

# Digital Skills for Youth (DS4Y) Program Guidelines

\*Please note that the DS4Y program guidelines have been updated in December 2021.  
A friendly reminder that some important program dates have been updated.

## 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 (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 an intern (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 and should hire an Intern within 3 weeks of receiving conditional approval. Final approval is only granted once the Intern is hired.

Each Employer is eligible for the following funding:

Up to \$25,500 maximum grant value to cover 100% of an Intern’s salary, training and capital costs.

Maximum Grant Value	=	Training (Optional)	+	Capital Cost (Optional)	+	Salary
\$25,500	=	Up to \$4,000	+	Up to \$5,000	+	Up to \$25,500*

\*Balance after any Training or Capital Costs

- Salary: Up to \$25,500 to cover 100% of an intern’s salary and any mandatory employment-related costs (benefits),
- Training: One optional training stipend of up to \$4,000 (inclusive of taxes) to cover the Intern’s training costs, and
- Capital/Direct Costs: Coverage of capital or direct costs is available under special circumstances, including small repairs or renovations to support the participation of youth facing barriers, up to a maximum of \$5,000.

**Note:** For placements exceeding the above amounts, the Employer will be required to cover the remainder of the costs.

Only costs incurred and paid between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022 will be eligible for reimbursement.

## 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, and
- Be a small or medium-sized business or not-for-profit organization (under 500 employees).

## Intern Eligibility

To participate in the **Digital Skills for Youth Program**, an 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 as a Canadian citizen, permanent resident or person who has been granted refugee status,
- Not be an immediate family member of the recipient or employer,
- Reside, physically work in BC or have plans to return to BC,
- Self-assess as underemployed, meaning they are employed below their level of education and/or hold part-time employment, or are unemployed,
- Not have completed a DS4Y work placement in their lifetime, and
- Not be a co-op student.

Employers must take into account employment equity considerations in the hiring process. Consideration should be given for participation from the five designated groups: Indigenous peoples, official languages minorities, persons with disabilities, members of visible minorities and women.

Applications with Interns who self-identify as part of the above employment equity groups 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 start no earlier than April 1, 2021 and end on or before June 30, 2022,
- Be in a technology-related position or supporting digital work where the 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 objectives<sup>1</sup>,
- Support the Intern with internal mentorship and the development and implementation of work activities to provide a meaningful and supportive work environment and prepare them for career-oriented employment,
- Provide the 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.

Employers may hire Interns for permanent positions, but the DS4Y work placement period is a minimum of 4 months and a maximum of 1 year. The work placement must be between April 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

Employers must externally advertise work placement opportunities and must mention that the job postings are for the **Digital Skills for Youth Program**.

## Eligible Paid Training

Interns can participate in third-party short-term courses, and training plans must be mutually agreed upon by the Employer and Intern. The Employer must agree to provide paid time off for the intern to participate in third-party training. To qualify for the **Digital Skills for Youth** training stipend, paid training must:

- Begin and end during the work placement,
- Complement the Intern's specific role 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,
- Be related to digital literacy or soft skills training (i.e. communications, logical reasoning, problem solving, design thinking, etc.)

## Grant Application & Intern Placement Process

1. Interested organizations can [apply online](#) for a grant through Innovate BC. Employer applications can be submitted before hiring an Intern or after an Intern has been hired. The deadline for submission of the application is January 31, 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

2. Innovate BC reviews the Employer's application and gives 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 interns 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 an Intern, they must post the job through channels of their own. Employers have 3 weeks from receiving conditional approval to hire. Employers must mention that the work terms are for 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 website. 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.

The application may be declined if an Employer does not hire within 3 weeks of receiving conditional approval.

4. Once Employers have hired an Intern, they will be required to complete an Intern Confirmation Form with the intern's information.
5. Upon completion of the Intern Confirmation Form, the Employer is required to complete a form for ISED data collection purposes. Innovate BC will also prompt the Intern to complete the Intern Application which requires the Intern to provide information to establish eligibility.
6. The Employer will be notified when the Intern has completed the Intern Application and will be prompted to complete the final part of the application process, the Project and Training Plan. The Intern's training plan must be aligned with the objectives of the **Digital Skills for Youth Program** and mutually agreed upon by both the Intern and Employer. The Employer must provide the Intern's training plan in the Project and Training Plan.
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 submit claims for reimbursement of expenses as early as one month after the start of the work placement and every month thereafter or less frequently if the Employers wishes. Claims must be submitted at a minimum on a quarterly basis. Claim Forms will be processed, and payment will be issued within 4-6 weeks. The deadline for submission of the final claim is March 31, 2022. Only costs incurred on or before March 31, 2022 will be considered for reimbursement.
10. Upon completion of the final claim form, Innovate BC will issue a satisfaction survey each to the Employer and the Intern, so that Innovate BC can evaluate the results and impact of the **Digital Skills for Youth Program**. Innovate BC will also send a form for ISED data collection purposes to the Employer.

## Eligible Expenses

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

### 1. Deadlines for Claim Submissions

Reimbursement claims must be submitted, at a minimum, on a quarterly basis:

<u>Period Costs Are Incurred</u>	<u>Deadline for Claim Submission</u>
April 1, 2021 – June 30, 2021	July 9, 2021
July 1, 2021 – September 30, 2021	October 8, 2021
October 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021	January 14, 2022
January 1, 2022 – February 28, 2022	March 15, 2022
March 1, 2022 – March 31, 2022	March 31, 2022

Only costs incurred on or before March 31, 2022 will be eligible for reimbursement. Any costs after this will not be considered.

Paid training courses must be submitted for reimbursement by March 4, 2022.

### 2. Salary and Benefits

Eligible costs are gross wages or salaries and benefits earned by DS4Y Interns to a maximum of \$25,500 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 Intern (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 Intern salaries. Note that benefits claimed must be incurred during the work placement.

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

**Contractors (Interns not on payroll) are not eligible for benefits, so no benefits can be claimed for reimbursement.**

Acceptable Supporting Documents:

Contractor with invoice	Invoice showing number of hours worked, hourly rate, and time period covered.
Contractor with no invoice	Contractor time sheets or time logs, clearly demonstrating the number of hours / days worked on projects, along with calculations arriving at amount paid.
On payroll	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.**

### 3. Training Costs

Intern training costs incurred and related to upskilling and training to a maximum of \$4,000 (inclusive of all taxes) per 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 and paid. The evidence must include supplier's name, date of purchase, name or description of the training, and the training period covered.



#### 4. Special Participant and Capital Costs

Capital costs can only be claimed for reimbursement for specific circumstances, where employment would not otherwise be possible, such as with youth facing barriers. An example would be an Intern living in a remote area needing internet, or an Intern with a disability needing modified equipment.

Applicant organizations will be required to provide rationale for the expenses which will be subject to review and approval from Innovate BC and ISED. These costs must be reported in the Project and Training Plan prior to their incurrence and approved by Innovate BC to qualify for reimbursement.

Capital costs for the construction of a building or the purchase of land or buildings are not eligible.

Acceptable supporting documents:

- For purchases made during the work placement, 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 and paid. The evidence must include supplier's name, date of purchase, and name or description of the capital cost.

## Changes and Termination

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

## FAQ

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

Each individual step (Company Application, Intern Confirmation and Application, and Project and Training Plan) 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 Digital Skills for Youth grant before I hire an Intern?**

Yes! You can receive conditional approval and must hire an Intern within 3 weeks of receiving conditional approval. Please note, the usual eligibility requirements concerning intern roles for work placements still stand.

**Can I apply after the work term has already started?**

Companies can apply for a grant retroactively for work terms that started in the past, with a start date no earlier than April 1, 2021. Please note that retroactive applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**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?**

Yes, companies can receive multiple DS4Y grants, from multiple DS4Y providers, over their lifetime. However, an Intern can only participate in the DS4Y program once in their lifetime.

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

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

**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?**

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.

**Can I keep the Intern as an employee following completion of the work placement?**

Yes, we encourage retaining the Intern as an employee past the work placement where possible.

## **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)

## **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 YESS 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.