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Innovate BC

Innovator Skills Initiative

Program Guidelines

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Key Goals and Objectives

The Innovator Skills Initiative Program is designed to increase diversity in the tech sector and help B.C.-based businesses fill talent shortages and grow. The Innovator Skills Initiative program provides grants to employers that are hiring for tech or tech-related roles.

The Innovator Skills Initiative program aims to help more under-represented people get their first job in the tech sector by ensuring placements for under-represented people are available in the tech sector.

The Program:

Employers can apply for an Innovator Skills Initiative hiring grant valued at up to \$10,000 to supplement a new employee's salary.

Employers offer valuable paid work experience to individuals that can prepare them for ongoing employment with the employer and the tech sector.

Innovate BC will provide Innovator Skills Initiative employers with links to resources to support them in recruiting, retaining and developing employees who self-identify as under-represented.

Grant Value:

- Up to \$10,000

Eligibility

Employer Eligibility

The Employer:

- Must be one of the following:
 - a technology business operating in B.C., hiring for a business or *tech role
 - a technology non-profit operating in B.C., hiring for a business or *tech role
 - a non-tech company operating in B.C., hiring for a *tech role
 - a non-tech non-profit hiring for a *tech role
 - a B.C.-based post-secondary hiring for a *tech role
 - a B.C.-based local/regional authority or Indigenous community hiring for a *tech role

** A tech or tech-related role is one that is enabled with technology that requires a level of education, certification, micro credential to perform.*

- Definition of “operating in B.C.” = Organizations registered in B.C. or having a physical location in B.C.
- May be of any size

Employer Requirements:

The Employer must:

- Offer valuable, paid work experience to the candidate that can prepare them for ongoing employment within your company or within the sector more generally.
- Agree to hire the candidate for a period of at least four months with the intent of offering that person a permanent position if the quality of work and suitability are a match with the company and there is mutual interest from the candidate.
- Hire the candidate as a regular employee on payroll, not as an independent contractor
- Complete a brief survey after the placement.
- Submit pay records for the approved employee
- Comply to all employer requirements under B.C.’s *Employment Standards Act*.

Employee Eligibility

The employee:

- Self-identifies as under-represented, as provided in the list of groups below:
 - Categories:
 - Indigenous
 - Black and people of colour
 - 2SLGBTQIA+
 - Neuro-diverse
 - Non-binary
 - Persons living with a visible or invisible disability
 - Women
 - Youth from care

- Other
- Must be eligible to work in B.C., including:
 - A Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada or authorized in writing to work in Canada under the federal *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*
 - 16-years of age or older as per B.C.'s *Employment Standards Act*.
- Has completed training or education, whether at a post-secondary institute or through other recognized pathways.
- Must have completed the training program on or after December 1, 2019
- Can be a student, including co-op students and international students
- If a student, is enrolled at an accredited post-secondary institution in B.C. **or** has completed a recognized training program that the employer feels has prepared them for effective employment.
 - Accredited post-secondary institutions in B.C.:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/find-a-program-or-institution/find-an-institution>.
 - Other institutes and recognized pathways are also eligible
- Examples of acceptable proof of education include, but are not limited to:
 - Proof of enrollment in a post-secondary program or completion of at least one year of post-secondary programming
 - Proof of completion of a technology-related training certification developed by a major tech company, such as Microsoft, AWS, Salesforce, IBM, Unity or Google
 - Proof of completion of a technology-related training program provided by a recognized post secondary institution
 - Proof of completion of a technology-related program by a training provider that is certified by a Canadian province
 - Proof of completion of a technology-related program by an industry-recognized international university or private training provider
- Is not a direct relative or immediate family of the employer and/or principal shareholder. 'Immediate family' means father, mother, step-father, step-mother, foster parent, brother, sister, spouse or common-law partner, child – including child of common-law partner, step-child, ward, father-in-law, mother-in-law, or any relative permanently residing with the recipient or the employer.
- Agrees to complete a brief survey after the placement.

Placement Eligibility

Placements:

- Must be at minimum a 4-month period
- Must start no earlier than June 1, 2021 and end no later than July 15, 2022
- Must have a start date no later than March 15, 2022
- May be retroactive (an application may be submitted and approved after the hire date); however, the application must be submitted before the 4-month work placement is complete.
- May be part-time or full-time

Eligible Grant Use:

- Supplement employee salary (see Eligible Expenses section for full detail)
- May be used with other grants (“stacking”) up to 100% of the employee’s salary (including standard employee benefits) during the placement
- Employers may receive up to 10 (ten) Innovator Skills Initiative grants through Innovate BC for 10 (ten) different employees per program year
- Maximum one grant per candidate per employer.
- Employers may not receive more than one Innovator Skills Initiative grant for the same candidate through Innovate BC or Innovator Skills Initiative program partners such as: Mitacs, the Information Communications Technology Council (ICTC) or the BC Tech Association.

Eligible Expenses

Only **costs incurred or paid during the term of placement** are eligible for reimbursement. Any costs after this will not be considered. Supporting documents must accompany each expense on the completed claim form.

Claims are due 5 business days after the placement end date.

Salary and Benefits

Eligible costs are gross wages or salaries and benefits earned by the employee to a maximum of \$10,000 for work that can be specifically identified and measured as having been performed during the work placement and which is identified and measured consistently by the employer's cost accounting system. Applicant organizations must offer fair and competitive salaries that are aligned with market.

The payroll rate to be used is the actual gross pay rate for each employee (normal periodic remuneration before deductions) during the work placement. The payroll rate is exclusively for salary and excludes all premiums (e.g., overtime), shift differentials and any reimbursement or benefit conferred in lieu of salaries or wages. Funds claimed in lieu of benefits must be consistent with the current level of benefits paid in B.C. (e.g., 4% for vacation paid out) and will be limited to a maximum of 20% of employee salaries. Note that benefits claimed must be incurred during the work placement.

Eligible Costs	Ineligible Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Salary or hourly wages• Employer portion of CPP• Employer portion of EI• WCB premiums• Employer Health Tax• Vacation paid out• Sick days paid out• Statutory holiday pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bonuses• Overtime pay• Shift differential pay (ex. Additional pay for working night shift)• Allowances (ex. For business use of personal cellphone)• Expense reimbursements

Acceptable Supporting Documents:

Employee pay stubs or other related documents to support salary rates used. If you are paying for employer portions of CPP & EI, WCB, or EHT, please provide supporting documentation and calculations for these amounts.

For all options above, if the documentation does NOT show proof of payment, please submit a direct deposit notification, screenshot of bank transaction, or copy of cheque payment.

Grant Application & Intern Placement Process

1. Interested organizations can [apply online](#) for a grant through Innovate BC.
2. Innovate BC reviews the Employer's application and gives conditional approval to eligible applicants. All grant approvals are conditional and are subject to specific requirements being met.
3. If an Employer has not yet hired, they must post the job through channels of their own.
4. Once Employers have hired, they will be required to complete an Employee Confirmation Form with the employee's information.
5. Upon completion of the Employee Confirmation Form, Innovate BC will prompt the Employee to complete the Employee Intake which requires the Employee to provide information to establish eligibility. The Employer will be notified when the Employee has completed the Employee Intake.
6. Innovate BC reviews the Employee Confirmation and Intake forms, and grants final approval to eligible applicants.
7. Innovate BC will prompt the Employer to complete a brief Progress Form midway through the placement.
8. The Employer submits a claim for reimbursement at the end of the placement.
9. The final claim stage will include a satisfaction survey for the Employer, so that Innovate BC can evaluate the results and impact of the **Innovator Skills Initiative**. Upon completion of the Employer survey, Innovate BC will issue the grant funds within 4-6 weeks.
10. After the grant funds are issued, the Employee will receive a request to complete an optional survey.

Changes and Termination

Any substantial changes or termination of the placement must be reported to Innovate BC via email to programs@innovatebc.ca immediately, including the reason for termination and the placement end date.

FAQ

How long does it take to process an application?

Each individual step (Employer Application, Employee Confirmation and Employee Intake) in the application process takes up to 15 business days to process. The Employer will be notified of their application status via email shortly after review.

Can I apply to receive a grant before I hire an Employee?

Yes. Note that the latest start date for a hire is March 15, 2022

Can I apply after the work term has already started?

Employers can apply for a grant retroactively for work terms that started in the past, with a start date no earlier than June 1, 2021. The application must be submitted before the minimum 4-month work placement is complete.

Are we eligible for a grant if we received other funding for the employee?

Yes, grant stacking is permitted as long as the combined value of all grant funding does not exceed the employee's salary. Limitations apply: Grants supported by Innovator Skills Initiative funds through our partners (e.g. Mitacs and ICTC) are not eligible for the same employee at the same time.

What is the definition of 'immediate family'?

'Immediate family' means father, mother, step-father, step-mother, foster parent, brother, sister, spouse or common-law partner, child – including child of common-law partner, step-child, ward, father-in-law, mother-in-law, or any relative permanently residing with the recipient or the employer.

Are international students on work permits/visas eligible for the program?

Yes, if they are authorized in writing to work in Canada under the federal *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. In addition, the student must be 16-years of age or older as per B.C.'s *Employment Standards Act*.

Can I submit a claim before the placement term is completed?

Yes, on a case-by-case basis. If you have reached \$10,000 in salary payments and a minimum of 3 months has passed, contact us to inquire about submitting for early claim.

What is the deadline to apply?

Applications close March 11, 2022

How to Apply | Contact Information

To apply, click [HERE](#)

For more information about the application process, contact us at programs@innovatebc.ca