



ROCKY MOUNTAINEER®

EXPLORING INTERNSHIP FUNDING FOR ROCKY MOUNTAINEER

Research Proposal

Prepared for

Jobina Tsang

Prepared by

Paul Butland

pbutland@rockymountaineer.com

October 25, 2024

Table of Contents

Research Summary..... 2

Introduction 2

Project Description 2

Research Design and Methodology 2

 Literature Review 2

 Research Questions or Hypotheses 3

 Methodology..... 3

 Data Collection and Analysis..... 3

 Expected Results and Contributions 3

Implications and Contributions to Knowledge..... 3

Timetable 6

Conclusion 6

References..... 7

Summary

The tourism and hospitality industry faces challenges in recruiting skilled labour, particularly for seasonal positions. This research aims to explore the integration of post-secondary students through co-op and internship programs as a solution to workforce shortages. Specifically, the study will focus on Rocky Mountaineer, a luxury train service in Canada, and investigate available government grants to support student internship initiatives. By identifying and accessing relevant funding opportunities, this research seeks to enhance Rocky Mountaineer's workforce while providing valuable experiential learning opportunities for students.

Introduction

The tourism and hospitality sector are a vital component of the Canadian economy, significantly contributing to employment and GDP. However, the industry frequently struggles with skilled labour shortages, particularly in seasonal roles that require specialized training and expertise. To address this challenge, organizations like Rocky Mountaineer are exploring innovative strategies to attract and retain talent, including the integration of post-secondary students through internship programs.

Despite the potential benefits of engaging students in the workforce, many companies, including Rocky Mountaineer, may not be fully aware of the government grants and funding opportunities available to support such initiatives. This research aims to bridge that gap by providing a comprehensive overview of the grants and subsidies offered by the Canadian government for student internship programs in the tourism sector.

Project Description

This research proposal aims to identify federal, provincial, and territorial government grants that specifically support Rocky Mountaineer in hiring post-secondary students. The research will assess the eligibility requirements for Rocky Mountaineer to qualify for these funding opportunities. Additionally, the proposal will investigate the application processes for various grants to outline a streamlined approach for the company. Finally, the research will analyze the availability of these grants throughout the year and determine whether Rocky Mountaineer meets the necessary criteria. The goal of this proposal is to provide actionable recommendations that will enable Rocky Mountaineer to effectively leverage these funding opportunities.

Literature Review

The literature review will examine existing research on student employment, government funding programs, and best practices in the tourism sector. By synthesizing information from academic journals, industry reports, and case studies, the review will highlight the current state of knowledge, identify research gaps, and suggest potential contributions to the field. This review will serve as the foundation for formulating key research questions and hypotheses.

Research Questions or Hypotheses:

1. What are the available government funding opportunities for student internships?

This proposal aims to investigate funding opportunities for student employment at Rocky Mountaineer. The research will involve a thorough review of government websites, academic journals, and industry reports to identify options utilizing government grants for student hiring to extract best practices and key strategies.

Methodology:

The research will utilize a qualitative approach to gather insights from key stakeholders, including Rocky Mountaineer representatives, student employment experts, and industry professionals. Data collection methods will include interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. The sample selection will involve representatives from organizations with successful student employment initiatives. Data analysis will involve thematic coding and pattern recognition to identify common themes and best practices.

Data collection and analysis:

Sources of data will include interviews, focus groups, organizational documents, and relevant reports. Data collection will be conducted using structured interview guides and data analysis software. The validity and reliability of the data will be ensured through triangulation of sources and member checking. Analytical techniques such as thematic analysis and content analysis will be employed to derive meaningful insights.

Expected results and contributions:

The research is expected to provide Rocky Mountaineer with a comprehensive overview of funding opportunities for student employment, best practices in utilizing government grants, and successful strategies for implementing co-op and internship programs. The findings will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on student employment initiatives in the tourism sector and offer practical recommendations for enhancing Rocky Mountaineer's student hiring programs.

Implications and Contributions to Knowledge

Implications and contributions to knowledge by recommending that Rocky Mountaineer explore additional funding sources from the Government of Canada, specifically The Propel Student Work Placement Program and the Mitacs Program, this research proposal aims to contribute significantly to the organization's student employment initiatives. The implications of leveraging these funding opportunities include:

1. **Enhanced Student Employment Programs:** Accessing funding from The Propel Student Work Placement Program and the Mitacs Program can enable Rocky Mountaineer to enhance its student employment programs by offering more diverse and meaningful opportunities to postsecondary students. This can lead to increased talent acquisition and retention within the organization.
2. **Industry Best Practices:** Exploring these government funding options will allow Rocky Mountaineer to learn from industry the best practices in utilizing such programs for student hiring. By understanding how other organizations in the tourism sector have successfully

leveraged these funding sources, Rocky Mountaineer can adopt similar strategies and improve its own student employment initiatives.

3. **Research and Innovation:** The Mitacs Program focuses on supporting research and innovation through collaborations between academia and industry. By engaging in this program, Rocky Mountaineer can foster partnerships with academic institutions, conduct research projects, and drive innovation within the organization. This can lead to the development of new products, services, or processes that benefit both the company and the broader tourism industry.
4. **Long-Term Sustainability:** By diversifying its funding sources for student employment, Rocky Mountaineer can ensure the long-term sustainability of its programs. Government-funded initiatives like The Propel Student Work Placement Program and the Mitacs Program provide financial support that can help offset the costs of hiring students, making it more feasible for the organization to continue offering valuable work experience to post-secondary students.

The Propel Student Work Placement Program offers significant benefits to businesses like Rocky Mountaineer that hire post-secondary students. If Rocky Mountaineer qualifies, they can receive substantial wage subsidies for hiring eligible students:

- 50% of total gross wages up to \$5,000 for regular placements.
- 70% of total gross wages up to \$7,000 for under-represented students, including women in STEM, Indigenous students, persons with disabilities, visible minorities, newcomers, and first-year students.

To utilize this program, Rocky Mountaineer must meet the following requirements:

- Be a registered Canadian business, startup, or non-profit related to the tourism and hospitality sector.
- Demonstrate an increase in the number of paid work-integrated learning students hired compared to their baseline year.
- Employ students who are enrolled at a recognized post-secondary institution, regardless of their discipline.

Funding Limits:

There is no limit to the funding available for companies participating in the Propel Program. If Rocky Mountaineer has the capacity to hire multiple students, they can apply for the wage subsidy for each eligible student they employ, if all eligibility criteria are met.

Student Eligibility Criteria:

To qualify for the Propel wage subsidy, students must meet the following criteria:

- Be enrolled in a post-secondary program that includes a work-integrated learning component, such as internships, co-op placements, practicums, field placements, or applied projects. Students can come from any field of study (e.g., Finance, Human Resources, or Business Administration) if their employment is within the tourism industry.
- Be a domestic student, meaning they are either a permanent resident or a Canadian citizen. **Please note that international students are not eligible for this program.**

Funding Period and Duration:

The Propel Program is funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and is now in its third year of operation. This funding is allocated for the current fiscal year, which ends on March 31, 2025. The availability of funding for the next fiscal year will be confirmed around January 2025.

The Mitacs Accelerate Program connects businesses with graduate students and postdoctoral fellows for research internships. Here are the key funding details:

- Mitacs contributes \$7,500 per internship unit.
- The partner organization (employer) is required to match this with \$7,500 per internship unit.
- The total funding for each 4–6-month internship unit comes to \$15,000

Employers have some flexibility in structuring the funding:

- Standard Award: \$10,000 or \$15,000 per intern, with Mitacs matching the employer contribution.
- Cluster Funding: \$13,333 per intern, available for projects with three or more unique interns and a minimum of six internship units. Mitacs offers a higher match of 1:1.2 in this case.

Additional Considerations:

- The full amount of the Mitacs contribution (\$7,500 or more) is allocated towards the intern's stipend.
- For longer projects, the Mitacs Accelerate Fellowship allows for extended collaborations, potentially increasing the total funding amount.
- The maximum funding for one placement through the Accelerate Program can reach up to \$90,000 for a 24-month term.

While Mitacs provides substantial co-funding, the program emphasizes industry co-investment. Consequently, the grant size may not cover all project costs, and employers should be prepared to contribute their share.

Based on available information, there are no specific limits on the number of students employers can accept each year through the Propel or Accelerate programs. Here are some relevant details:

Mitacs Accelerate Program: There does not appear to be a strict limit on the number of students an employer can accept each year. However, there are guidelines for internship durations based on the type of student:

- College students can undertake up to 3 four-to-six-month internships.
- Master's students can complete up to 6 four-to-six-month internships.
- PhD students can participate in up to 12 four-to-six-month internships.
- Postdoctoral fellows can do up to 9 four-to-six-month internships.
- Undergraduates and recent graduates can complete up to 3 four-to-six-month internships.

Propel Program: For the Propel program, which focuses on tourism and hospitality, there is no specific mention of a limit on the number of students an employer can accept.

Key Points:

- Both programs enable employers to hire multiple students.

ROCKY MOUNTAINEER INTERNSHIP PROPOSAL

- The number of students seems flexible, depending on the employer's capacity and project needs.
- Employers must ensure they provide meaningful work experiences for each student hired.
- The Propel program imposes a "net new" requirement, meaning employers must increase their number of work-integrated learning placements compared to their baseline year to qualify for funding.

Mitacs provides opportunities for students and postdoctoral fellows from affiliated Canadian colleges and universities to engage in collaborative projects. Postdoctoral fellows are eligible if their PhD graduation date is within five years of the project start date, with exceptions for extenuating circumstances such as parental leave or military service. They must not have been employed full-time at the partner organization prior to applying.

There is not a funding limit for the business that Mitacs partners with. Individual students have limits to the number of internships units (IU's) that they can participate in which is determined by their academic level.

Recent graduates can apply if they completed their studies within two years before the project starts. Non-degree students may qualify, subject to their institution's discretion. It's important for these applicants to confirm support availability with their institutions.

Visiting students and researchers from abroad may also be eligible, depending on the requirements of the Canadian institution. Interns can be Canadian citizens, permanent residents, international students with valid visas, or international postdoctoral fellows with work permits, and must be at least 18 years old.

Eligible partner organizations include for-profit corporations, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, and hospitals in Canada. For-profit and not-for-profit organizations outside Canada can collaborate with Canadian partners. Interns may engage with international partners remotely or in person, following their institution's international travel policies.

The program encourages applications from all academic disciplines and projects must be completed within the approved timeline, although pauses and exceptions can be requested on a case-by-case basis.

The funding has an expiration date; approved projects must be completed according to the timeline specified in the application. Pauses and exceptions may be considered, but only on a case-by-case basis.

While no explicit annual limit is mentioned for either program, employers should consult with program administrators for specific guidance on the number of students they can accept. This may depend on factors such as available funding, project scope, and the employer's capacity to support multiple interns.

Overall, by exploring and potentially leveraging these government funding opportunities, Rocky Mountaineer can strengthen its commitment to student employment, innovation, and industry partnerships. The knowledge gained from engaging in these programs can not only benefit the organization directly but also contribute to the broader understanding of effective strategies for supporting student workforce development in the tourism sector.

Timetable

ACTIVITY	START DATE	END DATE
Extensive review of funding sources. Arrange proposal outline concerning research gathered	October 7, 2024	October 11, 2024
Examining government websites; gathering qualitative research for proposal	October 15, 2024	October 18, 2024
Information will be collected from other organizations in the tourism sector that successfully utilize government grants	October 21, 2024	October 22, 2024
Analyze case studies of organizations that have effectively used government funding for internships, identify key strategies and outcomes	October 23, 2024	October 24, 2024
Writing up of research	October 24, 2024	October 25, 2024

Conclusion

This research proposal aims to explore the potential of leveraging the Propel Student Work Placement Program and the Mitacs Accelerate Program to enhance student employment initiatives at Rocky Mountaineer. By identifying any existing limitations in the organization's internship program and proposing solutions to address funding needs, this research seeks to contribute to the sustainable growth and development of Rocky Mountaineer's workforce.

References

- Canada, E. a. S. D. (2023, March 9). *Student Work placement program*. Canada.ca. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/student-work-placement-program.html>
- Canada, E., and S. D. (2023, March 9). *Government of Canada*. Canada.ca. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/student-work-placement-program.html>
- Find funding programs for jobs, skill-building, and community-building projects*. (2024, October 16). Canada.ca. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/programs.html>
- Ministry of Jobs, E. D., and I. (2023, October 23). *Innovate BC Tech Co-op grants*. Province of British Columbia. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/funding-and-grants/bc-tech-co-op-grants-program>
- Mitacs. (2024, October 7). *Supercharge Your Core Business with Mitacs Acceleration Program*. <https://www.mitacs.ca/our-programs/accelerate-core-business/>
- Propel - students*. Tourism HR Canada. (2024, October 10). <https://tourismhr.ca/programs-and-services/propel-student-work-placement-program/propel-students/>
- Student Work Placement (co-op)*. ECO Canada Wage Support. (2024, September 23). <https://careerfunding.ca/student-work-placement-co-op/>
- Tru career and experiential learning*. Riipen. (n.d.). <https://app.riipen.com/companies/3VoJ1ZLD>
- Wage subsidies and internships for Canadian companies in 2024*. helloDarwin. (n.d.). <https://hellodarwin.com/business-aid/wage-subsidies>