

Graduate Internship Opportunity

SUMMER 2026

Project Title

Strengthening Community-based Climate Action in Oak Bay

Organization

District of Oak Bay

About the Opportunity – Sustainability Scholars Program Info

These 250-hour internships are offered in partnership with community organizations and provide UVic graduate students from any discipline with opportunities to gain applied sustainability research experience. Scholars work under the guidance of a partner mentor and contribute to projects with real community impact.

The 2026 pay rate is approximately \$34.72/hour. To apply, visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) and review the application guide to confirm eligibility and required materials. Applications close at 11:59 pm PT on Sunday, February 1, 2026. Questions? Contact Laurel Currie: sustainability-scholars@uvic.ca.

Project Background

This project builds on the Oak Bay Coolkit Program, which was a collaboration between the District of Oak Bay and UBC's Collaborative for Advanced Landscape Planning (CALP) that aimed to promote local climate action. Running from September 2021 to August 2024, the program focused on training citizens and developing street and neighbourhood-level climate action plans for mitigation and adaptation.

The objectives of the program included:

- Engaging and informing the Oak Bay community on local climate change impacts and the role that urban forests, local food, renewable energy, active transportation, and other actions by residents can play in mitigating and adapting to climate change in their own neighbourhoods
- Empowering local climate champions in developing community-led climate action plans for implementation on private and public land
- Building a self-supporting grassroots activation program reaching across the community, coordinated by the District and community organisations,
- Raising the profile and visibility of local climate action in Oak Bay.

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Cohorts of residents registered in each of the three years participated in the Coolkit program, completing climate action plans, making climate commitments, and supporting tree planting initiatives. Many of those residents continue to act as climate champions in the community.

This project is designed to help formalize the ongoing efforts of both the champions and staff involved in the continued delivery of the program. Currently, there are evening events organized 4-5 times a year with guest speakers on a variety of climate and natural environment topics as well as several annual community events that bring Coolkit participants back together. Additionally, the District will be embarking on a Climate Action Plan in 2026, and the work of the prospective Scholar would support key engagement elements as part of that planning process.

Through this internship, the Sustainability Scholar will contribute applied research, analysis, and engagement design to help the District strengthen community-based climate action and inform its 2026 Climate Action Plan.

Project Description

Project Purpose

The Project purpose is to better integrate citizen-centered climate efforts into municipal planning and to strengthen the existing climate action networks to facilitate increased public participation and input into climate action and adaptation planning in the District of Oak Bay.

Project Objectives

- Strengthen the Coolkit legacy by creating structures, tools, and resources that facilitate ongoing collaboration among climate champions, District staff, and local organizations.
- Expand community engagement by researching and supporting approaches to increase participation in climate and environment events and creating new opportunities for residents, including students and youth, to contribute to local climate initiatives.
- Support the 2026 Climate Action Plan by aligning community activities with municipal planning and collecting input that reflects local priorities and experiences.
- Improve visibility and communication of local climate actions by analyzing, and supporting storytelling, media, and outreach, highlighting achievements of residents and partners.
- Ensure long-term sustainability by identifying pathways for ongoing coordination, funding, and leadership beyond the current project.

Intended Project Outcomes

- Development of a structured coordination framework, including roles, communication channels, and event templates, to sustain and grow the Oak Bay Coolkit network.
- Increased participation from diverse residents, including students and youth, in climate and environmental initiatives.

- Better integration of community input into the municipal planning process, particularly the 2026 Climate Action Plan.

Enhanced public awareness of Oak Bay's climate leadership through consistent storytelling and outreach.

Project Scope

The primary research question guiding this work is:

How can community-based climate initiatives, such as the Oak Bay Coolkit, be structured and supported to strengthen collaboration between citizens and municipal climate planning processes?

The following activities have been identified as included in the scope of this project.

Approximate project hours for each activity are inclusive of all time including coordination and planning with staff.

1. Conduct an Environmental Scan of Participation Models (30-40 hours)

An environmental scan will examine leading models for citizen participation in municipal climate action planning. The review will identify best practices from other communities and municipalities, focusing on effective structures for coordination, communication, and community-driven input.

2. Design and Support 1-2 Community Group Workshop(s) (70-80 hours)

Support the design and facilitation of 1-2 workshops to gather feedback on the direction of the Coolkit program, identify opportunities to grow existing climate networks, and surface ideas for District staff and Council.

3. Develop a Coordination and Engagement Framework (50-60 hours)

Based on input from the Community Group Workshop and the outcomes of the Environmental Scan, develop a Coordination and Engagement Framework grounded in best practices and community input.

4. Integrate Activities with Municipal Climate Action Planning (TBD up to 40 hours)

This activity will focus on analyzing and strengthening the connection between citizen climate initiatives and Oak Bay's municipal planning processes – specifically the Climate Action Plan, which is planned to be underway in 2026. The Scholar's work should align with this planning process and identify opportunities for including citizen initiatives where possible.

5. Summarize findings in Final Report (60-70 hours)

The final report should include discussion of all activities undertaken and results of the Scholar's work. The final report will include the Coordination and Engagement Framework and should serve as a tool for both District staff and community groups in building a more collaborative partnership.

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Deliverables

In addition to a final report summarizing the work completed as part of this project, there are a couple of interim deliverables that are anticipated, including:

- A Research Memo summarizing findings from the environmental scan of participation models
- An Event Plan for the workshop(s) as outlined above
- A draft Coordination and Engagement Framework for review by staff, with the expectation that the final version will be included in the scholar's report.

Time Commitment + Timeline

This project will take approximately 250 hours and will run from May 1 to August 15, 2026.

May 1st – Student Start Date

May 29 – Delivery of Research Memo

June 30 – Delivery of 1-2 Community Group Workshop(s) complete

July 15 – Development of Draft Coordination and Engagement Framework

July 31 – Draft Final Report

August 14 – Final Report Submitted and project complete

Required / Preferred Skills and Experience

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability
- Experience conducting stakeholder engagement events, including facilitation skills, is an asset
- Excellent public speaking and presentation skills
- Community engagement experience
- Ability to work independently
- Project management and organizational skills
- Demonstrated experience in communications and engagement related to sustainability and climate action
- Knowledge of online communication platforms and web-based engagement programs

Additional Information

The Scholar will receive guidance and feedback throughout the project and will have opportunities to learn about municipal climate planning processes. The Scholar will work directly with the Sr Planner – Climate Action.