. The final column below counts how many industries are "flagged" in each state, meaning their entry-level-to-internship ratio exceeds the national benchmark for that industry by at least one standard deviation.

Table 3. State-Level Entry-Level-to-Internship Ratio Snapshot

State	Entry-Level-to-Internship Ratio	# Flagged vs US
Maine	14.0	9
Vermont	8.7	9
Connecticut	13.7	7
New Hampshire	11.0	7
Rhode Island	9.6	4
Massachusetts	11.0	2

What Does "Flagged" Mean?

An industry is *flagged* when its internship utilization ratio exceeds regional or national benchmarks by at least one standard deviation.

This signals that internship demand is significantly lower than expected relative to hiring demand.

Massachusetts—the region's largest labor market—closely aligns with national norms, with the entry-level-to-internship ratios for most industries mirroring national benchmarks .

However, Massachusetts is the exception that proves the rule: other New England states show more industries flagged relative to national benchmarks, indicating markedly underdeveloped internship pipelines. Maine and Vermont each have nine industries where entry-level-to-internship ratios exceed national benchmarks, while Connecticut shows seven.

With entry-level hiring volume robust in all six states, these differences are not explained by weak demand for early-career hires. Indeed, many of these states with elevated entry-level-to-internship ratios exhibit strong hiring demand in healthcare support, retail, finance, and other business functions, clearly indicating that the problem is not a lack of employer need for early-career talent.

Instead, this divergence reflects variation in how internship infrastructure is embedded within local employer ecosystems. Specifically, smaller labor markets often exhibit characteristics that hinder robust internship pipelines, such as:

- Fewer large employers capable of absorbing interns at scale
- More distributed and fragmented employer bases
- Less centralized institutional infrastructure supporting internship pipelines
- Greater geographic dispersion between students and major hiring hubs

Where these conditions converge, hiring demand for early-career talent and internship provision tend to decouple.

The next step is to examine those gaps at the industry level, identifying specific sector–state combinations that drive each state's flagged total: those with strong entry-level hiring but internship pipelines lagging national norms.

Section III. Industries Underutilizing Intern Pipelines

To identify specific disconnects, we calculated ratios of entry-level postings to internship postings for each industry at the state level, "flagging" industries within each state when their entry-level-to-internship ratio exceeds national industry benchmarks by at least one standard deviation.

Table 4. Industries Flagged for Internship Underutilization Relative to US Benchmark by State

Industry	CT	ME	MA	NH	RI	VT
Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping						■
Agencies, Brokerages, & Other Insurance		■				
Employment Services						■
General Medical & Surgical Hospitals	■	■		■	■	
Grocery & Convenience Retailers		■		■		
Health & Personal Care Retailers		■				
Home Health Care Services	■			■		■
Individual & Family Services	■	■				■
Newspaper, Periodical & Directory Publishers	■	■		■		■
Nursing Care Facilities	■	■		■	■	■
Offices of Physicians	■	■	■			■
Other Financial Investment Activities			■	■	■	
Outpatient Care Centers		■				
Software Publishers						■
Warehouse Clubs, Supercenters & General Merchandise	■			■	■	■

This matrix reveals sharp gaps in specific sector–state combinations, indicating internship availability well below norms. As at the state level, these gaps reflect structural constraints on institutionalizing internship pipelines rather than any shortfall in hiring demand.

The clustering of flags across healthcare-related services, retail and general merchandise, and segments of finance is most pronounced. These industries vary in function and workforce profile, yet they share common structural features:

- Distributed employer bases
- Operationally intensive roles
- Limited centralized HR infrastructure

The pattern suggests that internship underproduction is associated less with an industry's broad sector definition and more with how those shared structural features are distributed across states, including differences in employer size, geographic concentration, and institutional capacity.

These cases defy a one-size-fits-all explanation. Some reflect the predominance of small and mid-sized firms (SMEs). Others reflect geographic isolation or the absence of national companies with substantial local administrative or operational hubs that typically staff interns. Still others reflect industries that have not historically formalized early-career pathways outside of licensed or credentialed tracks.

The table highlights where entry-level hiring demand has not yet translated into structured internship-to-hire pathways.

The case studies in Section V illustrate how these mismatches manifest within specific industries and states.

Section IV. The Skills Overlap × Conversion Matrix in New England

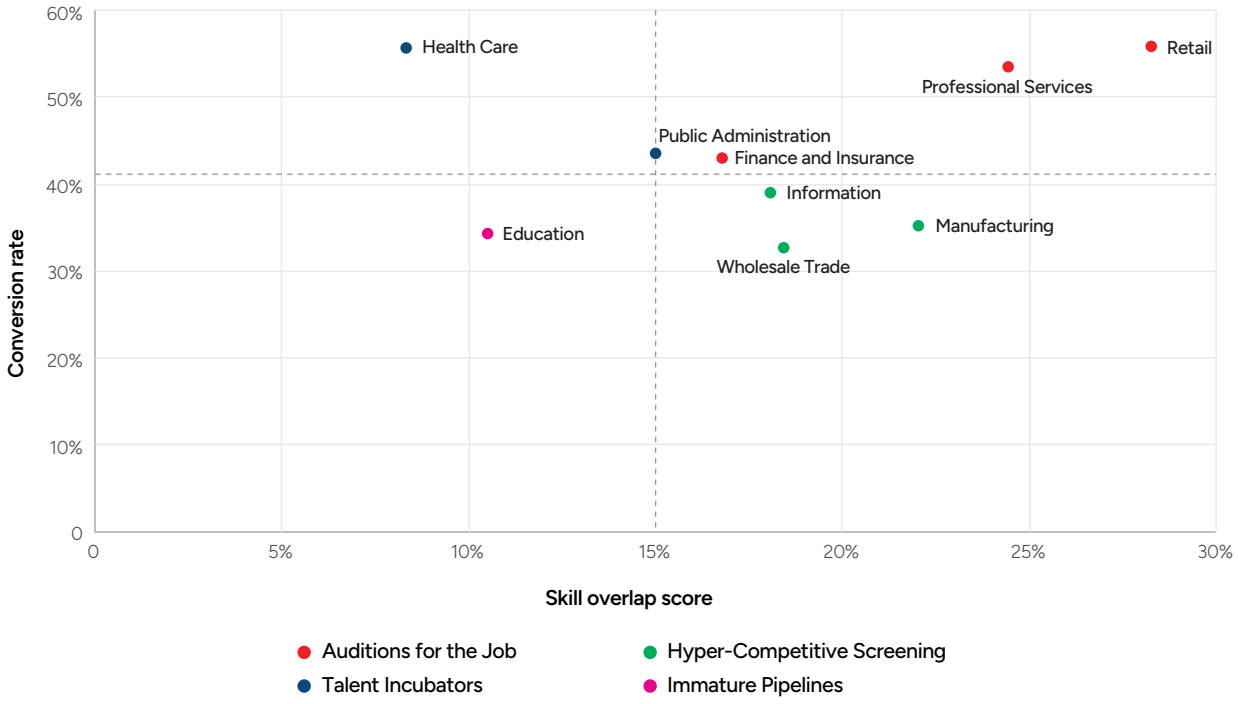
How New England Industries Use Internships

The entry-level-to-internship ratio answers one essential question: are internships present at scale relative to hiring demand? But ratios alone cannot tell us whether the internships that do exist are functioning as effective talent pipelines. To answer that question, we apply a complementary diagnostic introduced in our companion national report: the Skills Overlap × Conversion Matrix. This framework adapts the skill overlap and conversion matrix developed in our national analysis. Readers seeking the full definitions of the four internship archetypes, as well as the national baseline data, should consult our companion report on the national internship market, The Internship Imperative: Expanding the On-Ramp to Career Success.

The framework plots industries along two dimensions—the degree to which internship skill requirements resemble entry-level requirements (skill overlap) and the rate at which interns transition into full-time roles at the same company (conversion). Together, these measures sort industries into four archetypes: Auditions for the Job (high overlap, high conversion), Hyper-Competitive Screening (high overlap, selective conversion), Talent Incubators (lower overlap, high conversion), and Immature Pipelines (low overlap, low conversion).

Applied to New England, the matrix reveals a regional internship economy that diverges from national patterns in important ways—and helps explain why specific sectors at the state level struggle to convert robust hiring demand into structured internship opportunity.

Figure 1. Skill Overlap vs. Conversion Rate by Industry (New England)



Source: Burning Glass Institute analysis

Several findings stand out:

- **Retail and Professional Services lead New England's "Auditions for the Job" quadrant**. Both sectors combine high skill overlap with conversion rates well above the regional median, indicating that internships in these industries function as extended, structured evaluations for full-time employment. Consistent with patterns at the national level, the challenge in these sectors is access, not function. The pipelines work, but only for students who get into them. Finance & Insurance occupy intermediate positions, with above-median conversion and moderate overlap, a profile suggesting structured pipelines that are partially or inconsistently developed.
- **Manufacturing and Wholesale Trade fall sharply into the "Hyper-Competitive Screening" quadrant**. Both display high skill overlap, suggesting interns are exposed to work closely resembling entry-level technical roles. Yet conversion rates remain below 40%—materially lower than national manufacturing benchmarks. This pattern aligns directly with the structural reality described in more detail in Section V: New England's manufacturing base is materially lower than national manufacturing benchmarks, reflecting the precision-oriented profile of New England's specialized manufacturing base (discussed further in Section VI).

- **Education anchors the 'Immature Pipeline' quadrant.** A major engine of regional employment, yet their internships exhibit low skill overlap and below-average conversion. This sector has not, in aggregate, built internship infrastructure that meaningfully prepares students for entry-level work or systematically routes them into full-time roles.
- **Health Care anchors the 'Talent Incubator' quadrant.** The sector pairs the region's highest conversion rate—roughly 55%—with low skill overlap, meaning interns convert into full-time roles at high rates even though their internship work differs substantially from entry-level requirements. This tracks the national matrix, where healthcare also occupies the Talent Incubator quadrant, marking one area where New England aligns with rather than departs from national patterns.

Interpreting the Matrix

The quadrant boundaries in Figure 1 are drawn using New England's regional medians for skill overlap and conversion, not the national thresholds used in the companion report. This means an industry's quadrant placement reflects its position relative to other New England industries, not relative to national benchmarks. In practice, this matters most for industries near the dashed lines, since small shifts in where the thresholds are drawn can move an industry from one quadrant to another. The broader patterns described above—Professional Services and Retail as clear "Auditions for the Job" models, Manufacturing's selective-conversion profile, and Health Care's 'Talent Incubator' profile—are robust to these threshold choices.

However, while these industry-level averages provide a useful macro perspective, they can obscure significant variation among individual firms within an industry. Readers should treat quadrant labels for borderline cases such as Public Administration and Finance & Insurance, which sit almost exactly on the regional conversion median and could fall on either side of the line separating the quadrants depending on where the threshold is drawn.

Employer-Level Variation Within Sectors

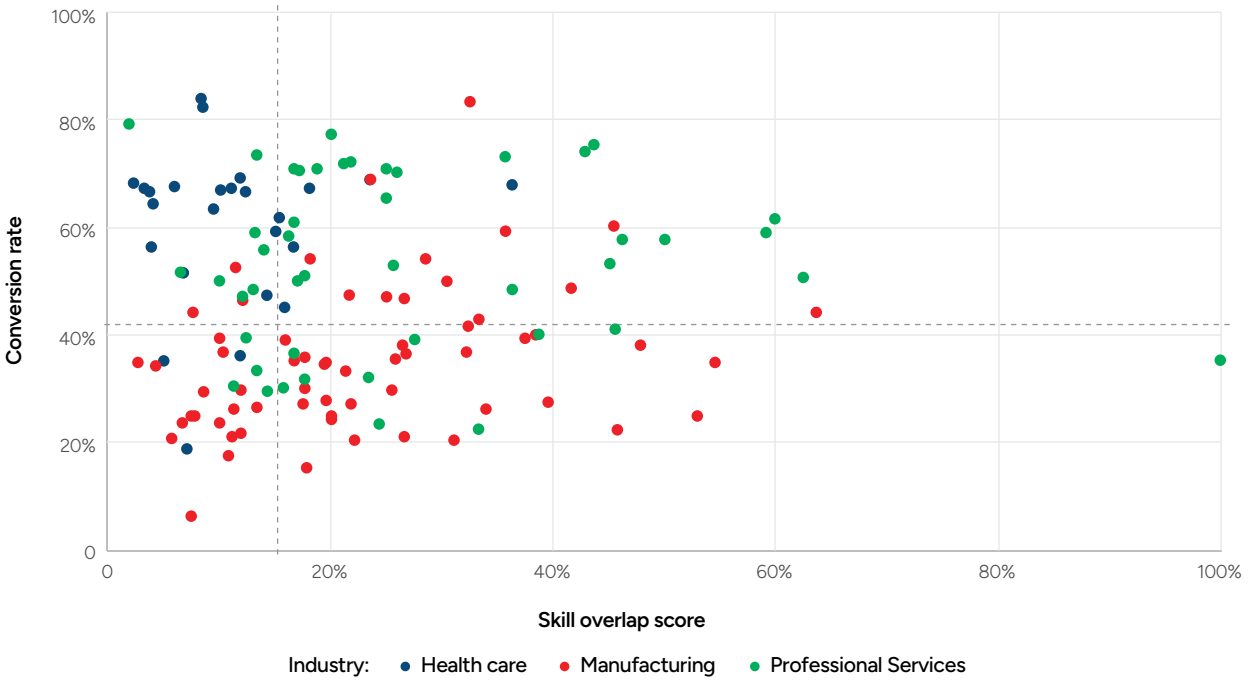
To understand the range of variation in internship strategies across industries, we must zoom in. Figure 2 plots the same skill overlap and conversion metrics for four of the region's biggest industries but disaggregates the data to the level of individual employers.

A Note on Regional Data Scope:

When this report discusses New England data, it specifically measures interns who *attend college* in New England, rather than all interns who work at New England-based companies. We do this to measure how well the region retains its own students.

Filtering by student's school rather than employer location reveals interesting pipeline dynamics. For example, a handful of elite New England healthcare systems boast overall intern conversion rates in the mid-to-high 60s. However, when we isolate the data to look only at local New England college students, their conversion rates drop by 20 to 30 percentage points. This distinction highlights how these elite hospitals act as powerful national talent magnets.

Figure 2. Skill Overlap vs. Conversion Rate by Company (New England)



Source: Burning Glass Institute analysis

Disaggregating at the employer level both reinforces and complicates this picture. By looking at the wide spread of dots within a single color, we see that individual employers occupy strikingly different positions on the matrix than their industry averages suggest:

- **Manufacturing (red) reveals a stark divide between Defense and Biopharma**. While the industry average falls below the conversion threshold, firm-level data shows that your sub-sector heavily dictates your pipeline strategy. Major defense and aerospace contractors have clearly figured out how to build high-converting technical pipelines, with BAE Systems (63%), General Dynamics (58%), and Lockheed Martin (57%) leading the pack. Conversely, the region's massive biopharma presence operates on a strict "selective-screening" model, with giants like Biogen (29%), Pfizer (25%), Merck (23%), Sanofi (22%), and Vertex (18%) converting only a fraction of their interns. Meanwhile, in the semiconductor space, Intel serves as the ultimate extreme of the "Hyper-Competitive Screening" archetype, boasting a massive overlap score of 66 but a conversion rate of just 26%.
- **Professional Services (green) is not a guaranteed pathway**. Although this sector anchors the high-performing "Auditions for the Job" quadrant at the macro level, the firm-level data reveals a massive spread. The sector's high average is driven by major accounting and advisory firms operating highly structured, high-volume pipelines (e.g., Bain & Company at 89%, and PwC and RSM at 78%). Yet, operating in a pipeline-friendly industry does not automatically translate to high conversion. Well-resourced employers fall well below the overall conversion threshold, proving that intentional employer execution matters more than sector affiliation.

- **Health Care (navy) occupies a distinctive low-overlap, high-conversion niche.** Healthcare clusters tightly at the far left of the matrix: every employer posts a skill-overlap score below 25, meaning interns rarely perform the same day-to-day tasks as full-time staff. Yet conversion rates are both high and remarkably compressed, with most hospitals landing between 55% and 70%. Conversion strength is also broadly shared across the region rather than concentrated in the marquee Boston names: Massachusetts General (64%), Brigham and Women's (63%), and Boston Children's (62%) are matched or outpaced by Yale New Haven Health (67%), Maine Medical Center (69%), and Baystate Health (82%). For care-delivery institutions, the internship functions less as a high-stakes audition than as a 'grow-your-own' pipeline: low task overlap on the front end, but a high probability of an offer at the finish.

This dispersion is itself diagnostic. The wide within-sector variance—particularly among manufacturers and healthcare providers—indicates that some New England employers have built effective internship-to-hire pathways while many of their peers have not. Where individual firms have institutionalized strong pipelines, they demonstrate that the constraints identified in Section VI are not insurmountable; rather, internship strategy, not industry definition, often determines whether hiring demand converts into structured opportunity.

From Diagnosis to Case Study

Together, the volume diagnostic (entry-level-to-internship ratios) and the function diagnostic (Skills Overlap × Conversion Matrix) sharpen the picture of where New England's internship market is breaking down. Volume tells us where pipelines are thin; function tells us whether the pipelines that exist are doing the work of preparing students and connecting them to jobs. The matrix also reveals a structural absence—no New England industry plays the high-volume, high-conversion "feeder" role that healthcare plays nationally—which the next section helps explain.

The case studies that follow examine three sectors—healthcare support, retail, and finance—where the gap between hiring demand and effective internship infrastructure is most pronounced.

Section V. Sector Case Studies

As the preceding diagnostics demonstrate, the gap between entry-level hiring demand and internship availability does not occur randomly. Instead, it clusters within specific industries that share common structural features. While broad factors like firm size constrain the internship market across the New England economy, they alone do not fully explain the region's most severe talent mismatches.

A closer look reveals that these gaps are driven by a complex intersection of geography, employer composition, and specific industry dynamics. In particular sectors—namely healthcare support, retail, and segments of finance—entry-level hiring demand remains substantial, yet structured internship pipelines are either severely limited or highly unevenly distributed.

The following case studies examine these three sectors in detail, illustrating how these structural mismatches manifest on the ground and exploring why robust hiring demand so often fails to translate into accessible early-career pathways.

A. Healthcare Support and Nursing Care

Table 5. Nursing Care Facilities

State	Entry-Level	Internships	Ratio	NE Benchmark	US Benchmark
CT	2,123	12	176.9	117.2	18.2
ME	898	2	449.0	117.2	18.2
NH	715	8	89.4	117.2	18.2

Healthcare support roles exhibit extreme entry-level-to-internship ratios—relative to national benchmarks—in multiple states. Entry-level hiring demand is significant, yet internship postings remain limited relative to hiring volume.

This mismatch does not reflect weak labor demand. Nursing care facilities, home health services, and outpatient centers consistently generate entry-level postings across the region. Instead, it reflects a structural nuance within the healthcare sector.

Clinical pathways—such as nursing rotations and residencies—are deeply institutionalized. However, non-licensed and operational roles are less consistently formalized. Care centers frequently hire for scheduling, billing, compliance, IT support, and business operations—roles with substantial entry-level demand but limited internship activity.

While lean administrative operations may view interns as a drain on supervisory capacity, these functions are well suited to structured early-career exposure.

B. Retail

Table 6. Higher Entry-Level-to-Internship Ratios in New England Retail

State	Industry	Entry-Level	Internships	Ratio	NE Benchmark	US Benchmark
CT	Warehouse Clubs	2,368	15	157.9	43.0	28.4
NH	Grocery Retailers	522	4	130.5	24.7	9.1

A similar pattern appears in retail.

In Connecticut, Warehouse Clubs generate substantial college-level entry-level hiring volume, yet internship postings remain in the low double digits. In New Hampshire, Grocery Retailers post hundreds of entry-level roles annually while offering minimal internship activity.

These are not marginal industries. They provide degree-relevant roles in operations, vendor coordination, inventory control, supply chain management, and process optimization—positions that rely on applied skills and on-the-job learning rather than licensure.

Retail hiring tends to be continuous and decentralized. Internship programs, by contrast, require deliberate design, supervision planning, and structured evaluation processes. Where employer footprints are distributed across stores rather than centralized administrative or operational hubs capable of hosting interns, internship institutionalization can lag.

C. Finance and Business Services

Table 7. Higher Entry-Level-to-Internship Ratios in New England Finance

State	Industry	Entry-Level	Internships	Ratio	NE Benchmark	US Benchmark
RI	Other Financial Investment Activities	585	12	48.8	26.8	16.8

The data for Rhode Island's "Other Financial Investment Activities" (portfolio management, investment advice, trust & fudiciary services (NAICS 5239)) industry reveals a significant gap in its talent pipeline. With 585 entry-level job postings to only 12 internships, the state's ratio of jobs to internships stands at 48.8. This figure contrasts starkly with regional and national benchmarks. For comparison, the national benchmark for this industry is 16.8, meaning Rhode Island's ratio of entry-level jobs to internships is nearly three times the national average, indicating a severe shortage of internship opportunities.

This is remarkable considering that entry-level hiring in this sector is concentrated in business operations, administrative support, and production roles—functions well suited to internship-based recruitment.

It also contrasts starkly with dramatically more mature internship pipelines at the national level, particularly among larger employers. In fact, Rhode Island's "Other Financial Investment Activities" offers internships at one-third the national rate. This gap signals a missed opportunity to build a local talent pipeline.

From Local Gaps to Regional Drivers

Across these sector–state combinations, the pattern is consistent: the observed gaps between early-career hiring demand and developed internship pipelines are rooted in specific structural features of local employer ecosystems. The case studies demonstrate that this often involves national companies with limited local administrative or operational hubs, or smaller firms lacking the dedicated capacity to formalize internship programs, leading entry-level hiring demand to convert directly into full-time roles rather than structured internship-to-hire pathways.

The next section examines the broader structural features that shape these patterns across the region.

Section VI. Structural Drivers

Employer Capacity

In this report, *employer capacity* refers to the organizational infrastructure required to sustain internship programs — including supervision, HR processes, compliance systems, and geographic coordination.

The patterns identified above are not random idiosyncrasies: they reflect systematic outcomes directly caused by the structural features of the region's economy that make internship pipelines more challenging to establish and maintain. These barriers create friction that prevents entry-level hiring demand from naturally converting into structured internship opportunities.

They point to an important conclusion: the primary constraint on New England's internship market is a lack of pipeline architecture.

1. Firm Size Constraint

A major constraint across the region—and, indeed, the nation—is firm size. The presence of internship programs correlates strongly with employer scale. Large employers offer the vast majority of internships, while SMEs—despite accounting for a substantial share of entry-level hiring—offer disproportionately few.

At the national level, large firms account for 86% of internship postings and a 78% share of entry-level postings (those requiring a bachelor's degree and zero years of experience). SMEs, by contrast, account for 22% of observed entry-level postings but only 13% of internships. This disparity becomes even clearer when viewed through the entry-level-to-internship ratio. For large firms nationally, the ratio is approximately 9-to-1, indicating that internships are a well-integrated part of their talent pipeline. For small and mid-sized businesses, however, that ratio is nearly double, at roughly 16-to-1. This means that for every internship they advertise, they also post 16 entry-level openings, signaling a heavy reliance on external hiring rather than a strategic pipeline. This represents an important pool of talent for SMEs that is currently going untapped.

Large firms benefit from centralized HR functions, predictable hiring cycles, and deep supervisory benches. They have internalized the administrative costs of internship programs—compliance, recruitment, curriculum design, and mentorship—which are more easily absorbed at scale when spread across scores or even hundreds of placements.

These costs can be prohibitive for many SMEs. In addition, smaller firms typically rely on episodic hiring and "just-in-time" recruitment, filling entry-level roles as they open, a model less suited to building a long-term internship-to-hire runway. Without dedicated HR staff, navigating wage compliance and designing meaningful work assignments often defaults to just-in-time hiring—filling entry-level roles with resumes and a few interviews that the firm could have been de-risking through a structured pipeline.

These dynamics become more acute in less densely populated states such as Vermont and Maine, where small businesses account for a majority of employment.

Massachusetts' accounting sector illustrates this divide clearly. A well-functioning industry with healthy demand for early-career talent posts thousands of entry-level openings annually. Yet firm size strongly shapes participation.

Large firms such as KPMG, RSM, UKG, and Ernst & Young embed internships deeply into their talent strategy, offering internships at consistent ratios relative to entry-level hiring. In these environments, internships function as "Auditions for the Job," pairing high skill overlap with high conversion rates to systematically evaluate talent. By contrast, SMEs may post dozens of entry-level openings but offer few or no internships at all.

The result is a tendency toward market bifurcation: Large firms are more likely to use internships as a strategic, long-term talent pipeline, while many SMEs rely on direct hiring without the structured bridge of internship programs.

Because New England's economy is weighted toward smaller employers, a significant portion of the region's entry-level labor market remains structurally disconnected from the internship ecosystem.

Table 8. Hiring Ratios: Entry-Level vs. Interns

A breakdown of hiring volume in Massachusetts, including the ratio of entry-level openings to internship positions.

Company Size	Company Name	Entry-Level Postings (MA)	Intern Postings (MA)	Ratio (Entry : Intern)
Small Companies	MassPay	41	0	N/A
	Benz Communications	14	0	N/A
	Withum Smith + Brown	10	3	3
Medium Companies	Insource Services	60	0	N/A
	Wolf & Company, P.C.	41	2	21
	AAFCPAs	33	0	N/A
	ConnectPay	30	1	30
Large Companies	RSM	196	104	2
	EY	159	40	4
	KPMG	153	26	6
	UKG	143	40	4
Overall		**2,564**	**289**	**9**

Ratio calculated as Entry-Level Postings divided by Intern Postings (rounded). N/A indicates zero internship postings.

2. Geographic Concentration

Geography acts as a second powerful filter.

Internship opportunities cluster in a few major metropolitan hubs: Boston, Providence, and Hartford. However, New England's higher education landscape is unusually decentralized. Community colleges, regional public universities, and liberal arts institutions are dispersed across rural Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, and western Massachusetts.

This spatial mismatch creates a logistical tax on participation.

Students in non-metro areas face barriers that their urban peers do not: long commutes, limited public transportation, seasonal weather constraints, high housing costs near internship sites, and thinner local employer networks.

Rather than serving as a universal bridge to opportunity, the current internship market can reinforce patterns where access depends on proximity to a major city or the financial means to relocate.

3. Anchor Employer Presence

Finally, New England's industry mix lacks the type of high-volume "anchor employers" that drive large-scale entry-level-to-internship ratios in other regions.

Where anchor employers are present, internship institutionalization becomes more stable and predictable. Large industrial campuses and operational headquarters often absorb interns at scale, creating structured pipelines that extend across business functions.

Nationally, sectors such as manufacturing are dominated by giants like Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Intel, and Collins Aerospace. These firms individually employ more interns than many regional employers combined.

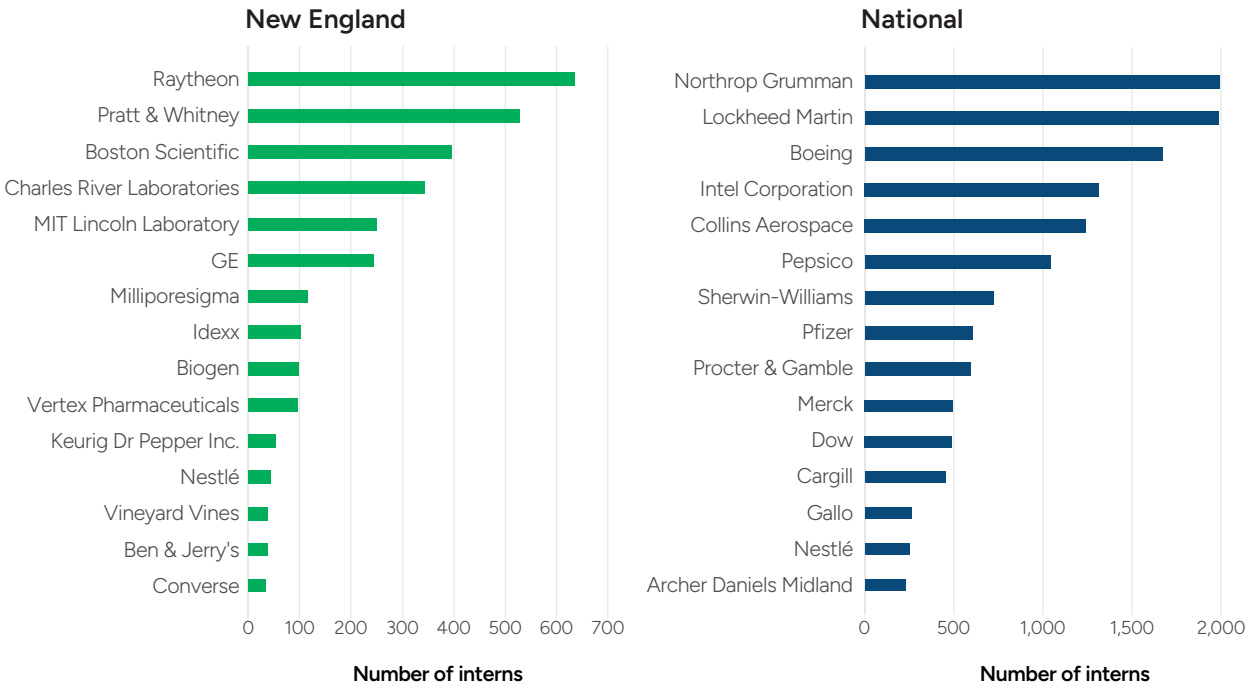
New England's manufacturing base, by contrast, is anchored by highly specialized firms such as Raytheon, Pratt & Whitney, MIT Lincoln Laboratory, and Boston Scientific. While these firms offer high-quality, high-value internship experiences, they are designed for precision rather than scale. Their programs tend to serve select cohorts rather than mass absorption models.

This structural dynamic extends beyond manufacturing. In retail and in segments of financial services, New England lacks the large-scale processing centers and operational headquarters that typically support robust internship pipelines in other regions.

Amplifying these dynamics is the predominance of healthcare and education within the regional economy. While these sectors are major engines of entry-level hiring, their internship models are frequently limited to licensed or clinical roles. Non-clinical business functions—operations, HR, IT, and support roles—often lack comparable structured internship pathways.

As a result, industries that traditionally serve as large-scale providers of corporate internships occupy a smaller footprint in the region.

Figure 3. Top Providers of Manufacturing Internships in New England vs. Nationally



Source: Burning Glass Institute analysis

Across firm size, geography, and anchor presence, the pattern is consistent:

Internship expansion will not come from simply asking employers to "do more." It will require interventions that reduce the costs of participation for SMEs, engage missing anchor employers, and address geographic barriers that filter access.

Section VII. Operational Implications

The analysis above demonstrates that New England's internship market does not suffer from weak labor demand or insufficient student interest. The constraint lies in institutional capacity: the organizational, geographic, and industrial structures that determine whether entry-level hiring demand converts into structured internship opportunity.

Addressing this constraint requires targeted, structural responses. Because the barriers identified—firm size distribution, geographic dispersion, and anchor employer presence—are embedded in the region's economic architecture, solutions must reduce friction rather than assume organic expansion.

The following recommendations align directly with the structural drivers outlined in Section VI.

1. Reduce Costs for Small and Mid-Sized Employers

SMEs account for a significant share of entry-level hiring across the region but are less likely to operate formal internship programs. These challenges become more acute in less densely populated states, like Vermont and Maine, where small businesses account for 62% and 55% of employment, respectively, versus 45.9% nationwide.[2] [3] Internship programs carry costs related to supervision, compliance, recruitment, onboarding, and program design—costs that are more easily absorbed at scale.

Rather than asking each small employer to independently design and manage a program, regional stakeholders should focus on reducing participation costs through shared infrastructure.

Intermediary organizations—such as chambers of commerce, industry associations, or workforce boards—can aggregate employer demand and centralize administrative burdens. Shared supervision models, pooled training resources, standardized onboarding templates, and coordinated recruitment processes can allow small firms to host interns without replicating the full HR infrastructure of large corporations.

By lowering fixed costs, these approaches convert episodic, "just-in-time" hiring environments into more predictable internship-to-hire pathways.

2. Unlock Internship Capacity in Non-Clinical and Non-Instructional Roles

Healthcare and education dominate New England's employment landscape. While these sectors maintain robust clinical rotations and student-teaching pathways, their internship pipelines are frequently limited to licensed roles.

Hospitals, school systems, and higher education institutions operate complex operational infrastructures—finance, supply chain, human resources, IT, compliance, data analytics, and facilities management. These functions generate substantial entry-level hiring demand yet often lack structured internship pathways.

Expanding internships within these operational roles would allow the region's largest employers to absorb talent from business, technology, and liberal arts programs without altering core clinical training models.

Because these institutions already possess administrative infrastructure, they are uniquely positioned to scale structured internship opportunities in non-licensed roles. Unlocking this capacity can alleviate pressure on the limited corporate internship market while leveraging sectors that already anchor regional employment.

3. Mitigate Geographic Barriers Through Hybrid and Regional Models

Internship opportunities cluster in metropolitan hubs, while higher education institutions are geographically dispersed. This spatial mismatch creates logistical barriers for students in rural and smaller metro areas.

Hybrid internship models can decouple location from opportunity. For example, students may work physically within local branches, retail locations, or healthcare facilities while engaging virtually with centralized corporate teams in analytics, operations, or finance.

Such models allow firms with distributed footprints to scale internship participation without requiring relocation to headquarters or replicating corporate functions across multiple sites.

In addition, regional internship hubs, transportation supports, and housing stipends can reduce the friction that limits participation for non-metro students. Addressing geographic filters expands access without requiring fundamental shifts in employer demand.

4. Engage and Stabilize Anchor Employer Participation

The absence of large-scale anchor employers in certain sectors limits internship institutionalization at scale. Where anchor employers are present, internship pipelines tend to be more stable, predictable, and visible.

Economic development leaders and higher education institutions should engage major regional employers to assess how national internship models can translate more effectively into New England operations. In sectors where internship activity is limited by operational structure, partnerships with regional colleges can help formalize pathways aligned to local hiring needs.

In fragmented industries, coordinated recruitment efforts and shared branding initiatives can help smaller firms collectively approximate the scale advantages of anchor employers.

Strengthening anchor participation stabilizes internship infrastructure and signals long-term commitment to early-career pipeline development.

5. Improve Data Transparency and Participation Tracking

Internship participation is frequently tracked informally, limiting the ability to diagnose gaps precisely. Institutions should systematically collect and analyze internship participation data by industry, role type, geography, and compensation.

Improved transparency allows stakeholders to distinguish between structural capacity constraints, awareness gaps, and misalignment between academic programs and employer demand.

Standardized tracking also supports benchmarking over time, enabling institutions and employers to measure whether interventions reduce divergence from regional and national norms.

Collectively, these recommendations do not call for wholesale redesign of the regional labor market. Rather, they aim to reduce the structural frictions that currently prevent entry-level hiring demand from converting into structured internship opportunity.

By lowering costs for small employers, unlocking operational capacity in dominant sectors, mitigating geographic barriers, engaging anchor firms, and improving data visibility, New England can scale internship access in ways commensurate with the strength of its educational institutions and labor market demand.

Conclusion

New England's internship market is fundamentally strong, anchored by one of the nation's deepest pools of early-career talent and robust entry-level hiring demand across sectors. Yet, as this analysis demonstrates, aggregate parity with national benchmarks masks significant localized gaps. The region's capacity to deliver internships remains uneven, with state-level and industry-level data revealing structural bottlenecks that prevent hiring demand from consistently converting into structured opportunities.

These bottlenecks are not the result of a weak labor market, but rather three entrenched structural realities:

- **An economy weighted toward SME employers** that often struggle to absorb the costs of supervision and program design.
- **A decentralized geography** that creates a spatial mismatch, filtering access based on proximity to metropolitan hubs rather than educational hubs.
- **An industry mix dominated by anchor sectors**—particularly healthcare and education—whose internship models are highly formalized in clinical pathways but limited in broader operational and business functions.

As long as internship expansion depends on traditional, high-touch models suited primarily for large corporate headquarters, portions of the region will remain disconnected from the internship ecosystem. Furthermore, as the Skills Overlap × Conversion Matrix illustrates, successful internship-to-hire pathways require intentional employer design; they do not happen by default simply because hiring demand exists.

Addressing these structural constraints offers the clearest pathway toward scaling internship access across New England. Doing so will require deliberate effort to reduce the burden on SMEs through shared intermediary infrastructure, broaden internship models beyond legacy structures to bridge geographic divides, and ensure that institutional design—not firm scale—determines access to opportunity.

Ultimately, this transformation is essential to ensuring that career opportunity in New England is defined by potential, not proximity.

Endnotes

[1] Calculated as the state's entry-level postings divided by the national entry-level-to-internship ratio (2,123 ÷ 18.2 ≈ 117 internships), less the 12 internships currently offered (≈ 105 additional).

[2] *Small Business Profiles for the States, Territories, and Nation 2024*, US Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy. November 2024

[3] Stephanie Ferguson Melhorn, Makinizi Hoover, Isabella Lucy. *Small Business Data Center*. Published May 20 2024. Updated June 06 2025. US Chamber of Commerce.


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