

Digital Skills for Youth (DS4Y) Program Guidelines

Digital Skills for Youth Program

Innovate BC is pleased to offer **Digital Skills for Youth (DS4Y)**, a program funded by the Federal Government of Canada through Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), that aims to match underemployed youth with small to medium-sized businesses (SMBs) and not-for-profit organizations to provide meaningful work experience to support their successful transition to career-oriented employment in the digital economy or with digital skills. Applicant organizations are eligible for a grant that covers the full wage of a Youth Intern to create employment opportunities for youth to build digital skills essential for the digital economy. A training stipend is also provided to support youth in developing digital skills through the course of the placement.

Key Objectives & Benefits

The **Digital Skills for Youth Program** will:

- **Match** underemployed youth with SMBs and not-for-profits in digital related roles,
- Provide **digital skills training** so youth can successfully transition to the workforce,
- **Increase employability** and marketability of youth.

The key objectives of **Digital Skills for Youth** include:

- **Support and provide work opportunities for underemployed post-secondary graduates.** Valuable work experience gained along with digital skills training will support youth to successfully transition to the labour market, while fostering their long-term employability.
- **Provide participants with new or enhanced digital skills and knowledge** giving them the opportunity to learn how to apply them in combination with soft skills (such as business and entrepreneurial skills, communication, problem solving and teamwork),
- **Encourage small and medium-sized businesses and not-for-profits to create employment opportunities for youth to build digital skills needed for the evolving digital economy.** Such initiatives support small and medium-sized firms in gaining access to an energetic and innovative workforce.
- **Support knowledge transfer, innovation and workforce resilience across all industries.** Employment opportunities will prepare youth to adapt to the major changes projected in tomorrow's workplace, particularly in emerging areas such as those related to cyber security, the automation of knowledge tasks, big data, artificial intelligence, among others.

Placement Terms and Program Funding

Participating organizations are required to hire a youth (ages 15-30, inclusive) for a minimum of four months. Participating organizations are advised to apply early and are free to do so before hiring. Applicants can receive conditional approval prior to hiring but final approval is only granted once the youth is hired.

Each Employer is eligible for the following:

- One grant of up to \$17,000 to cover 100% of a youth's salary and any employment-related costs,
- One training stipend of up to \$4,000 (inclusive of taxes) to cover the same youth's training costs, and
- Coverage of capital/direct costs, including small repairs or renovations to support the participation of youth facing barriers, up to a maximum of \$5,000.

Note: For placements longer than 4 months, or exceeding the above amounts, the Employer will be required to cover the remainder of the costs.

Applications approved between April 22, 2020 and January 15, 2021, will only be eligible for reimbursement of expenses incurred before February 28, 2021.

Employer Eligibility

To participate in the **Digital Skills for Youth Program**, an Employer must:

- Be established in BC, as defined by being registered in BC and/or having a physical location within the province,
- Be a small or medium-sized business or not-for-profit organization (under 500 employees), and
- Have not received a **Digital Skills for Youth** grant from Innovate BC or [another program delivery partner](#) after April 22, 2020.

Youth Eligibility

To participate in the **Digital Skills for Youth Program**, a Youth Intern must:

- Be between the ages of 15 and 30, inclusive, at the start of the internship
- Be a post-secondary graduate (i.e. has completed a diploma or degree following secondary education),
- Not be in receipt of EI during the course of the work placement,
- Be legally entitled to work in Canada (Canadian citizen, permanent Resident or person who has been granted refugee status),
- Reside, physically work in BC or have plans to return to BC and

- Self-assess as underemployed, meaning they are employed below their level of education and/or hold part-time employment, or are unemployed.

Youth who self-identify as women, Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit and Métis), member of an official language minority community, new immigrant, refugee, a person with a disability, a visible minority or LGBTQ2S+ or who live in a rural or remote location, will be given special consideration.

Eligible Work Placement

To qualify for the **Digital Skills for Youth Program**, work placements must:

- Be a minimum of four months and a maximum of one year,
- Be in a technology-related position or supporting digital work where the Youth Intern can develop on-the-job experience in the areas of: AI, Automation, Big Data, Digital Marketing, Programming/Coding, Cybersecurity, UI/UX, AR/VR, or 3D Printing,
- Be comprised of activities that are non-commercial, not intended to generate profit, and support program priorities and objectives¹,
- Support the Youth Intern in the development and implementation of work activities to provide a meaningful and supportive work environment and prepare them for career-oriented employment,
- Provide the Youth Intern with productive and valuable work during the placement,
- Provide a fair market wage to the Youth Intern for the work performed during the placement.

Eligible Training

To qualify for the **Digital Skills for Youth** training stipend, training plans must:

- Begin and end during the work placement,
- Begin before March 31st, 2021,
- Complement the Youth Intern's work activities and contribute to a valuable and productive employment experience,
- Be in one of the following digital areas – AI, Automation, Big Data, Digital Marketing, Programming/Coding, Cybersecurity, UI/UX, AR/VR, or 3D Printing,
- Include a component of digital literacy or soft skills training (i.e. communications, logical reasoning, problem solving, design thinking, etc.),
- Confirm that the Employer agrees to provide paid time off for the intern to participate in digital skills training.

¹ The applicant organization may be for-profit, but the youth hired should not be working in a role involved with directly generating profit, such as sales.

Youth training plans must be mutually agreed upon by the Employer and Youth Intern. Innovate BC has provided a [list of recommended digital training providers](#). This list is by no means exhaustive and is only meant to provide examples of training providers; program participants are free to select a provider not on the list and include that option in their application for consideration and approval.

Grant Application & Intern Placement Process

1. Interested organizations can [apply online](#) for a grant through Innovate BC. Employer applications can be submitted before hiring a Youth Intern or after a Youth Intern has been hired. Applications submitted after hiring are often processed more quickly.
2. Innovate BC reviews the Employer's **Digital Skills for Youth** application and grants conditional approval to eligible applicants. Due to limited funding, applications will be reviewed in the order they are received and special consideration will be given to youth from equity-seeking groups and organizations whose leaders identify as such. All grant approvals are conditional and are subject to specific requirements being met.
3. If an Employer has not yet hired a Youth Intern, they must post the job through channels of their own. Employers must mention that work terms are with the **Digital Skills for Youth** Program on job postings. An Employer can share the job posting with Innovate BC to help promote and share on Innovate BC's social channels. If applicable, a provision can be added to the posting mentioning that the job is conditional upon the Employer receiving a **Digital Skills for Youth** grant. If the Employer is unable to find a suitable Youth Intern, they may ask for Innovate BC's support to promote the opportunity and help to find the right match.
4. Once Employers have hired a Youth Intern, they will be required to log back into the online application portal to complete an Intern Confirmation Form to provide Innovate BC with information related to the youth that was hired.
5. Upon completion, the Employer will receive an email with a form to be completed for ISED data collection purposes. Innovate BC will also prompt the Youth Intern by email to complete the Intern Application. The Intern Application step requires that the student provide information to establish eligibility and also complete an optional Self-Identification Questionnaire.
6. The Employer will be notified when the Youth Intern has completed the Intern Application and will be prompted to complete the third and final part of the application process, the Project Plan and Budget. The Youth Intern's training plan must be aligned with the objectives of the **Digital Skills for Youth** Program and mutually agreed upon by both the Youth Intern and Employer. The Employer must provide the Youth Intern's training plan in the Project Plan and Budget.
7. Innovate BC reviews the Employer's full application and grants final approval to eligible applicants.

8. The Employer reads and signs off on the Contribution Agreement between them and Innovate BC.
9. The Employer can log into SurveyMonkey Apply to submit claims for reimbursement of expenses. Claims can be submitted as early as one month after the start of the work placement and every month thereafter or less frequently if the Employers wishes. The Employer will download the Claim Form, complete it and re-upload it for processing. Claim Forms will be processed and payment will be issued within 4-6 weeks. The deadline for submission of the final claim is February 28th, 2021. Only costs incurred on or before February 28th, 2021 will be considered for reimbursement.
10. Upon completion of the final Claim form, Innovate BC will issue two satisfaction surveys, one will be sent to the Employer and the other to the Youth Intern, so that Innovate BC can evaluate the results and impact of the **Digital Skills for Youth** Program. Disbursement of the final claim will follow completion of the two surveys and final payment will be issued within 4-6 weeks.

Eligible Expenses

Only incurred expenses are eligible for reimbursement and supporting documents must accompany each expense on the completed claim form.

1. Direct Labour/Salary Costs

Gross wages or salaries incurred by DS4Y interns to a maximum of \$17,000 for work that can be specifically identified and measured as having been performed on the Project 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 intern (normal periodic remuneration before deductions) working on the Project. 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. and will be limited to a maximum of 20% of intern salaries.

Note, approvals granted before January 15th, 2021 will only be eligible for reimbursement of expenses incurred up to February 28th, 2021. Applications approved between April 22, 2020 and January 15, 2021, will only be eligible for reimbursement of expenses incurred before February 28, 2021.

Acceptable Supporting Documents:

- Project time recording system/process/method used to track, cost, record and claim Direct Labour and Salaries Costs, particularly where recipients manage multiple projects and employee time is charged to multiple projects.
- Employee time sheets or time logs, clearly demonstrating the number of hours/days worked on projects.
- Employee pay stubs or other related documents to support salary rates used and demonstrate payments of salary to employees.

2. Training Costs

Youth training costs incurred and related to upskilling and training to a maximum of \$4,000 (inclusive of all taxes) per Youth Intern.

Acceptable Supporting Documents:

- Copies of receipts, invoices, cheques made out to the vendor, financial bank/ credit card statements and any other evidence to demonstrate that the costs have been rendered. The evidence must include suppliers name and date of purchase

3. Special Participant and Capital Costs

Participant costs, such as living expenses, dependent care, scholarships/bursaries, and accommodation. Capital costs, including small repairs or renovations to support the participation of youth facing barriers. Participant and capital costs can only be claimed for reimbursement for specific circumstances, where employment would not otherwise be possible, such as with youth facing barriers. Applicant organizations will be required to provide rationale for the expenses which will be subject to review and approval from Innovate BC. Capital costs for the construction of a building or the purchase of land or buildings are not eligible. These costs must be reported on Part 3 of the application form, Project Plan and Budget, prior to their incurrence, and approved by Innovate BC to qualify for reimbursement.

Acceptable supporting documents:

- For purchases made during the project period for direct use in projects, copies of receipts, invoices, cheques made out to the vendor/supplier, financial bank statements and any other evidence to demonstrate that the costs have been rendered. Evidence should include suppliers name and date of purchase.

Changes and Termination

Any substantial changes or termination of the work placement must be reported to Innovate BC immediately.

FAQ

How long does it take to process an application?

Each step in the application process (I.e. Company Application, Intern Application and Project Plan & Budget) is processed within 15 business days. The Employer will be notified of their application status via email shortly after review.

Are there any timing considerations?

In order to qualify for the 100% wage grant, the final reimbursement claim for Employers approved between April 2020 and January 15th, 2021 **must be submitted by February 28th, 2021**. Claims submitted after February 28th, 2021 will not be considered. Only costs incurred on or before February 28th, 2021 will be eligible for reimbursement, any costs after this will not be considered.

Can I apply to receive a Digital Skills for Youth grant before I hire a Youth Intern?

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

Can I apply after the work term has ended?

Yes! This is another great benefit of our program. You can apply for a grant retroactively for work terms that occurred in the past, with a start date no earlier than April 22, 2020.

Any placement that began before April 22, 2020 is not eligible for retroactive approval.

If I have hired or plan to hire a Youth Intern for longer than 4 months, is my company still eligible to participate in the Digital Skills for Youth Program?

Yes. In fact, we highly encourage longer work placements to enrich the learning and employment experience. The Employer would be eligible for up to a maximum of \$17,000 to cover direct labour/salary expenses incurred during the duration of the placement. Only costs incurred for months worked before February 28th, 2021 are eligible for reimbursement.

Are we eligible for Innovate BC's Digital Skills for Youth grant if we received a Digital Skills for Youth grant from another organization in the past?

In order to be eligible for Innovate BC's **Digital Skills for Youth** grant, the Employer must have not received a **Digital Skills for Youth** grant from Innovate BC or [another program delivery partner](#) after April 22, 2020.

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

Yes, grant stacking is permitted as long as the combined value of all grant funding does not exceed the youth's salary, training expenses and participant costs.

How long do I have to identify and hire a Youth Intern once I have received conditional approval?

Employers should try to hire a Youth Intern as soon as possible in order to get started with the project and meet the requirements of the placement. Conditional approval cannot be deferred from one fiscal year to another. Only costs incurred after the start of the internship and before February 28, 2021 will be eligible for reimbursement. For example, if you received conditional approval in October 2020 and you did not hire a student until January 2021, you will only be able to claim reimbursement for costs incurred from January to February 28th, 2021.

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

No, in order to be eligible for the Digital Skills for Youth Program, interns must be Canadian citizens, permanent residents or refugees under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

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

In order to receive the funds, Employers will need to have done four key things:

1. An Employer must hire a Youth Intern and the Youth Intern must complete digital skills training prior to the completion of the work placement,
2. Employers are required to provide the Youth Intern's contact information and follow up with them on the completion of the Intern Application,
3. Employers must submit reimbursement claim forms with all supporting documents,
4. In order to receive final reimbursement, both Employers and Youth Interns are required to fill out a satisfaction survey and post-placement form. Survey responses will not in any way impact the company's eligibility for reimbursement. Both Employer and Youth Intern satisfaction surveys and forms are compulsory.

When will I receive the funds?

Employers can begin submitting reimbursement claims at least one month after the start of the work placement and every month thereafter.

Reimbursement claims will be reviewed and payments issued within 4-6 weeks of receipt via direct deposit. Applications approved between April 22, 2020 and January 15, 2021, will only be eligible for reimbursement of expenses incurred on or before February 28, 2021.

How to Apply | Contact Information

To apply, click [HERE](#)

For more information about the application process, visit the [Innovate BC Website](#) or contact us at programs@innovatebc.ca.

Appendix A: ISED User Guide & Definitions

Digital Skills for Youth (DS4Y) Program Participant Information Form

User Guide

The Participant Information Forms (also referred to as the PIFs) are used to collect information to determine a participant's eligibility in Digital Skills for Youth (DS4Y) Program and to record the results of a participant's involvement in these interventions. The eligibility criteria complies with Employment and Social Development Canada's Youth Employment and Skills Strategy's (YESS).

The PIFs are broken down into two separate forms (**Part 1** and **Part 2**).

Part 1: This form must be completed and signed by each youth intern who participates in the Program prior to the commencement of their internship. This form confirms that the intern is eligible to participate in the Program. It is the employer's responsibility to verify that the potential participant is eligible to participate in the YESS program.

Part 2: This form must be completed at the end of the internship and must be provided to ISED when the quarterly progress reports are submitted.

For optimal functionality, each PIF (PDF version) should be saved locally and opened using Adobe Reader or Adobe Pro. To facilitate the completion of the PIF, some sections can be prepopulated and saved before being sent to the employer and youth intern (e.g. Project Number, Delivery Organization contact information, etc.).

Once all of the mandatory fields are completed, the PIFs can be submitted electronically by clicking on the "Submit" button at the end of each form. All of the data will automatically be submitted to a database intake system. Once a PIF is submitted, a confirmation email will be sent to the delivery organization, the employer, as well as the youth intern. Please save a copy of this email for your records.

The **Project Number** must be entered on the top right-hand corner of each form. The delivery organization should supply the Project Number to the Employer. The Project Number can be found in the top right header of the contribution agreement.

Before the start of the internship, each youth intern will be required to complete the eligibility questionnaire (Part B) and confirm that the information provided in the form is accurate. The youth intern will also be asked to consent to the collection and use of their personal information for policy analysis, research and evaluation purposes. All personal information collected is protected under the Privacy Act.

Highlighted Terms

Employment Equity encourages the establishment of working conditions that are free of barriers, corrects the conditions of disadvantage in employment and promotes the principle that employment equity requires special measures and the accommodation of differences for the four designated groups in Canada: women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, members of visible minorities.

Indigenous group: The term Indigenous peoples (or Aboriginal peoples) refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Living in a rural or remote location: A rural or remote locations are areas where the population density is very low.

Member of an official language minority community: Official language minority communities (OLMCs) are groups of people whose maternal or chosen official language is not the majority language in their province or territory – in other words, Anglophones in Quebec and Francophones outside of Quebec.

New Immigrant: A new immigrant is a person who has moved from their country of origin (their homeland) to another country to become a citizen of that country and has been in that country for less than 5 years.

Person with Disability: A person who has any severe and prolonged condition that inhibits a person from performing normal and routine daily activities.

Refugee: A person on whom refugee status has been conferred under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Residency Status: The *Residency Status* question will be used to verify the participant's eligibility for YES programs. All basic eligibility criteria are stated on page 2 of the PIF.

Visible minority refers to whether a person belongs to a visible minority group as defined by the Employment Equity Act and, if so, the visible minority group to which the person belongs. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour". The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.