Summer 2026 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. The pay rate for the summer 2025 program is $31.25/hour or $7,812.50 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 11:59 pm on Sunday February 1, 2026.

Project title: Informing an equity-driven social vulnerability analysis for emergency response and recovery planning (City of Surrey)

Project Background

Surrey is a rapidly growing and developing urban centre in Metro Vancouver. It is the second biggest city in British Columbia by population and is anticipated to outgrow Vancouver by 2027 (Statistics Canada, 2021). As a result, Surrey continues to develop and densify across its land base that have variable environmental, climate, and social conditions (e.g., areas within a floodplain or more susceptible to heat, etc.).

Surrey's population is young and highly diverse. It is home to the largest population of children and youth in BC, and has the second largest urban Indigenous population in the province. As an arrival city for newcomers, it has a large number of recent immigrants, including refugees. Of note, is Surrey's South Asian population, making up nearly 40% of the city's population. While the city's poverty rate is similar to the provincial average, there are neighbourhoods with disproportionate numbers of households with very low incomes.

The City is interested in embedding equity considerations into its emergency response and recovery related to climate disasters and other emergencies. With a diverse social, cultural, and ethnic population base on Metro Vancouver's largest land base, the City understands that situational responses to emergencies can significantly differ from person-to-person, household-to-household, and neighbourhood-to-neighbourhood.

Guided by the City's Emergency Response Plan (ERP), the City's Community Climate Action Strategy (CCAS), and new provincial legislation on risk and vulnerability assessments under the Emergency and Disaster Management Act, the City is interested in identifying evidence-based social vulnerability variables to factor into its emergency response and recovery approach.

Project description

Recent emergency simulations identified a gap in the City's ability to identify and visualize vulnerable populations and critical occupancies during emergencies. Surrey seeks a Sustainability Scholar to create a practical methodology for building a multi-hazard, equity-informed, social vulnerability map layer (on COSMOS) to support emergency planning and operational decision-making.

The desired outcomes are for the City of Surrey be able to:

- Identify areas and populations at heightened risk per emergency;
- Weighted vulnerability factors specific to each emergency type;
- Quickly assess vulnerability within defined geographic boundaries; and
- Support requirements of the Emergency & Disaster Management Act for equity-focused planning.

Project scope

The Scholar will produce a document detailing how to create a social vulnerability layer on the City's online mapping system (COSMOS) combining:

- Social and physical vulnerability indicators (e.g., age, mobility, income, housing type, language, disability etc.);
- Critical occupancies (e.g., day cares, schools, seniors' housing, homeless shelters etc.);
- City hazard types: atmospheric hazards (extreme cold, extreme heat, hailstorm, blizzard, windstorms, etc.), flooding (river flooding, storm surges, heavy rain), seismic hazards (earthquake, tsunamis, etc.), aircraft crash, dangerous goods, disease/epidemics, explosions, fires, landslides, motor vehicle crash, pipeline rupture, rail crash, social disturbance, structural collapse, terrorism, utility failure.

Project activities will include, but are not limited to:

- Research social vulnerability and emergency response and recovery.
    - A review of the Government of BC's Emergency and Disaster Management Act and its emerging legislation on risk and vulnerability assessments;
    - Review of City plans and documents;
    - Academic and grey literature review on equity, risk, and vulnerability as it relates to emergency response and recovery planning; and
    - Best practices research on what other jurisdictions are doing to consider equity, risk, and vulnerability as it relates to emergency response and recovery planning.

- Identify a list of equity, risk, and vulnerability variables for the 16 emergencies outlined in the City's Emergency Response Plan by reviewing available public data (e.g., Census data), internal City data and identifying necessary data gaps. Identified variables should Identify the data source;

- Provide recommendations on social vulnerability variables to be included on an equity layer that will support emergency planning and operational decision-making.

- Optional - Prototype/map mock-up if time allows.

Deliverables

- A final report containing a summary of the work completed and recommendations for:
  - A list of equity-informed social vulnerability variables for the 16 emergencies within the City of Surrey's Emergency Response Plan; and
  - Recommendations of the social vulnerability variables for the City to consider including in a mapped equity layer that will be used to inform decision-making related to emergency response and recovery planning.
- A final report for the online public-facing Scholars Project Library.

Mentorship

The Scholar's primary mentor and project oversight will be within the Social Planning Team within the City's Housing and Social Development Division. The Project Advisors will include the Manager of Housing & Social Development, the Senior Engineer in the Utilities Division, and the Deputy Fire Chief. The Scholar will have ample opportunity to learn in this role while building relationships and networks across multiple teams.

Time Commitment

- This project will take 250 hours to complete
- This project must be completed between May 1 to August 14.
- The Scholars is to complete their hours between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 17 to 20 hours per week.
- Monthly meetings with the Project Advisors

Required/preferred Skills and Background

☒ Excellent research and writing skills
☒ Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques
☒ Statistical analysis
☒ Strong analytical skills
☒ Ability to work independently
☒ Deadline oriented
☒ Interest in or familiarity with spatial analysis and GIS is considered an asset
☒ Interest in or familiarity with emergency response and recovery planning is considered an asset
☒ Interest in or familiarity with equity-based analysis and research is considered an asset

Applications close **at 11:59 pm Sunday February 1, 2026**
Apply here: Click here to apply
Contact Karen Taylor at sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca if you have questions

Useful Resources

We are holding a special **resume preparation workshop for prospective Scholars** on January 19, 2026. Click here for details and to register.

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume, cover letter and preparing for an interview (there are many more online).

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