Vancouver CoastalHealth Research Institute

2025 VCHRI SPARKS Guidelines

Summer Program Advancing Research Knowledge & Skills

The Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute (VCHRI) Summer Program Advancing Research Knowledge & Skills (SPARKS) provides an opportunity for highly qualified undergraduate and medical students to explore their interest in health research and receive hands-on experience by undertaking a summer project with a VCHRI Principal Investigator (PI).

Award Amounts

VCHRI SPARKS students will receive an award of $5,000 ($3,500 from VCHRI + $1,500 from PI) to work 30 hours/week for 8 weeks, or $7,500 ($5,300 from VCHRI + $2,200 from PI) to work 30 hours/week for 12 weeks, from June - August 2025, in world-class laboratories within VCHRI.

The award term starts on June 2, 2025, for 8 or 12 consecutive weeks, and must be completed by August 29, 2025. The requested number of weeks and start/end dates must be indicated at the time of application. Students are eligible to work longer than the award period, but additional funding from VCHRI will not be provided. Students will become VCHRI research trainees and will be eligible to attend VCHRI workshops and participate in educational and training opportunities.

VCHRI SPARKS awards are issued as a stipend to support research training, and PIs are required to provide a top-up to the stipend. VCHRI will transfer its contribution to the PI's academic department. VCHRI summer student appointments will be processed by the PI's academic department and the responsibility of the PI and their academic department to appropriately administer payment to the student.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a VCHRI SPARKS award, students must:
- Be an undergraduate or medical student registered at a recognized university during the program period: June - August 2025. If you complete your undergraduate program in spring/summer 2025, you are no longer eligible for this program.
- Primarily work under the supervision of a VCHRI PI. The student may work closely with research associates, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students in the lab. The VCHRI PI must be determined before applying. Affiliate investigators are not eligible.
- Have a proposed project that will be conducted at a VCH site, and is directly relevant to improving health outcomes, patient experience, and/or service delivery at VCH. This includes community-based research within the VCH region.
- Be a Canadian citizen, permanent resident or foreign national who is living/working within Canada to receive funding. International applicants will be considered in the future.
- Be the only student applying with the proposed VCHRI PI. Both the student and VCHRI PI may only be listed on one application.
- Not hold any other award (including UBC SSRP, USRA, WLIURA) during the tenure of the VCHRI SPARKS award.

Applicants currently employed full-time on a paid co-op placement are eligible to hold an award during the placement period if: (1) the proposed PI supervisor and project are the same as the co-op supervisor and project; (2) the co-op position is not receiving funds from a wage subsidy program (e.g., Biotalent); and (3) the applicant has approval from the supervisor and co-op coordinator to receive the additional funding.

The VCHRI PI is expected to provide the space, supplies, and/or resources that the student requires to complete the project. No research allowance is provided with this award.

Application Process

1. Review the eligibility criteria.
2. Reach out to a VCHRI PI who you are interested in working with. Best practice is to reach out over email, and then send a polished resume, cover letter, your transcript and/or a statement of interest. You can find eligible supervisors in our [research directory](#).
3. Once you have a supervisor, read through the program requirements together. *If you are having difficulty finding a supervisor, you can request help from VCHRI education.award@vch.ca*
4. Submit application package via the submission link on our [website](#) by **Friday March 28th, 2025 at 4:00pm (PST).**
5. Application results will be announced in the spring of 2025.

Application Package

The following documents need to be submitted online:

- **Application Form**
  - Student and VCHRI PI information.
- **Research Project Summary**
  - Includes scientific summary, training expectations and project relevance.
  - Information on equity, diversity, and inclusion considerations [here.](#)
  - If you are conducting an Indigenous health research project or a project focused on topics that disproportionately impact Indigenous Peoples (e.g., work in the Downtown Eastside), contact the [Indigenous Health Research Unit.](#)
- **Applicant Resume**
  - Maximum 2-pages any format, include scholarly achievements and any other relevant experience (e.g., volunteering, leadership)

Evaluation Criteria

All eligible applications are reviewed by members of the VCHRI leadership and research community. Applicants are assigned a final rank and funding is allocated to top-ranked applicants. Applications will be evaluated based on the student's academic merit and scholarly achievement, the scientific merit of the research project, research potential, and the potential benefit the student will obtain from the experience.

Program Requirements

All students are required to meet the following conditions, or as outlined in an award offer letter:
- Submit a written report that includes a summary of the research project and a reflection of program experience. This report should be sent to education.award@vch.ca by August 30, 2025. A template and instructions will be provided by the VCHRI awards team.
- Complete program evaluation conducted by VCHRI as requested (e.g., online survey).
- Submit a final financial statement at the end of the award term.

Contact Information

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