

**BCIC Innovator Skills Initiative
Program Guidelines**

**Program Overview and Objectives**

The **BCIC Innovator Skills Initiative** (**BCIC-ISI)** is designed to cultivate future technology entrepreneurs and innovators with the ultimate goal of creating quality, high-paying jobs for the BC economy. BCIC-ISI is focused on fulfilling regional industry needs while preparing students to start companies, in addition to filling jobs.

**Student Benefit:** BCIC-ISI provides post-secondary students from across BC with business, technical, innovation and entrepreneurial training, skills and experience to meet the needs of industry in BC. The program focuses on exposing students to regional industry needs and challenges, while providing students with the skills required to run a successful business.

**Company Benefit:** BCIC-ISI offers BC-based technology companies access to top talent and skilled workers, training of future employees, resources for a project that will move their company forward, and the opportunity to showcase industry problems to future solution providers.

Students are selected to work with companies based on their skills and the company’s needs. The students are paid for their time working with the company, through a BCIC-ISI voucher valued from $2,500-$7,500 (average $5,000), which must be matched in-kind and/or in-cash by a company contribution.

**Application Process**

1. Interested students and companies should contact their local program partner to apply. Please refer to page 3 to find a program partner in your region.
2. Program partners will work with approved companies, local post-secondary instutions, and other sources in their networks to find appropriate student matches for the company and their project.
3. The matched student and company must each sign a **‘Student-Company Agreement’** (provided by the program partner), to confirm their commitment to the program objectives and requirements as outlined in these Program Guidelines.

**Program Partners**

The following is a list of the BCIC-ISI Program Partners by region. BCIC recommends that you contact your local Program Partner for further information.

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| **Region** | **Program Partners** | **Website** | **Telephone** |
| **Central Interior BC** | Kamloops Innovation | www.kamloopsinnovation.ca | (250) 434-0200 |
| **Central/Northern Island, Sunshine Coast & Gulf Islands** | Innovation Island | www.innovationisland.ca | (250) 753-8324 |
| **East Kootenays** | Kootenay Rockies Innovation Council KRIC) | www.kric.ca | (250) 426-6388or Toll Free1-877-505-KRIC (5742) |
| **Greater Victoria** | Victoria Advanced Technology Council (VIATeC)  | www.viatec.ca | (250) 483-3214 |
| **Lower Mainland & Fraser Valley** | BC Technology Industry Association (BCTIA) | www.bctia.org | (604) 683-6159 |
| Foresight Cleantech Accelerator Centre | [www.foresightcac.com](http://www.foresightcac.com) | (604) 245-0042 |
| Launch Academy | www.launchacademy.ca | (604) 652-3230 |
| New Ventures BC | www.newventuresbc.com | (604) 602-5202 |
| Sumas Regional Consortium for High Tech (SRCTec)  | www.srctec.org | 1-877-523-5543 |
| VenturesLabs | www.venturelabs.ca | (604) 729-4747 |
| Wavefront AC | www.wavefrontac.com | (778) 331-7500 |
| **North Central BC** | Bulkley Valley Economic Development Association (BVEDA) | www.bveda.ca | (250) 847-4355 |
| Innovation Central Society | [www.innovationcentral.ca](http://www.innovationcentral.ca) | (250) 562-9622 ext 108 |
| **Okanagan Valley** | Accelerate Okanagan (Kelowna Innovation Centre) | www.accelerateokanagan.com | (250) 870-9028 |
| **West Kootenays** | Kootenay Association for Science & Technology (KAST) | [www.kast.com](http://www.kast.com) | (250) 362-5052 or Toll Free 1-844-224-KAST(5278) |

**Voucher Use**

* Vouchers may only be used to pay for work undertaken in the province of BC. Any portion of a project undertaken outside of BC is not eligible under the program.
* Vouchers cannot be used to pay for student services already fully funded through other sources.
* Vouchers may only be used to pay for work as outlined in the **‘Student-Company Agreement’**.
* All cash funding from the voucher and any company in-cash matching contributions must be student salary. CRA deductions are permitted and the responsibility of the employer.

**Eligibility**

**Student:**

* Must be a post-secondary student currently enrolled at a BC post-secondary institution.
* Is required to complete the **‘Virtual Market Validation Training’** offered through New Ventures BC, and companies must ensure this is completed.
* Is eligible for two vouchers per year.
* Can be a co-op student if the co-op position is not funded by any other co-op subsidization program.
* Must be employed a reasonable number of hours per week (approximately 25 hours) at a fair market value for a highly skilled student; in accordance with regional and industry differences factoring in local wages, types and lengths of projects.

**Company:**

* Must be a BC-based technology company and participating in the program partner’s services or programs.
* Is eligible to receive two vouchers per year.
* Must provide a 1:1 matching contribution to the voucher funds (in-kind and/or in-cash).
* Must provide adequate training (business, technical and innovation and entrepreneurial) to meet the program objectives.
* Must provide a project to the student. Company projects offered to students must be related to business, technical and innovation and entrepreneurial opportunities, and cannot be general administrative duties.

**Changes and Termination**

* Students and companies must notify their local program partner in writing within 30 days if the project is terminated or postponed by either the student or the company.
* Vouchers cannot be transferred to another company or student. In the event that a company and/or student becomes unavailable to complete an approved voucher, a revised application form with a new student and/or company must be completed through the local program partner. If there is insufficient time to replace the student and/or company, the funds must be returned to the program partner.
* Any substantial changes must be consistent with the overall intention of the approved project and program objectives. Students and companies must receive written approval from their local program partner for any significant changes to the program.

**Key Dates**

Participating students and companies must agree to participate in a survey and other program evaluations that may be undertaken, both during and after completion of the work term. The BCIC-ISI Summer and Fall Work Terms, tasks and dates are included for your reference.

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| **BCIC-ISI Summer Work Term** |
| Student-Company Matches Secured | April 1-May 31 |
| Summer Student Work Term | May 1-August 31 |
| Student and Company submit Summer Final Report to program partner | September 15 |
| **BCIC-ISI Fall Work Term** |
| Student-Company Matches Secured | August 1-September 30 |
| Fall Student Work Term | September 1 – April 30 |
| Student and Company submit Final Fall Report to program partner | March 1 |

* Final Annual Reports must provide all student and company program results.
* Local program partners will provide the necessary **‘Reporting Template’** to the participating students and companies.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **What is an ‘in-kind’ contribution?** Examples of in-kind contributions may be (but are not limited to) training time, regular staff time, shares in company.

1. **Is it possible to hire a student from a private post-secondary?** Yes, as long as the post-secondary institution is accredited under the governing bodies of BC. If you are in doubt, please check with BCIC for confirmation through your local program partner.
2. **Does the student have to be returning to school?** The student must be registered and currently enrolled at a BC post-secondary institution.
3. **Can we make student and company matches in the middle of a term?**
Yes, the goal is for all work term matches to be completed by June 15 for summer term and by September 15 for the fall term. However, if you see an opportunity for a student and company match, please apply through your local program partner as there may be flexibility.
4. **How does the ‘Virtual Market Validation Training’ work?** Once matched, companies are provided with information on how to register students for the mandatory **Virtual Market Validation Training**.
5. **Do the students have to work the whole duration of each work term (summer and fall)?**

No, the work term start and end dates simply denote the period of time in which the summer and fall work terms occur, and the maximum period of time that a student could be employed for each work term. Students are employed during the work term for as long as their voucher amount, plus any matching cash contributions from the company, last.

1. **Do students need to be working with the companies by the start of the term?** No, BCIC needs to know what students and companies have been matched June 30, but employment can begin after that date.
2. **Can the same students and companies receive vouchers in subsequent work terms and years?** Yes, as long as the limit of two vouchers per year for each company is not exceeded. BCIC would like to see vouchers used to support a diversity of students and companies, but we understand there are circumstances where a company, project, and student are of a quality that warrants repeated access to an opportunity. Program partners can make such decisions.