

Mitacs Science Policy Fellowship Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. WHAT ARE THE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES FOR THE BC PUBLIC SERVICE?

- To advance science and innovation in policy development for the BC Government;
- To attract and promote retention of academic researchers with unique scientific expertise and training.

2. WHAT IS MITACS?

- Mitacs is a national non-profit research and training organization that works with universities, private companies, and public sector organizations.
- Its purpose is to build research partnerships that support innovation across all academic disciplines and industry sectors in Canada.
- The *Science Policy Fellowships (SPF)* sees accomplished PhD holders receive hands on policy-training while contributing their unique scientific expertise to government policy making in host ministry offices.
- The SPF program is open to all PhD holders, including faculty affiliated with a Canadian university.

3. WHAT IS THE COSTING MODEL FOR THE SCIENCE POLICY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM?

- Salary and benefits are the responsibility of the hosting ministry.
- The salary is \$73, 768.80 plus 6% at the rate of pay of regular earnings in lieu of vacation and \$0.74 per hour in lieu of health and welfare benefits.
- Up to 15 days of professional development, skill-building and networking is mandatory for every fellow during their fellowship. The training costs will be covered corporately.

4. WHAT ARE THE FELLOWSHIP TIMELINES?

- Fellowships are 12-month auxiliary work terms, beginning the first week of September following the Labour Day statutory holiday.
- Mitacs Science Policy Fellows abide by the Terms and Conditions of the BCGEU Collective Agreement.

THE FELLOWS

1. WHAT LEVEL OF EXPERTISE DO SCIENCE POLICY FELLOWS BRING?

- Fellows bring advanced expertise of a PhD-level researcher.

2. IS THE RESEARCH FELLOW AN EMPLOYEE?

- Yes. The research fellow is hired as an auxiliary employee, with the same responsibilities and rights as other auxiliary employees.

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- Like other employees, the research fellow must swear the Oath of Employment and abide by the Standards of Conduct.

3. WHAT IF I DON'T GET THE PERFECT FIT?

a. E.g. can we switch with another ministry?

- Kind of. Any host office that has a fellow whose expertise may be applicable to another project should communicate first with Mitacs at policyFellowship@mitacs.ca. Mitacs will assess whether the candidate(s) are suitable and if the host office in question requires additional profiles.

b. Can we match new Fellows if none of their first matches are a fit? Is there always going to be a second round of matching?

- Yes. Mitacs can provide additional candidates for a project, but if a successful match is not found, the best course of action is the project forward in a future competition.

c. Can we match new Fellows to in-progress projects if the current fellow leaves?

- No. Mitacs does not place Fellows' off-cycle. In accordance with Mitacs guidelines, Fellowships must be 12-months and commence in September.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. WHAT IS THE HOST'S ROLE?

The program focuses on the creation of a science policy cohort across government; this will be represented by employees in senior policy roles (hosts), and the Mitacs Fellows.

Application phase

- Interview top-ranked candidates from the shortlist provided by Mitacs.
- Be open to outside-the-box candidates; maybe a physicist or a mathematician can tackle your data project.
- Identify more than one candidate from the shortlist as a match; certain candidates may also be top-ranked candidates for another project - having three or more ranked candidates on your short-list is preferable.
- Administer and finalize the employment agreement; confirm supervisor; prepare the offer letter. - Note: Relocation costs are not covered by Mitacs or the BCPS.

Onboarding phase

- Take steps to supervise as mentor/coach.
- Ensure a smooth onboarding process - e.g. appropriate office space, equipment, facilitate executive and team introductions and so on.

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- Discuss any changes on the project since the initial interview.
- Accommodate Fellows' participation in the training activities such as Mitacs led professional development activities and BCPS led training activities and networking sessions.

Fellowship Project

- Hosts are expected to act as the senior lead and primary contact for Fellows in order that they can complete their project successfully.
- Provide a project overview; communicating the project outcomes, and impacts at the ministry and provincial level.
- Discuss research practices and parameters for information-sharing and privacy requirements for the BCPS.
- Introduce when and what tools, templates, resources are used in the BCPS for approvals required from decision makers (briefing note formats, concept papers, TB submissions etc. Ministry templates, data analysis platforms etc.).
- Identify key stakeholders early on in the project.

2. WHAT IS THE PSA'S ROLE?

- To be a valuable, objective resource for both the host ministries as well as the Mitacs fellows, ensuring a successful and fruitful placement and experience on both sides.
- To support the Fellows throughout the duration of their Fellowship experience by facilitating various opportunities, fostering an innovative environment to grow and work in the BC Public Service.

3. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SCIENCE POLICY FELLOW?

- Working in partnership with their Hosts, take leadership for completing deliverables identified for the Ministry project. **The Fellowship Impact Plan** may be one resource which can be used to gain agreement on scope and project deliverables.
- Fellows are considered **full-time** auxiliary employees of their host offices. Academic work is to be completed on their own time unless directly contributing to the project objectives and deliverables.
- As a requirement of their Mitacs Fellowship, they are expected to participate in all program activities facilitated by Mitacs.

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4. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MITACS?

- Mitacs administers the call and promotion of ministry projects to prospective academic researchers. They provide necessary program application information and requirements to prospective candidates.
- Mitacs adjudicates the ministry short-list of prospective PhD candidates and leads the recruiting and matching process until candidates can be confirmed to a host office project.
- In addition to the applicant's distinctions, the adjudication process also seeks individuals who demonstrate a **combination of leadership attributes, communication skills** and a commitment to the Fellowship's professional development opportunities and objectives.
- Mitacs facilitates accompanying training and networking activities, often times in partnership with resources from UVIC.
- Mitacs administers and monitors the Fellowship Impact Plan. This is a document that is used to frame the scope of the project and outline its objectives. This allows the fellow to consider the impact of their project, defining the problem they are solving as well as to support the Fellows' final presentation to their cohort and all the host ministries.

WORKING WITH YOUR RESEARCH FELLOW

1. WHAT TYPES OF AGREEMENTS NEED TO BE IN PLACE?

- It is strongly recommended Hosts and their Fellows meet and work with your Ministry Information Security Officer to understand information security policies and practices in relation to the their project.

2. CAN RESEARCH FELLOWS PUBLISH IN PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS IN THE COURSE OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT?

- It is important that Fellows have the freedom to publish in peer-reviewed journals during the 12-month period of employment, should they wish to do so.
- However, Hosts are encouraged to have proactive conversations about expectations regarding proprietary data. They also should discuss whether work on the journal article is an appropriate use of work time given the individual project as well as the subject of the journal article.