

## Fall 2022 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

The UBC Sustainability Hub is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on funded sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the mentorship of a partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing sustainability across the region.

- Visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) to learn [how the program works](#) and to [apply](#).
- Be sure to review the [application guide](#) to confirm your eligibility before applying.

**Applications close at midnight on Sunday September 18, 2022.**

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### **Research project title: Benchmarking the environmental and economic value of a clothing recirculation program**

#### **Background**

Founded in 2009, [Working Gear](#) is a social enterprise that removes the final barriers to employment, allowing society's most vulnerable to access employment with safe, proper fitting personal protective gear including quality steel toe boots, which comply with safety regulations. Working Gear also provides office and interview attire to marginalized individuals returning to work. In 2021, Working Gear helped over 1300 people return to work.

Most of Working Gear's donations are new items from corporate donors who send us their excess stock, dead stock, and returns. We also receive a sizable amount from film production companies as well as from the community. Many of these donations are new or in excellent condition, while some are unsuitable for Working Gear's programming (e.g., non-steel toe footwear or casual t-shirts) while others are much needed items. Over the last two years, the volume of corporate donations to Working Gear has increased substantially. This has resulted in a surplus of footwear and clothing. To address this surplus of clothing, Working Gear has been hosting monthly free clothing pop-ups which has helped recirculate the clothing in a sustainable fashion.

In 2019, Working Gear wanted to understand our reclaiming metrics better. The simplest metric that we could manage was to start weighing the donations, which we did for over a year, and measured 6 tons of donations. Given that we have a large footprint in terms of circulating clothing in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) we are curious to know our impact from an environmental aspect as well as from an economic perspective.

Many research projects on diverting textile waste focus on consumer end responsibility. Which highlights the need for consumers to purchase less even though the manufacturers are still producing surplus amounts of clothing. These surplus items are still in the economy and may end up in the landfill. Traditional textile waste studies focus on the value of purchasing second hand or upcycled products. While these efforts are noble, they do not address the effects that more affluent consumers have on the price of second hand clothing. Over recent years many low-income consumers have been priced out of thrift and second hand clothing. Furthermore, upcycling does not always seem scalable or a feasible solution to large amounts of textile waste. Through our efforts, Working Gear is helping low-income

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consumers that have been priced out of second hand clothing by providing clothing at no cost. If it was not for Working Gear many people might resort to buying cheap mass-produced clothing further exacerbating the climate crisis.

## **Project Description**

The purpose of this project is to develop a baseline understanding of the environmental and economic impact of Working Gear's clothing recirculation and to develop a methodology based on best practices for calculating the ongoing impact on a regular basis.

## **Scope of the work**

Research to understand and measure the donation ecosystem (with a focus on the corporate side). The work will include:

1. A best practice review of methodologies for measuring the amount of clothing and footwear donated to Working Gear and where it is diverted from.
2. Development of a methodology to benchmark and understand the economic and environmental value of Working Gear's clothing re-use program. The methodology should document or assess the following:
  - Clothing re-use and donation
  - Thrift shops and other organizations involved with reclaiming clothing
  - Clothing recovery
  - Scalability and benchmarking of Working Gear's impact
  - Understanding the environmental benefits of Working Gear's operations
3. Preliminary benchmarking of re-use activities. The metrics to be considered will include (but not be limited to) quantitative data (tonnage, amounts diverted and donated, number of uses, emissions reductions, etc.) and qualitative data on the impact of the charity's work and benefits to clients (learned through interviews). The outcome of this research project will be a report that details the following
4. A "map" of the donation ecosystem showing the key actors and flow of items (among other things)

## **Deliverables**

- A report summarizing the research, findings, and interviews
- A benchmark analysis of re-use activities, including economic value, environment tonnages, number of uses, or mapping of donations
- A methodology for measuring the impact of Working Gear's recirculation/re-use activities
- A final report or executive summary for the online Scholars project library

## **Time Commitment**

- This project will take 250 hours to complete.
- This project must be completed between October 17, 2022, and March 15, 2023
- The Scholar is to complete hours or at minimum be available to attend meetings and conduct interviews, between 9 am and 8 pm Monday to Saturday, approximately 10 - 12 hours per week.

## **Required/preferred Skills and Background**

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability

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- Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques
- Statistical analysis
- Comfortable interacting with vulnerable populations to conduct public/in person surveys
- Experience conducting interviews is an asset
- Strong analytical skills
- Familiarity with benchmarking methods and tools
- Comfortable interacting with strangers to conduct public/in person surveys
- Familiarity preparing feasibility studies
- Experience with environmental and/or financial modelling and analysis an asset
- Familiarity with or interest in the textile industry or textile recycling/reuse

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Apply here: [Click here to apply](#)

Contact Karen Taylor at [sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca](mailto:sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca) if you have questions

## Useful Resources

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume and cover letter (there are many more online). Some of these resources also provide information on preparing for your interview.

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/resumes-cover-letters-curricula-vitae>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/graduate-pathways-success>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/cover-letter-cv-resume-templates-ubc-career-services>