

Internships & Mentorships

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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1. Getting Canadian Experience

Introduction

As a newcomer, you may find one of the most difficult aspects of looking for work is getting Canadian experience. Many employers look for Canadian experience to show you are able to fit into to the Canadian work environment.

This can mean having the right communication and language skills, familiarity with work expectations, and understanding Canadian workplace culture. It can also mean proving that work experience or skills from your home country are similar to Canadian standards.

This guide discusses how internships and mentorships can help you find suitable work in Canada.

Check “**Getting Canadian Work Experience**” for more suggestions:

- <http://pwp.vpl.ca/siic/career-advice/getting-canadian-work-experience/>

2. What is an internship?

An internship is on-the-job training offered by an employer to provide you with practical experience. Often internships are offered to recent graduates of a degree or diploma program to improve your resume and gain experience in your field. There are also internship opportunities that help newcomers to Canada gain Canadian experience.

Internships are normally for a set time, usually 3 to 6 months. They can be either part-time or full-time hours.

Note:

*Because internships are considered “work” by the Employment Standards Act of British Columbia, all advertised internships must be **paid** positions.*

Occasionally internships will be advertised as unpaid experience for school credit. This type of experience is actually classified as a **practicum** in British Columbia.

Internships and practicums are different. A practicum is part of your formal education in college or university. Practicums are not considered “work” because they provide hands-on training required to complete your degree or diploma. No wages are paid for this type of work experience; instead you get credit toward your education.

More information:

- **Canadian Intern Association**
<http://www.internassociation.ca/what-is-the-law/>

3. Protect Yourself

In British Columbia, it is illegal to advertise unpaid internships. If a company does not offer at least minimum wage for work done during an internship, it is in violation of the Employment Standards Act of BC.

The only types of companies that can advertise unpaid positions are not-for-profit or charity organisations looking for **volunteers**. Volunteer positions are not covered by the Employment Standards Act.

- **Employment Standards Act**
http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00_96113_01
- **Guide to the Employment Standards Act**
<https://www.labour.gov.bc.ca/esb/esaguide/>
- **Canadian Intern Association – Claim Back Your Pay**
<http://www.internassociation.ca/claim-back-your-pay/>

4. Finding Internship Positions

Internships are posted on many job boards

- **Federal Internship for Newcomers**

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomers/work/fin.asp>

A government program to give newcomers to Canada 3 months of work experience and a mentor.

- **Maple 2.0 – Mentorship in Action**

<http://www.maple2.ca/>

A program for internationally educated professionals to gain 4 to 10 week internships or work placements

- **Internships for Youth**

http://www.youth.gc.ca/eng/topics/career_planning/internships.shtml

- **Career Edge Organisation – Internationally Qualified Professionals**

<https://www.careeredge.ca/en/job-seekers/find-your-edge>

A “head hunter” for internship positions, with a program for internationally trained recent immigrants (less than 3 years) who are able to work in Canada.

- **Indeed.com**

<http://ca.indeed.com>

A search of “internship” in Vancouver will pull up a range of internships.

- **The Best Student Internship Platforms of 2017**

<http://www.reviews.com/student-internship-platforms/>

A review of the best online sources for finding internship positions

5. What is a mentorship?

Mentorships are one of the most successful strategies to help you find suitable employment.

Mentorships are programs that connect internationally-trained professionals with your Canadian counterpart. They can help you meet and learn from other professionals in your field.

The benefits of having a mentor include:

- building your network
- meeting new people
- gaining an understanding how things work within your industry
- increasing your knowledge of Canadian workplace culture

For more information:

- **Mentoring. Finding and Working with a Mentor**
<https://alis.alberta.ca/ep/eps/tips/tips.html?EK=12437>
- **How to be a Good Mentee – ASAE**
<http://www.asaecenter.org/files/How%20to%20be%20a%20Good%20Mentee.pdf>

6. Finding a Mentor

As a newcomer to Canada, it can be difficult to find a mentor. A number of options are available specifically for newcomers like you.

For career mentoring:

- **Career Mentoring – Immigrant Services Society of BC**
<http://issbc.org/prim-nav/programs/career-services/career-mentoring>
Offers personalised help for learning workplace culture, networking opportunities, and how to make career-related decisions.
- **Mentoring Program – Immigrant Employment Council of BC**
<http://www.iecbc.ca/our-initiatives/mentoring>
Matches skilled immigrants to professionals in a range of occupations
- **Workplace Connections Mentoring Program - MOSAIC**
<http://www.mosaicbc.com/settlement-services/general-support/workplace-connections-mentoring-program>
A 3-month mentoring program and monthly classes on employment- and workplace-related topics
- **Career Mentoring for S.U.C.C.E.S.S.**
<http://www.successbc.ca/eng/services/settlement-services/career-mentoring-for-success>
A mentoring program that matches professional newcomers with BC professionals in a related field

For small business start-up mentoring:

- **Futurpreneur Canada**

<http://www.futurpreneur.ca/en/mentoring/>

A mentoring program for young newcomers aged 18-39 who want to start a small business

- **Mentorship BC**

<http://www.mentorshipbc.ca/>

Lists mentoring programs available for small business owners

7. Additional Resources

- **NewToBC**

<http://newtobc.ca/>

- **S.U.C.C.E.S.S.**

<http://www.successbc.ca/eng/>

- **Mosaic BC**

<http://www.mosaicbc.com/home>

- **Immigrant Services Society of BC**

<http://www.issbc.org/>

- **WelcomeBC**

<http://www.welcomebc.ca/home.aspx>

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in Central Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/> .