

## 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: Evaluating how Vancouver Business Improvement Associations incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion into their practices**

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

Cultural food assets (CFAs), such as restaurants, green grocers, food courts, and other food-related businesses, are significant places of intangible cultural heritage. These places are particularly important places for newcomer and equity-denied groups as they provide culturally relevant foods, informal community space, and economic opportunities. However, Vancouver's housing policies have tended to concentrate development along commercial stretches that, along with various other pressures affecting business viability, have put CFAs increasingly at risk of closure.

Previous research in the Vancouver-context, especially in the Chinatown and Renfrew-Collingwood areas, has highlighted the impact the loss of cultural food businesses is having on newcomer communities. For example, their loss contributes to difficulty accessing culturally relevant, affordable food options, loss of cultural transmission and community, and lost economic opportunities for equity-denied communities struggling to find employment. In response to the threats to CFAs, various grassroots efforts across the city called on the City to respond to the closures that disproportionately, negatively impact equity-denied groups.

In 2022, Vancouver City Council passed the Placekeeping Motion that directed staff to explore local government tools to protect CFAs. In 2023, a City-initiated scan identified various strategies from other jurisdictions and existing City initiatives that already are or could be tailored to support CFAs. The scan also identified a need to explore approaches to better understand how CFAs are engaged and what their needs are, given previous research that suggests that businesses are particularly hard to reach because of their long working hours, limited familiarity with City resources or processes, and potential language barriers.

Vancouver's Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) were identified as a potential avenue to support and engage with CFAs. BIAs are specially funded business districts that provide promotion, community enhancement, advocacy, and other programs to contribute to the

success of their businesses. In Vancouver, there are 22 BIAs that support over 25,000 businesses, with each BIA governed by a volunteer board composed of property owners and tenants. While many CFAs also exist outside of BIAs, BIAs are well-positioned to support CFAs given their relationships with business owners, their mandate to support business districts, and the types of tools available to them.

## **Project description**

The purpose of this project is to identify how BIAs are incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into their work with regards to protecting and promoting cultural businesses. DEI has the potential to intersect with various aspects of BIAs, including governance structure and decision making, engagement, projects and programs, safety and security, and so on.

Understanding how BIAs are approaching DEI, especially from the BIAs who regularly integrate it into their work, can provide valuable information for the City with regards to our approach in protecting and promoting CFAs. Owners and operators of CFAs bring valuable lived experiences, connections, and other skills to grow their businesses; however, they still face unique challenges. While there is limited Vancouver-specific data, findings from other jurisdictions indicate that racialized and newcomer business owners face disproportionate business challenges compared to White, non-newcomer business owners. This includes challenges with accessing capital, navigating language or technical barriers when conducting business or navigating bureaucratic processes, and adopting digital tools.

BIAs have more experience directly engaging with businesses. As such, this project could help respond to the following questions:

- How are CFA needs or challenges identified?
- How are CFAs involved in the BIA's response to those needs?
- Are CFAs accessing City or BIA-created resources, and if not, why?
- What conditions potentially facilitate the retention of longstanding CFAs and the opening of new ones?

This project will be largely actioned by the student who will be responsible for conducting, analysing, and reporting the research. An initial project scope is provided; however, there will be opportunity for the student to inform the scope based on their skills, interests, and their own scoping work with the BIAs. Mentor(s) from the Social Policy will work closely with the student and will also bring in content expertise from Economic Development and Cultural Redress as needed. Findings from this project will inform new and ongoing City projects, programs, and practices – including BIAs – aimed at protecting and promoting intangible cultural heritage, specifically around CFAs.

Note the scope of the project is broader than only food businesses given 1) some BIAs may not have as many food businesses, 2) food likely inherently makes up many of the cultural businesses in the City, and 3) the value of this project is understanding the processes BIAs are taking to engage cultural business operators, which could translate over to engaging with CFA operators.

## **Project scope**

The Scholar will be responsible for the following activities:

## **Project launch**

- Refine project scope based on Scholar's interests and skills.
- Develop timeline of deliverables in consultation with participating BIAs. Note the participants will be identified prior to the project start date.

## **Environmental and Jurisdictional scan**

- Review existing reports and resources related to cultural food assets.
- Conduct desktop research of BIAs incorporating DEI principles into their work.
- Interview up to three relevant jurisdictions to determine how they are integrating or centring DEI into their work. Ideally, the Scholar should prioritise engaging with organisations who are/or serve similar roles to BIAs in British Columbia; however, the Scholar may expand their scope to other Canadian jurisdictions, as needed. The Scholar will also be encouraged to also engage with businesses within the identified jurisdictions, if possible, to validate and enrich the findings with business owner perspectives.
- Develop up to three case studies based on the interviews and desktop research.

## **Interim presentation**

- Present initial findings to participating BIAs and City staff.

## **Research Vancouver BIAs / businesses**

- Based on the research from the environmental and jurisdictional scan develop a research approach and research questions to understand how local BIAs are incorporating EDI principles into their work. Areas of work could include:
- Some of the information we're interested in learning includes:
  - How has gentrification impacted the way you work?
  - How are decisions made regarding policies and programs?
  - What are BIAs' understanding of issues faced by newcomer, BIPOC-owned businesses? How are these addressed?
  - Are cultural businesses accessing City or BIA-developed resources?
  - How are BIAs supporting longstanding and up-and-coming cultural businesses?
  - What conditions or factors contribute to cultural businesses thriving in a business district?
  - How is EDI being centred, celebrated or recognised in the different facets of BIAs work and operations? (e.g., governance, marketing, events, street enhancement, public safety, community and business engagement, business recruitment, and advocacy)
- Conduct interviews with up to three BIAs to understand how they are incorporating DEI principles into their work.

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- Engage with businesses situated in the participating BIAs as feasible to validate and enrich the findings with business owner perspectives. Ideally, one to two businesses at minimum should be engaged; however, the number of businesses will also depend on Scholar capacity and recommendations from the BIA partner.

It is important to note that there are other BIA-like organisations outside of the City's jurisdiction. These organisations, such as the Punjabi Market Collective or the Black Business Association of BC, often have unique mandates to serve specific communities. While the focus of this project is on the City's specially funded BIAs, there may be opportunity to engage with these entities given their focus on equity-denied communities.

## Deliverables

- A final report containing a summary of the work completed including: findings, reflections and recommendations for the City.
- A presentation of findings and recommendations to City staff and participating BIAs.
- A final report for the online public-facing [Scholars Project Library](#). The report should contain a summary of best practices with regards to how BIAs are integrating equity into their work.

## 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 5 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 17 to 20 hours per week.

## Required/preferred Skills and Background

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Experience conducting stakeholder engagement events, including facilitation skills, is an asset
- Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques
- Excellent public speaking and presentation skills
- Community engagement experience
- Ability to work independently
- Deadline oriented
- Project management and organizational skills
- Demonstrated experience in equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Familiarity or experience working with business improvement areas or small business (especially cultural food businesses or cultural businesses in general)

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

# SUSTAINABILITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

## 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>