

Getting Canadian Work Experience

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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1. Getting “Canadian Experience”

Introduction

When looking for work you may come across employers who ask for “Canadian Experience.” But how can you acquire Canadian experience if no one will give you a job in the first place?

This guide explores different methods of acquiring Canadian experience. The process can be positive because you may find opportunities to:

- get Canadian work experience
- build relationships and networks
- find mentors
- contribute to your new community
- explore careers and work environments

2. Volunteering

Introduction

- *Volunteering is often recognized as valuable work-related experience by employers*
- *It can provide you with references from local people or organizations*

Volunteer work is unpaid work, often with non-profit or charity organizations. It is an excellent way to gain Canadian experience.

Before beginning your search for volunteer positions you should think about your personal needs and how much time you might be able to offer.

Volunteer opportunities may vary from one hour to a full day each week, for one day only or long term.

Some organizations may require an interview, just like a regular job. Use the experience as an opportunity to develop your interviewing skills.

When volunteering, get to know the other staff members on your volunteer site and build relationships. Volunteer Co-ordinators may be able to offer you a letter of reference when you apply for paid work, or they may be aware of paid job opportunities.

Sometimes when an official job does become available within the organization, you may be considered a top candidate for the position.

Considering a Volunteer Role

When applying for volunteer opportunities you should look for work-related duties that will support your future career goals

The volunteer position does not have to be directly related to your career goal, but it can still be relevant.

For example you can look for volunteer positions that help you:

- Develop office or administrative skills
- Gain customer service experience by welcoming or serving people
- Show technical skills by contributing to a website

You will also enjoy your volunteer experience more if it is connected with something you are interested in.

Searching for Volunteer Positions

- *Every community has a need for volunteers, particularly non-profit organizations, charities, and the arts community*
- *Become familiar with your community, such as up-coming events and fundraisers*

Associations

If you have a particular career in mind a good place to start is with a professional association. They may have conferences and committees looking for volunteers. Use the following sources to search for national, provincial and local associations:

- **Associations Canada**
Available at VPL Central Branch, 060 A84
- **Finding Business & Trade Associations – Simon Fraser University Library**
<https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/research-assistance/subject/business/associations>
- **BC211**
<https://bc.211.ca/>
Information on local social service organizations, which often require volunteers

Volunteer Websites:

There are many websites that post volunteer opportunities. Try looking at the following:

- **Go Volunteer**
<https://govolunteer.ca/>
- **Volunteer BC**
<https://volunteerbc.bc.ca/>
- **Charity Village**
<https://charityvillage.com/app/volunteer-listings>
- **Alliance for Arts and Culture**
<https://www.allianceforarts.com/volunteer-calls/>
- **Craigslist**
<https://www.craigslist.org/about/sites/>
Most cities have a “Craigslist” website where anyone can post an advertisement for free. Check the volunteer listings below the “Community” heading. *Note: There is an element of risk because the ads are from anonymous people. However, interesting opportunities may be posted.*
- **City of Vancouver – Volunteering**
<https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/volunteering.aspx>

Other Tips

- Be clear with the organization about your availability and when you plan to end your volunteer experience, just like a regular job
- Attend social events for volunteers - it is a great way to make friends and build your social network
- Always remember to include your volunteer experience on your resume, and how this experience is relevant to the paying job you are applying for
- If you feel that an organization is taking advantage of you, there is no obligation to continue. It is still respectful to tell your volunteer co-ordinator of your departure plans
- Non-profit organizations often rely upon volunteers to survive. It is honourable to volunteer and always reflects well on your resume

3. Temp Agencies and Temporary Work

Introduction

- *Temporary work is a short term job or contract with an organization that has a position that must be filled immediately*

“Temp Agencies” or “Temporary Staffing Services” are companies that place you in a temporary work setting. There are various types of temporary jobs in industries such as construction, clerical and secretarial, and IT-related. Your temp agency receives a commission from the company. You do not pay for their services.

The jobs are usually short term. However, sometimes they can lead to permanent employment. Temporary employment also provides you with Canadian experience.

Finding an Agency

- **Association of Canadian Search, Employment and Staffing Services.**

<https://acsess.org/membership/member-directory/search>

A reputable source for finding temp agencies; you can select your location, and specify your interest.

- **Yellow Pages**

<https://www.yellowpages.ca/>

Search “Temporary Employment Agency” or “Temporary Staffing” and limit by city.

Some large temp agencies with a good reputation for their services include:

- **Adecco Staffing Agency** <https://www.adecco.ca/>
- **Hunt Personnel** <https://huntvancouver.ca/>
- **Manpower** <https://www.manpower.ca/>
- **TES The Employment Solution** <https://www.tes.net/>

What to Expect

A temp agency will often advertise jobs on their website. You apply by creating an online account and submitting your resume. A representative will then contact you and verify your resume. This person will often re-connect with you to make sure that your temp experience is going smoothly.

Other temp agencies may prefer you to contact their company by phone or in-person. They will then connect you with a representative who will match you with temporary jobs.

Most temp agencies provide a “Frequently Asked Questions” or “FAQ” section on their website regarding expectations, wages and benefits.

Note that a “recruiter” is different than a temp agency, because a recruiter works for you for a fee to find you a specific job.

Other Tips

- Be sure to verify the hourly wage in advance of accepting a job
- Temporary employment agencies cannot charge you help find work
- Confirm a contact person at your new job site and their address.
- When you arrive at a temporary job setting, consider the role as an opportunity to connect with potential long-term employment. Introduce yourself to your co-workers and represent yourself and your skills in a professional manner.

More information:

- **Employment Agencies, Employment Standards British Columbia**
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/licensing/licensing-employment-agencies>

4. Employment Programs and Internships

Introduction

There are a variety of employment programs and internship opportunities for skilled immigrants who need Canadian experience in their specific field

These programs are often a combination of study and practical experience. Some offer financial assistance, and may even cover tuition costs if Canadian certification is required.

Employment Programs

These programs are also known as “Bridging Programs,” because they act as a bridge leading into work. There is usually an application and placement process.

Bridging programs are especially helpful if you are in a “regulated” occupation that requires a Canadian license. They can speed up the process and help you prepare for examinations.

To determine if your career is regulated search this site:

- **Welcome BC**

<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Work-in-B-C/Getting-Certified-to-Work-in-B-C>

Information about Employment Programs can be found through the following sites:

- **WorkBC Employment Programs**

<https://www.workbc.ca/Employment-Services.aspx>

Find employment programs designed to help you obtain sustainable work. Types of training include: job readiness, industry and trades, entrepreneurship, and more.

- **Industry Training Authority BC (ITABC)**

<https://www.itabc.ca/>

The ITA provides immigrants with training opportunities and apprenticeships for over 100 trades in British Columbia from aerospace to horticulture. You may be eligible for tuition funding, along with career counseling and an introduction to employers. The programs are a combination of on-the-job training and classroom study.

- **Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants**

<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Work-in-B-C/Career-Paths-for-Skilled-Immigrants>

Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants connects immigrants to jobs in B.C. You can get help to get your credentials assessed, financial support for upgrading professional training, referrals to employers and mentors, and opportunities for Canadian work experience through work-study programs.

- **Immigrant Employment Council of British Columbia (IECB) Programs**

<https://iecbc.ca/our-work/programs/>

The IECBC offers a selection of programs that assist newcomers gain entrance into the local workforce.

Internships

Internships are on-the-job training offered by employers to provide you with practical experience. Often internships are offered to recent graduates of a degree or diploma program to gain experience in their fields. 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.*

Internships are posted on many job boards

- **Federal Internship for Newcomers**
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/new-immigrants/prepare-life-canada/prepare-work/federal-internship.html>
Provides access to mentorship and temporary work experience and training opportunities with Canadian federal, provincial and municipal organizations.
- **Student Employment – Government Co-op Placements & Internships**
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission/jobs/services/recruitment/students/coop-internship.html>
- **Skilled Newcomer Internships for the Bio-Economy, Bio-Talent Canada**
<https://www.biotalent.ca/programs/skilled-newcomer-internships-for-the-bio-economy/>
- **Indeed.com**
<https://ca.indeed.com/>
A search of "internship" in Vancouver will pull up a range of internships.

5. Part-time Work

Finding full-time work in your desired industry can be a full-time job in itself. You might consider taking a part-time job to acquire some Canadian experience and income while you are looking for more permanent employment.

Most job search sites provide an option to narrow your search to part-time work, through “Advanced” search selections.

Try searching the following:

- **Work BC – Advanced job search setting**
<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs/JobSeekers/AdvancedJobSearch.aspx>
Filter by “Job Type” – select Part Time
- **Indeed.com**
<https://ca.indeed.com/>
Search by “part time”

As well, there are some roles in Canada that do not require a work permit. A creative newcomer may be able to build “Canadian experience” by working in these jobs.

Such jobs are listed here:

- **Jobs that Do Not Require a Work Permit in Canada, Immigration.ca**
<https://www.immigration.ca/jobs-that-do-not-require-a-work-permit-in-canada/>

6. Additional Resources

Still looking for more information? Try these following resources:

- **How to Find a Job in Canada** / Efim Cheinis and Dale Sproule. 2008. Central Library, Level 4. 650.142 C51h
- **No Canadian Experience, Eh? : A Career Success Guide for New Immigrants** / Daisy Wright. 2011. Central Library, Level 4. 650.142 W94n1
- **BC Job Search Guide** / Christian Saint Cyr. 2013. Central Library, Level 4. 650.142 S13t.
Includes a chapter dedicated to British Columbia Recruiters for temp agencies and paid recruiters.
- **NewToBC Settlement Information for Newcomers**
<https://newtobc.ca/settlement-information-for-newcomers/>
- **Canadian Immigrant Magazine**
<https://canadianimmigrant.ca>
This free monthly magazine features articles, advice, resources and websites tailored for new immigrants.

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff on Level 4, 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 <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/>.