Food Producer Wage Subsidy and Training Support Program Program Guide

What is the Food Producer Wage Subsidy and Training Support Program?

The Food Producer Wage Subsidy and Training Support (Program) will provide support to primary food producers in the Basin that are maintaining or increasing food production to meet the continued increase in demand for foods that are locally produced. The Program will provide flexibility to primary food producers to hire and/or train residents of the Basin as needed throughout peak seasons (e.g. growing and harvesting).

This program is administered by College of the Rockies. For more information, call 250.420.8530 (direct) or 1.877.489.2687 (toll free) ext. 3522 or email fpwagesubsidy@ourtrust.org.

Who can apply?

Eligible applicants (Employer(s)) include primary food producers in the Columbia Basin Trust region (ourtrust.org/map), that grow grains, vegetables, fruit or forage, produce honey, or raise livestock for meat, dairy, or eggs.

When is the application deadline?

The Program opens January 14, 2027 at 1:00 p.m. PT / 2:00 p.m. MT. Applications will be reviewed and accepted on an ongoing basis until all funding for the Program has been committed.

What types of costs are eligible?

The maximum amount of Trust funding for any one food producer is $25,000.

The following costs are eligible:

Wage Subsidy:
Eligible Employers may apply for a wage subsidy of up to 75% of an employee's hourly wage up to a maximum of $17.00 per hour. The maximum total wage subsidy a producer can apply for is $21,000.

Short-term Occupational Skills Training
Eligible Employers may apply for up to 100% of eligible short-term-occupational skills training for their employees to a maximum of $4,000 to support training that provides job-specific skills or certifications required for employment.

Training programs are typically completed in less than two weeks and emphasize practical, hands-on training aligned with current industry needs and standards. Training could include but is not limited to pesticide applicator courses, forklift operator training, first aid and WHMIS.

An Eligible Employer does not need to apply for a wage subsidy to be eligible for short-term occupational skills training.

Eligible short-term occupational skills training costs may include:

- tuition and registration fees;

- mandatory course materials; and
- reasonable and necessary travel and accommodation costs only when the training program is not offered online or locally.

What types of costs are not eligible?

Wage subsidy funding will **NOT** be considered for:

- salary employees and piece work; and
- tasks that would provide personal service to the employer such as domestic services, childcare or construction work on the owner's non-farm property.

Short-term occupational skills training funding will **NOT** be considered for:

- training that takes place outside of the Columbia Basin Trust region (ourtrust.org/map) unless the training program is not offered online or in the Basin; and
- living expenses and/or meal allowances while attending training.

What are the eligibility requirements?

Job Criteria

Funding will be considered for employment positions that:

- are temporary, part-time, or full-time;
- are paid hourly; and
- offer an hourly wage that reflects the market wage rate for the position(s).

The intent of the Program is to support local food production and to develop employee skills through a combination of hands-on work and relevant training. Employers must develop and implement a suitable training plan for employees hired under this Program.

Employer Criteria

To be eligible for the Program, the business or organization must:

- be located in the Columbia Basin Trust Region (ourtrust.org/map);
- derive the majority of its income from food sales;
- intend to maintain or increase food production compared to the previous year;
- intend to maintain or increase employment levels compared to the previous year;
- have been in operation for a minimum of two years;
- not use funding from the Program to hire or train a relative unless the relative is supervised by someone other than the owner(s);
- provide a T2042 Statement of Farming Activities or a corporation income statement for 2025 (required);
- be a taxable entity with a GST and business number;
- not be receiving funding for the same position from another wage subsidy program;
- adhere to all applicable labour laws;
- pay mandatory employment-related costs (MERCs), including Employment Insurance, Canada Pension Plan, and WorkSafeBC and a minimum of four per cent vacation pay (or offer vacation days) in addition to the market wage rate, and may choose to offer extended benefits (such as medical, dental, etc) to the employee; and
- have a WorkSafeBC account in good standing by the time the employee(s) start work.

If you currently have WorkSafeBC coverage, you must provide a clearance letter with your application (get the form here).

If you don't have WorkSafeBC coverage, you must obtain coverage and send us proof of it before the employee starts work (register here).

Employee Criteria
The employee must be:

- age 16 or older before the employment start date;
- legally entitled to work in Canada;
- residing in the Columbia Basin Trust region when the employment starts; and
- hired as an employee, not a contractor.

Employers approved for funding that have questions about employee eligibility or would like to request an exception to employ non-Basin residents can contact program staff for more information.

Frequently asked questions

1. How many people can Employers hire and/or train through the program?

The Program is flexible.

2. When can the employees work?

The wage subsidy can be used to support typical peak-season operations (i.e., February 1, 2027 – October 31, 2027, inclusive). In situations where the Employer's operations deviate from the typical peak/off peak model (i.e. more employees during the off season and fewer or none during the field season), the subsidy term may be extended to December 31, 2027.

3. Does the Program help me find employees?

No, Employers must recruit and hire employees.

4. What happens if Employers hire an employee who doesn't meet the eligibility criteria?

It is the Employer's responsibility to ensure that the employee(s) hired meets the eligibility criteria listed herein. If an Employer hires an ineligible employee, program staff will notify the Employer and wages expended for the ineligible employee will not be reimbursed.

When will the organization hear the results?

The review process usually takes up to ten business days. College of the Rockies will contact you by email, at the address on your application form, to let you know if your project has been approved for funding.

Prior to approving any projects, College of the Rockies staff may contact you during the evaluation phase to request additional information.

Note:

- College of the Rockies, Columbia Basin Trust and their agents shall not be obligated in any manner to any applicant whatsoever.
- College of the Rockies and Columbia Basin Trust reserve the right to fund all or none of any application submitted.
- If your application is successful, you must enter into a contribution agreement with the College of the Rockies and commit to offering the employment opportunities being subsidized. If you are not able to hire and will therefore not be using the subsidy, program staff must be contacted immediately so that the funds can be allocated to another applicant.

Financial claims, payments and monitoring

If your application is successful, you will be able to submit claims for reimbursement of wages and training as early as four weeks following your employee(s)' start date and every four weeks thereafter. It is a **mandatory requirement** of the program that you submit at least one claim by August 6, 2027 and provide confirmation that you intend to use the total amount of your approved wage subsidy and/or training support by October 31, 2027 (unless an extension has been issued). If you do not submit an initial claim and confirmation by these dates your wage subsidy and/or training support agreement will be terminated.

Note:

- College of the Rockies will not issue advance payments.
- College of the Rockies will monitor you through a site visit, virtual meeting, or phone call.
- Financial reimbursements will be based on satisfactory reporting and claims requirements.
- You must submit your final claim by November 30, 2027 (unless an extension had been issued).

If your application is successful, we will provide you with further details on claims, payment and reporting processes.

What else to keep in mind?

- College of the Rockies assess the applications as they come in and continues until all funding for the Program has been committed. Don't wait to apply!
- Be clear and succinct and use point form where appropriate in the application process.
- Complete the application in full; incomplete applications will not be processed.
- Don't forget to upload an electronic copy of your Statement of Farming Activities (T2042) or corporation income statement for 2025 and WorkSafeBC Compliance Letter (unless not yet covered by WorkSafeBC).
- Even if an application meets eligibility criteria, it may not be selected for funding as the Program often receives requests for more funding than what is available. College of the Rockies retains the right to determine project eligibility and the amount of funding allocated to each project; this may be all or part of what was requested.

Ready to apply?

1. Complete the online application form at online application form.

If your application requires clarification or further information, College of the Rockies will not consider it “received” until you have provided all the required information.

You will receive an email confirming receipt of your application from program staff**.**

If you prefer to submit a paper application, or if you have questions about the application process, please contact College of the Rockies staff by email at fpwagesubsidy@ourtrust.org or call 250.420.8530 (direct) or 1.877.489.2687 (toll-free). When prompted, press 1 for the College of the Rockies Cranbrook Workforce Development and CBT Programs.