



Recruitment, Retention and Innovative Skills Training Program

PROGRAM GUIDE



The Recruitment, Retention and Innovative Skills Training Program supports industry to adopt, implement and scale innovative tools, processes, practices and resources to raise awareness of, attract, retain and develop people to work in agriculture and food.

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This program is funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

If there is a discrepancy between this program guide and www.iafbc.ca/rrist, the website will take precedence.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Recruitment, Retention and Innovative Skills Training (RRIST) Program is an initiative funded by the Government of British Columbia through the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC (IAF) is leading this program to address the workforce needs of BC's agriculture, seafood, and food industries. The program supports projects that enhance recruitment, retention, and the development of a skilled workforce. Applications demonstrating a measurable and sustainable positive impact will be prioritized for funding. This funding initiative aims to tackle domestic workforce challenges in British Columbia, with IAF overseeing the review and evaluation of submissions.

Program Goal

The program aims to enhance the agriculture and food industry in BC by supporting the adoption of industry-led and focused initiatives best suited to address specific labour and skills training needs. It will assist organizations and partnerships in recruiting, hiring and training domestic workers. Working in alignment with the workforce strategies and labour initiatives, the goals of this program include:

- Adoption of labour resources, tools and processes by producers and processors
- Developing partnerships that attract, train and support people to work in agriculture, seafood and food processing
- Piloting of new or innovative labour resources, tools, and/or processes for agriculture, seafood and food processing

Program Objectives

Successful project proposals should contribute to the following program objectives:

- Adoption or establishment of new innovative training programs to recruit, train, and retain workers
- Increased participation of individuals facing barriers to employment and/or underrepresented populations within the agriculture workforce¹
- Improved awareness, applicability and outcomes of applied skills development and training programs and/or curriculum for the food and agriculture sector
- Increased awareness of opportunities and pathways for entry into food and agriculture
- Improved employer/farm manager management capacity for recruitment, retention and workplace improvements

¹ For example, youth, new immigrants, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, individuals exiting the criminal justice system or other populations facing barriers to employment.



APPROACH

Program Structure

The RRIIST program is designed to support projects that address labor market needs in the agriculture and food sectors. Applicants are strongly encouraged to employ a collaborative approach to their projects.

Projects must have a clear implementation plan and be time-bound, with an initial project duration of up to 12-months. Project proposals should demonstrate sustainability and outline how they will achieve their objectives and deliverables without relying on future funding.

Multi-disciplinary collaborations are strongly encouraged, and all activities must be conducted within the province of BC. Each partner's relevant role should be clearly described in the application.

This program is open to Industry Associations, or collaborations of Producers and/or Processors in BC's agriculture, seafood, and food industry (see eligibility criteria).

Funding is not intended for research projects. Projects evaluating or researching the labour force / market will not be considered.

Funding Structure

Funding is available to industry to support activities in the following areas:

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Skilled Workforce Development Models

Applicants can apply for up to 70% of eligible project costs. The maximum project funding amount is \$250,000.

What does the maximum funding limit mean?

This is the maximum amount of funding you may receive through the program. The maximum amount of funding you can receive through RRIIST is \$250,000. If your total project costs are greater than \$250,000 you can still apply but will only be reimbursed a maximum of \$250,000.

What's a cost-shared ratio?

The cost-sharing ratio represents the proportion of eligible Total Project Costs contributed by both the applicant and the funder. In this case, 30% of the eligible costs would be paid by the applicant with the remaining 70% paid by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (via IAF).

The stacking of funds from other government programs is allowed up to 100% of project costs, provided other funds are not from other programs delivered by IAF.



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligible Applicants

To be considered eligible for this program, an applicant must be based in the province of British Columbia, and must be one of the following:

- Agriculture, food and/or seafood industry organizations
- Indigenous groups, organizations, and communities engaged in the agriculture, seafood and/or food industry
- Local governments engaged in the agriculture, seafood and/or food industry
- A partnership of producers, processors, non-profit organizations, industry associations, employer organizations, and/or Indigenous groups, organizations, or communities

Please note:

- Only organizations/communities are eligible to receive funding. Individual producers or processors are not eligible to apply individually, however two or more producers/processors may apply in partnership (there must be a lead applicant who applies on their behalf).
- All applicants must be legal entities that are able to enter into a contractual agreement for the transfer of program funds.
- Academic institutions are not eligible applicants but may support or participate in a project that is lead by an eligible applicant.

Eligible Activities and Expenditures

The following activities and costs are eligible within each RRIIST activity area. However, other activities and costs aligned with the program goals and objectives may be considered.

- Develop and lead new or innovative approaches to raise awareness of and promote in-demand food and agriculture careers, job opportunities, and associated skills and training programs amongst youth and adults
- Development, delivery and/or adoption of tools, resources, communications strategies, or technologies that facilitate worker recruitment, retention and/or coordination of seasonal workers
- Develop, pilot, and/or delivery of skills and training programs and delivery models that address industry identified gaps, employer, and/or worker needs, and are directly tied to current or potential job opportunities or to advancement in the sector
- Develop and/or deliver employer or management education and training activities to support innovative approaches and best practices in recruitment, retention, human resource development, and/or workplace improvements
- Create partnerships between businesses, industry associations and/or agencies that support employment for populations facing barriers to employment and/or advance equity, diversity and inclusion within the agriculture and food workforce (e.g. youth, new immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, people exiting the criminal justice system, etc.) ²
- Pilot initiatives that reduce an identified barrier to participation in the workforce and/or promote retention (e.g. transportation, translation, childcare, flexible scheduling, etc.)
- Industry led initiatives to develop and pilot new or innovative approaches and/or adoption of practices that address identified labour market challenges, improve labour efficiencies, address skills shortages, promote best practices in human resource development, and/or other workplace improvements

² Must demonstrate appropriate supports and resources in place for the population or community being employed.

Ineligible Participants, Activities and Expenditures

The following participants, activities and expenses are not eligible to be funded under RRIIST. This list is not exhaustive and is meant to be used as a guideline.

Ineligible Participants

- Individual producers or processors (may apply as lead as part of a partnership)
- Academic institutions (may be part of a partnership in a project led by an eligible applicant)
- Non-agricultural or food individuals or groups

Ineligible Activities and Expenditures

- Activities not directly related to domestic agricultural and food workforce development (including Temporary Foreign Workers - TFWs)
- Projects targeting recruitment or retention of temporary foreign workers
- In-kind expenses or costs
- GST and other taxes/credits reimbursed to applicant
- Any costs incurred prior to project approval (retroactive costs)
- Requests for funding that are not project-based, and which are dependent upon future funding. Individual projects must have defined start and finish dates, and not be part of an applicant's day-to-day operations (i.e., employee wages)
- All costs associated with employee housing, relocation or any other employer benefits/wages
- Benefit to only one employer; Assistance to a single employer may only be considered in situations where 1) the applicant represents a majority of a sector; and 2) any resulting competitive advantage experienced by the employer is incidental to broader benefit gained by the labour market
- Capital, equipment or operational expenses
- Travel costs that are not related to implementing the project or presenting results
- Duplicate and/or replace programs or services already provided in BC
- Duplicate projects, information already available in BC
- Assist business/industry with the launch of new products or product development
- Activities that address union-management collective bargaining issue(s)



PROJECT INFORMATION

Applicants to the Recruitment, Retention, and Innovative Skills Training (RRIST) Program can submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) through the [IAF Client Portal](#) starting on December 4, 2024. EOIs will be accepted until December 23, 2024, at 4 PM PT. Following EOI review, only those with successful EOIs will be invited to apply. See Review and Adjudication below for more information.

Important Dates

December 4, 2024	Expressions of Interest open
December 23, 2024	Expressions of Interest close
January 2025	IAF will start sending invitations to apply
Upon Approval	Project start
Up to 12-months post-approval	Project end
February 28, 2026	All projects complete

Application Process

Step 1: Expression of Interest (EOI)

The purpose of the Expression of Interest (EOI) is to determine the eligibility of your organization for funding and the eligibility of the project concept.

Expressions of Interest are submitted through the [IAF Client Portal](#). The process will generally consist of:

Create an Account & Organization Registration

If you've applied for IAF-delivered funding in the past year (since January 2023) you already have an account and you're all set! Please ensure your contact details and organization information is up to date.

If you don't have an account, don't wait to start this process – it can take up to two business days to validate your organization!

Creating an account and registering your organization is simple:

1. Create a personal profile (name and email)
2. Provide organization information, including:
 - Name
 - Contact details
 - Type of organization
 - BC ID / CRA numbers, or a file number provided and recognized by the provincial government for organizations where BC ID or CRA numbers are not applicable
 - Primary contact (if this isn't you)
 - And more

Apply for EOI: Recruitment, Retention, and Innovative Skills Training Program

Starting on December 4, 2024, select *Recruitment, Retention, and Innovative Skills Training (RRIST) Program* from the **Funding Opportunities** section of the [IAF Client Portal](#) and provide:

- Applicant type (examples: Producer, Local Government, Indigenous Community, etc.)
- Project name
- Proposed start and end dates
- Project summary
- Project goals and objectives
- Project benefits
- Project costs and budget
- And more

IAF staff are available to answer questions regarding eligible activities, costs and/or the EOI process. IAF may also contact applicants for additional information or clarification to assess their EOI. Applicants can contact rrist@iafbc.ca with any questions about the program or to receive support in developing their EOI.

Applicants are encouraged to include only activities they are confident will be completed on time and within budget limits. Applicants may attach any relevant supporting document to their Expression of Interest submission. These documents can be uploaded through the [IAF Client Portal](#) as attachments.

Step 2: Apply to RRIST Program for Project Funding

Select applicants will be invited to submit a full application. The purpose of the full application is to solicit all information required for funding decision.

Complete the new 'Full Application' section on the EOI to provide:

- Project start & end dates
- Detailed project description, need/issue and project objectives
- Description of key activities/outcomes, who will undertake work and timeline
- Intended benefits and impact
- Partnerships and communications plan
- Funding request and detailed project budget
- And more

Applicants may provide supplementary materials in support of their application (e.g. letters of support, CV's, quotes). These documents can be uploaded through the IAF Client Portal as attachments to the application.

IAF staff are available to answer any program questions or assist with technical difficulties throughout the application process. Applicants can contact rrist@iafbc.ca with questions or to receive support in developing their application.

IMPORTANT: Applications submitted to the wrong program or after the due date will not be reviewed. Remember to click "save and close" and "submit".

Review and Adjudication

Expression of Interest Review

All EOIs submitted through the IAF Client Portal will be reviewed by the IAF Team. This review entails:

- Organization/applicant eligibility check
- Initial review of application completeness
- Confirmation of alignment with program eligibility
- Project/budget eligibility check
- Evaluation against the RRIST Evaluation Criteria (see **Appendix 1**)

EOIs will be reviewed by IAF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and successful EOIs will be invited to submit a full application.

IAF will review EOIs on an ongoing basis and anticipates notifying applicants of decision beginning in January 2025. IAF will act in a timely manner to provide EOI decisions and expects all decisions within 8 weeks of submission.

Only those EOIs that meet the evaluation criteria threshold will be invited to complete a full application. Applicants will be notified by email of Expression of Interest results via the [IAF Client Portal](#).

EOIs that are not successful will not be brought forward for any future application intakes. Should another intake occur, applicants will need to re-apply for future consideration. All adjudication decisions are final.

Should an invitation to apply be extended, applicants will have 30 days to complete the full application.

Application Review

All full applications submitted through the IAF Client Portal will be screened by the IAF Team. This review entails:

- Organization/applicant eligibility check
- Initial review of application completeness
- Detailed project/budget eligibility check
- Confirmation of alignment with program eligibility
- Evaluation against the RRIST Evaluation Criteria (see **Appendix 1**)

The IAF Team may work in consultation with funding partners to confirm the need for additional review.

Retroactive approval of costs incurred prior to project approval will not be considered.



NOTIFICATIONS AND OBLIGATIONS

Funding Notifications and Contracts

If the project is approved, IAF will inform the applicant of the details of the decision and any associated terms and conditions. The applicant then enters into an agreement with IAF which outlines the obligations of each party.

Funding is application and project-specific and must be used for the approved project and related expenses. Funds are non-transferable. Payment of the program funding may only be made to the lead organization (Project Proponent) as outlined in the contribution agreement. All funding payments will be issued via EFT to recipient organization.

Project activities requiring financial resources cannot commence until the contribution agreement has been signed by both the applicant and IAF. All project activities and expenditures must be approved prior to commencing – retroactive costs will not be considered.

Projects may begin on or after a notice of approved project funding. All projects must be completed within 12-months of starting and all projects approved through the program must complete by February 28, 2026. If the project is not approved, the applicant will receive a written response from IAF.

Changes to Contracted Projects

If you are not able to complete your project according to the approved workplan, please inform the IAF Team as soon as possible via the [IAF Client Portal](#).

Reporting Requirements

Successful applicants must complete one or more activity and financial reports to receive payment from the program. These report(s) must be filled out and submitted to IAF to be considered for funding reimbursement. It is important that reports are submitted on time and with all the required information. Please retain all invoices and receipts, you may be asked to submit some or all receipts/invoices following a review of your report(s) by the IAF Team. **Expenses will be reimbursed based on the approved project budget and/or audited receipts. All reporting will be completed via the [IAF Client Portal](#).**

Funding Acknowledgements

This program is funded by the Government of Canada and Province of BC, therefore; acknowledgment of funding is required when publicly communicating about a project and/or funding. To ensure appropriate acknowledgments, all communications and marketing materials, including public announcements or social media posts, must be pre-approved by the IAF Communications Team. Materials can be submitted via the [IAF Client Portal](#).

Appendix 1: RRIST Evaluation Criteria

EOI and applications to RRIST will be evaluated based on the following criteria.

Criteria	Considerations for Evaluation
Program Alignment	Does the project align with the program goals and objectives?
Applicant Eligibility	Is the applicant eligible to apply for funding?
Project Eligibility	Are all project activities and expenses eligible for funding?
Project Plan	Does the application clearly describe the domestic labour/workforce challenge and how it will address it? Are the project objectives realistic within the project's timeline and budget?
Scope of Benefits	What is the expected scope and reach of the benefits for this project? Will the results of the project be shared with the sector/industry at large?
Sustainability of Benefits	Are project benefits sustainable and will they extend beyond project funding?
Key Performance Indicators	How will the project capture and report on performance measures?
Applicant Resources/Capacity	Does the applicant have sufficient human resources (internal, partners, consultant) to undertake the project?

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