

## Summer 2024 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

The UBC Sustainability Hub is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the guidance of a mentor from the partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing sustainability across the region. These opportunities are paid. The pay rate for the summer 2024 program is \$27.50/hour or \$6,875 for a 250-hour project.

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

**Applications close at midnight on Sunday January 28, 2024.**

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### **Project title: Exploring the potential for a holistic indicator of social sustainability and quality of life in Vancouver**

#### **Project Background & Overview:**

Outcome indicators are a critical part of any sustainability strategy, and Vancouver's existing [Healthy City Strategy](#) includes several population-level metrics that are publicly reported through an [online dashboard](#) and other tools. These indicators tell important stories about each of the City of Vancouver's sustainability goals and areas of work, but we do not have a single indicator that can evaluate the overall progress toward our vision of becoming a healthy city for all.

Public health practitioners often reference increased life expectancy as an overall outcome, but this does not capture the quality of that life. We see potential for developing a single measure based on examples from academic research and other jurisdictions that could measure both length and quality of life and contribute to a clearer evaluation framework for our social sustainability work.

These examples include health-adjusted life expectancy (HALE) which has been used by agencies such as the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Mayor of London; or years of good life (YoGL), which is a measure recommended in academic literature and tested in European countries.

The purpose of this project is to assess whether (and how) these examples, or other similar metrics, could be adopted in Vancouver using population-level data sources available in Canada, and to also make sure these metrics are aligned with our equity, reconciliation, and accessibility goals.

#### **Project description**

In 2024, Vancouver plans to renew its overall social sustainability plan, the Healthy City Strategy. The renewal will build on the strengths of the original Strategy—including its upstream orientation, breadth of focus areas, long-term targets, and commitment to collaborative

action—while also improving the strategy to ensure successful implementation of the next phase.

A holistic metric could be an important tool for enabling clearer and simpler evaluation and communication on progress of the Strategy. For example, this metric could enable a clear evidence-oriented answer to the (deceptively simple) question of whether Vancouver is becoming a healthier city overall; currently, we report progress on a number of different goals and indicators, but a holistic answer is not possible. As such, the research conducted by this scholar will be immediately actionable and inform options for renewing our strategy, as well as helping to shape our overall Social Policy research and data program and partnerships.

## Project scope

1. Review existing holistic quality of life metrics used in policy and academic contexts, summarizing how these metrics are communicated, presented, interpreted, and used.
  - a. Begin with initial examples provided by City staff, such as the Mayor of London's [Health Inequities Strategy](#), the Public Health Agency of Canada's [Health of People in Canada dashboard](#), and academic research into the YoGL concept published by [Lutz et al.](#)
  - b. Conduct a desktop search for additional example metrics used for policy and practice in other jurisdictions.
  - c. This will mainly be a literature review of published academic and policy/practice literature, but may also include contact with relevant researchers and practitioners, if scholar time allows.
2. Reverse-engineer the operational definitions of these metrics, providing a conceptual and technical analysis of data sources and methods used to create them.
  - a. Become familiar with essential City strategies that will provide conceptual guidance on potential indicators, including the Healthy City Strategy, Accessibility Strategy, Equity Framework, City of Reconciliation Framework, Resilient Vancouver Strategy, and others recommended by Social Policy staff.
  - b. Critically assess the metrics identified in Part 1 from an equity, reconciliation, and accessibility perspective. Pay particular attention to any identifiable groups whose identities or lived experiences would not be appropriately reflected in these metrics—for example, we would not want to adopt a metric that precludes people with disabilities from enjoying a good life. Assess potential metrics for their ability to support upstream action to address health inequities rather than stigmatizing groups who experience them.
3. Assess the feasibility of using existing Vancouver population-level data sources, such as provincial vital statistics, the Canadian Community Health Survey, the BC SPEAK Survey, the T1 Family File, and the Census of Population, to construct a holistic metric in our context.
  - a. If feasible, prototype how the metric could be constructed; if not, recommend what additional data collection would be required.

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- b. Assess the extent to which the metric is comparable across other jurisdictions (i.e. to benchmark Vancouver against other cities) and the extent to which it can be disaggregated across different population groups and localized to specific geographies (to understand overall health inequities within the city).
4. Summarize key findings and make a recommendation for whether the City should use a holistic metric and, if so, what conceptual and operational definition the City should use.

## **Deliverables**

- A final report containing a summary of the work completed
- A final report for the online public-facing [Scholars Project Library](#).
- If a prototype indicator is developed, a dataset and documentation of how it was created

## **Time Commitment**

- This project will take 250 hours to complete
- This project must be completed between May 1 to August 15, 2024
- The Scholar is to complete hours between 9 am and 6 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 17 to 20 hours per week.

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

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in social sustainability
- Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques
- Statistical analysis
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work independently
- Familiarity with benchmarking methods and tools
- Familiarity with public health objectives, measures, and data sources
- Knowledge of the social determinants of health and health inequities in Vancouver
- Quantitative research experience, an asset
- Data science experience or comfortable working with complex data sets, an asset

Applications close **midnight Sunday January 28, 2024**

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

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

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## Useful Resources

We are holding a special **resume preparation workshop for prospective Scholars** on January 23, 2024. [Click here for details and to register.](#)

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>