

# Applications open through March 2 for 2026 Step-Up Omaha program

OMAHA, NE, UNITED STATES, February 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- With more than 700 applications submitted, the [Step-Up Omaha](#) 2026 launch is in full swing. As a summer employment initiative organized by the [Empowerment Network](#), the program is designed to empower Omaha's youth and young adults ages 14 to 21 by connecting them with career exploration, paid internships, job training and entrepreneurship opportunities. The application deadline is March 2.

"Step-Up Omaha continues to be a powerful force in shaping the future of our city by providing young people with real work experience, meaningful career exploration and the confidence to pursue their dreams," said Mayor John Ewing. "As mayor, I'm proud that the City of Omaha partners with the Empowerment Network and local employers to invest in our next generation of leaders because when we equip our youth with skills and opportunities, we strengthen our workforce and build a more vibrant, inclusive community."

Since its founding in 2008, Step-Up Omaha has placed more than 9,000 youth in meaningful work experiences and career pathways. Last year, more than 1,700 young people applied for the program. With more than 700 applicants to date, this year's program (which starts June 2 and runs through July 31) will provide hands-on training in healthcare, technology, education, construction and nonprofit sectors. Interns can earn \$1,800 to \$3,000 or more during the summer.

"Step-Up Omaha is about developing and retaining the incredible talent we have in our communities," said Willie Barney, CEO and founder, Empowerment Network. "The program helps Omaha's youth and young adults develop critical skills, while giving businesses access to driven talent and a way to give back meaningfully to their community."



Applications are now open through March 2 for Step-Up Omaha 2026.



Step-Up Omaha provides critical skills for Omaha's youth and young adults, while giving businesses access to driven talent and a way to give back meaningfully to their community."

*Willie Barney, CEO and founder, Empowerment Network*

Nearly 100 local employer partners participated in 2025, reflecting Omaha's strong commitment to workforce development and community investment. Employers benefit by gaining fresh energy and perspective while investing in the city's future workforce. Last year, businesses reported nearly 100% satisfaction with the professionalism and dedication of Step-Up interns.

"We showed them engines, let them take engines apart. I taught them briefly how to weld. Tre kept calling all summer asking when he could come back to work. That kind of drive tells you he's going places," said Damian Good, owner of Authentic Auto, in an interview with KMTV 3 News Now, reflecting on hosting interns from Step-Up

Omaha, including North High School graduate TreVaugh Grant.

The program is powered by a robust coalition of funders and community partners, including American National Bank, Charles E. Lakin Foundation, CHI Health, City of Omaha, Cox Communications, Google, Mutual of Omaha and United Way of the Midlands.

Additionally, Step-Up partners with the Obama Foundation's My Brother's Keeper Alliance, a program that seeks to positively shift outcomes for boys and young men of color by implementing evidence-based practices.

Applications for the 2026 cohort remain open through March 2 at [StepUpOmaha.com](https://StepUpOmaha.com).

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### About Step-Up Omaha

Step-Up Omaha is a program dedicated to providing career exploration, job opportunities, internships and entrepreneurship avenues for youth and young adults ages 14 to 21 in Omaha, Nebraska. Since its inception in 2008, Step-Up Omaha has connected thousands of young individuals with valuable job training and career pathways.

### About the Empowerment Network

The Empowerment Network is a nonprofit organization committed to advancing economic, social and civic progress within Omaha's African American community, North Omaha and the region. Through collaborative efforts and innovative initiatives, the Empowerment Network strives to create opportunities for empowerment and transformation in every zip code and neighborhood in the city of Omaha and other national communities.

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