

# **BC Tech Co-op Grants Program Guidelines**

## BC Tech Co-op Grants Program

Innovate BC is pleased to offer the **BC Tech Co-op Grants Program** to support talent in BC's technology sector. Tech firms hiring for any roles and non-tech companies hiring for tech-specific roles are encouraged to hire from an accredited co-op program and apply for salary support through the BC Tech Co-op Grants Program.

## Key Objectives & Benefits

The **BC Tech Co-op Grants Program** will provide:

- **Grant incentives** to small and medium-sized firms to recruit and train co-op students.
- **Work experience** for students, during which they acquire skills and knowledge, that they can apply towards their academic credits and future integration into the work force. In addition, students will gain hands-on experience within the technology industry.

The key objectives of the **BC Tech Co-op Grants Program** include:

- **Develop training opportunities for students in their first co-op placement.** Experience acquired during the first co-op placement helps students secure subsequent co-op placements required for academic credit and graduation, while fostering their long-term employability for full time jobs.
- **Encourage small and medium-sized technology firms to employ their first co-op student.** Such initiatives contribute to the increase of co-op employers in the BC technology sector and support small and medium-sized firms in gaining access to an energetic and innovative workforce.
- **Address the skills gap** between the business needs of technology employers and traditional classroom training.
- **Support knowledge transfer and innovation in the technology sector**, which will impact all other industries from healthcare, to natural resources, and more.

## Co-op Placement

Co-op students function as employees and are paid at fair market rates by the company they have been matched to work with for their co-op term, as part of an accredited post-secondary co-op program. In return, employers will have the opportunity to fill temporary human resource needs.

The co-op student's progress on the job will be monitored by the post-secondary co-op program and evaluated by the employer, according to the terms and conditions of each post-secondary co-op program.

## Co-op Terms and Program Funding

Participating companies are required to hire a student for a minimum of one co-op term, which is typically 16 weeks. Companies are advised to apply early, as post-secondary co-op program departments start the recruitment process at least four months prior to the beginning of each co-op term, as outlined below:

Co-op Work Terms
Summer (May – Aug)
Fall (Sep – Dec)
Spring (Jan – April)

Each employer is eligible to a maximum of four grants each per fiscal year valued at \$5,000 (a total value of \$20,000), to recruit and train between one to four distinct co-op students. Grant values represent approximately half of the salary for a co-op student. The employer must account for the remainder of the student’s salary during the co-op term.

## Company Eligibility

To participate in the **BC Tech Co-op Grants Program**, a company must:

- Be established in BC, as defined by having a physical location within the province.
- Be a small or medium-sized business. If the company has more than 100 employees, they will be required to provide additional information on the types of skills and training provided to the co-op student.
- Be established as one of the following:
  - 1) Technology company or technology not-for-profit hiring a co-op student for any role.
  - 2) Non-tech company or non-tech not-for-profit hiring for a tech role
- Have not exceeded the grant limit of 4 successful BC Tech Co-op Grants within the current academic year – from May 1 to April 30.

## Eligible Work Placement

To qualify for the **BC Tech Co-op Grants Program**, work placements must:

- Be approved by a co-op coordinator at a BC public post-secondary institution.
- Involve a student in a co-op program that is provincially approved by the Accountability Council for Co-operative Education in BC (ACCE-BC) or nationally accredited by the Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL Canada).
- Be a minimum of one co-op term as determined by the academic institution (typically 16 weeks).

- Provide the student with productive and valuable work during the placement.
- Provide a fair market wage to the student for the work performed during the placement.
- Include student supervision and performance evaluation by the employer.

Further, the work placement is subject to one of the following limitations, which will be ensured by the post-secondary co-op department:

- Option A**            **The student must be a first term co-op placement** for a post-secondary program conducted in BC. Employers can ask the post-secondary co-op department to help ensure that the employer is matched with a first term co-op student; or
- Option B**            **The company must be employing their first co-op student in at least the last five years** (new co-op employer). In this case, employers may be matched with students of any level of co-op experience.

## Grant Application & Co-op Placement Process

1. Interested companies apply to an accredited post-secondary co-op program in BC. If they wish, employers have the option to advise the co-op program that the posting is conditional upon approval of a BC Tech Co-op Grant.
2. The post-secondary co-op program will review the employer's job posting, and advise the employer if the position meets the standards of an accredited co-op program.
3. Once the job posting meets the standard of an accredited co-op program the employer can apply for a grant through Innovate BC. Applications can be submitted before hiring a co-op student, or after hiring a co-op student. Applications submitted after hiring are often processed quicker.
4. Innovate BC reviews the employer's BC Tech Co-op Grant application. Due to limited funding, a first-come first-served principle is in effect. All grant approvals are conditional and are subject to specific requirements being met.
5. The co-op program approved job posting is posted to co-op student candidates. If applicable, a provision can be added to the posting mentioning that the job is conditional upon the employer receiving a BC Tech Co-op Grant. The post-secondary co-op program will then match students with employers, and finalize the hiring process with the employer. If the work placement is conditional upon receipt of a BC Tech Co-op Grant, the employer may ask the co-op department to postpone this step until conditional approval is granted.
6. Once employers have hired the co-op student, they will be required to complete a Co-op Confirmation Form to notify Innovate BC of the co-op program from which the student was hired.

7. Innovate BC will issue a Student Consent Form for the employer to share the student name. By signing this form, the student gives consent for their employer to share their name and email address with Innovate BC and for Innovate BC to cite their name when corresponding with their co-op department and with New Ventures BC, the Tech Co-op Grants Program delivery partner.
8. Innovate BC will issue two satisfaction surveys to the company, one to be completed by the company, and one that the company has the student complete, so that Innovate BC can evaluate the results and impact of the BC Tech Co-op Grant.
9. Approved companies will receive a BC Tech Co-op Grant valued at \$5,000 toward the student's salary, in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> month following the start of the co-op term.

## Changes and Termination

Any substantial changes or termination of the work placement must be processed through the post-secondary co-op program.

## Roles

**Post-secondary co-op departments** deliver the co-op program. They make the co-op placements (e.g. matching students with employers, overseeing the hiring process, evaluation for education credits). The employer and student will be participants of a formal co-op program.

**Innovate BC** administers the BC Tech Co-op Grants Program. The employer can apply to Innovate BC for a grant as soon as the job posting has been approved by the co-op department. Innovate BC will verify the co-op work placement with the co-op department and disburse the funding.

**Employers** participate in a formal co-op program.

Employers apply to the post-secondary department for a co-op match with a student.

Employers apply to Innovate BC for the **BC Tech Co-op Grant**.

## FAQ

### What is a co-op work term?

A co-op work term is an opportunity for post-secondary students to gain work experience while still in school. Companies looking for fresh, eager-to-learn talent hire students on temporary contracts. Students spend the term working for the company and get academic credit for it. Co-op students are typically hired for 4 or 8 months, spanning 1 or 2 terms.

Co-op hiring is coordinated through the post-secondary institutions. To be eligible for a BC Tech Co-op Grant, the student must be hired through an accredited co-op program in BC.

## What's a tech role?

Two things count as a tech role:

1. A role in a tech company
2. A role that is primarily related to developing tech or providing tech support. Some examples include:
  - a. 3D programming
  - b. iOS development
  - c. computing science
  - d. medical equipment operations and diagnostics
  - e. front-end and back-end web development
  - f. tech support

## What is the definition of a first-time co-op student?

This means the student has never completed a co-op work term with an accredited co-op program in BC. The student needs to be hired through an accredited co-op.

## Does it matter which university or college my student is from?

Yes. In order to be eligible to receive a grant, the student must be enrolled in an accredited co-op program in BC. You must also hire the student through the co-op program at the academic institution.

## Does it matter if I've hired a co-op student in the past?

If it has been less than five years since your company has hired a co-op student then you must hire a student on their first co-op placement in order to be eligible for a BC Tech Co-op Grant.

## How long does it take to process an application?

A typical application is processed within 15 business days. You will then be notified whether you have received conditional approval or have been declined.

## Are there any timing considerations?

Co-op work terms start at three different times during the year. We suggest posting a few months ahead of when the co-op term you are hiring for begins.

- Spring (Jan – Apr)
- Summer (May – Aug)
- Winter (Sep – Dec)

**Can I apply to receive a grant before I hire a student?**

Yes! You can receive conditional approval and once you hire the student, you will be required to provide student information. Please note, the usual eligibility requirements concerning student roles for work placements still stand.

**Can I apply for a grant after the work term has ended?**

Yes! This is another great benefit of our program. You have until March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 to apply for a co-op term that took place in Summer 2020, Fall 2020, or Spring 2021.

PLEASE NOTE: Any placement completed before May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 is not eligible for retroactive approval.

**I have hired a student for an 8-month co-op contract, is my company eligible to receive a grant?**

Yes. In fact, you are eligible to receive two grants – one for each term of the 8-month contract. However, you will be required to apply twice. In your second application, please make note that the student is in a consecutive placement.

**Are we eligible for a Tech Co-op Grant if we received an Innovator Skills Initiative (ISI) voucher in the past?**

Yes. However, you cannot receive both a Tech Co-op grant and an ISI voucher for the same student in the same work term.

**Are we eligible for a Tech Co-op Grant if we received other funding for the student?**

Yes. However, you cannot receive both a Tech Co-op grant and ISI voucher for the same student in the same work term and the combined value of all funding cannot exceed the student's salary.

**What do I need to do once I've received grant approval?**

In order to receive the grant funds, employers will need to have done three key things:

1. An employer must hire a student from an accredited co-op program. One of two conditions must be met to satisfy this requirement. Either:
  - a. The student has never completed a co-op term in an accredited BC program OR
  - b. The company is hiring a co-op student for the first time in five or more years.
2. Employers need to confirm from which accredited co-op program the student was hired from. The employer will be asked for confirmation after receiving conditional approval.
3. Employers are required to provide their students with the Student Consent Form to sign. By signing this form, the student gives consent for their employer to share their name and email address with Innovate BC and for Innovate BC to cite their name when corresponding with their co-op department and with New Ventures BC, the Tech Co-op Grants Program delivery partner.

4. Employers are required to fill out a survey indicating their satisfaction with the program. Survey responses will not impact the company's eligibility for future grants. Employer satisfaction surveys are compulsory. Students will also be asked to fill out a satisfaction survey; however, student response is optional.

### **When will I receive my grant?**

Grants will be disbursed at the end of the student's co-op term via direct deposit. Typically, funds arrive in your account in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> month following the start of the co-op term.

For example, a Fall 2018 (Sep – Dec) grant will be disbursed in December or January.

### **How to Apply | Contact Information**

To apply, click [HERE](#).

For more information about the application process, contact us at [programs@innovatebc.ca](mailto:programs@innovatebc.ca).