2024 VCHRI SPARKS

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 2024, in world-class laboratories within VCHRI.

The award term starts on June 3, 2024, for 8 or 12 consecutive weeks, and must be completed by August 30, 2024. 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 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 summer student appointments will be processed by the PI's academic department. VCHRI will transfer the contribution to the PI's academic department. It will be the responsibility of the PI and their academic department to appropriately administer payment to the student.

Eligibility

To be eligible for an VCHRI SPARKS award, students must:
1. Be an undergraduate or medical student registered at a recognized university during the program period: June - August 2024. If you complete your undergraduate program in spring/summer 2024, you are no longer eligible for this program.
2. 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.
3. Has 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.
4. 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.
5. Be the only student applying with the proposed VCHRI PI. Both the student and VCHRI PI may only be listed on one application.
6. 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 space, supplies, and/or resources 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 send them 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.
4. Submit application package to education.award@vch.ca by **Monday April 22nd at 4pm (PST)**.
5. Application results will be announced May 1st, 2024.

Application Package

The following documents need to be submitted.
- Application form
  - Student and VCHRI PI information.
- Research project summary
  - Includes scientific summary, training expectations and project relevance.
- Student resume
  - Maximum 2-pages, including scholarly achievements.

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, and the potential benefit the student will obtain from the experience.

Program Requirements

All students are required to meet the following conditions:
1. Submit a written report that includes a summary of their research project and a reflection of their program experience. This report should be sent to education.award@vch.ca before August 30, 2024. A template and instructions will be provided by the VCHRI awards team.
2. Complete an end-of-program online survey before September 6, 2024.
3. Submit a final financial statement at the end of the award term.

Contact Information

Amanda Chisholm, PhD
Senior Manager, Education and Funding Initiatives
Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute
6/F, 2635 Laurel Street, Vancouver, BC V5Z 1M9
education.award@vch.ca