

Program Guide

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WHAT IS THE Seafood Business Accelerator?

Introduction

The Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) is a BC-based program to help local small-scale fishers and farmers develop more sustainable, profitable seafood businesses. The program provides food industry training, coaching, business advice and implementation services. It was designed for seafood entrepreneurs looking to better manage their businesses, distinguish their catch, add value to their harvest or bypass lengthy supply chains — but who don't know where to start. The SBA taps seafood experts in market research, business and financial planning, product development, social media, grant writing and project planning to deliver webinars and workshops to participants. It also offers Experts in Residence to help participants work on their individual projects.

Program Goals & Objectives

The goal of the Seafood Business Accelerator is to support innovation, profitability and sustainability for small-scale seafood entrepreneurs — to help seafood enterprises go farther and grow faster than they would have gone alone. By the end of the program, participants will have a better understanding of the food supply chain and will have developed their own **Innovation Plan** plus a product, process or marketing prototype to present to potential investors or community decision-makers.

Partners & Funders

The SBA was developed by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University in partnership with the BC Commercial Fishing Caucus. The program is funded by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Island Coastal Economic Trust, the Food Processing Skills Canada's Student Work Placement Program, and the T. Buck Suzuki Foundation. Generous in-kind contributions came from Vancouver Island University and the BC Commercial Fishing Caucus. The Native Fishing Association, BC Young Fishermen's Network, BC Shellfish Growers Association, and the Pacific Seaweed Industry Association provided letters of support for the SBA.

Funding provided by:

Support Team

SBA participants are supported by an all-star team comprised of Business Coaches, Experts in Residence, the Centre for Seafood Innovation and Vancouver Island University staff and students. Experts in Residence will include a food development chef, a food scientist, a seafood marketer, and others based on your needs.

Special guests will also be invited to share their food industry expertise at SBA workshops and webinars.

As a bonus, the SBA includes a workforce attraction component where students from a variety of faculties will be invited to observe and assist throughout the program. Students will learn about your businesses and the food industry in general. It is so important that young people, and our future leaders, understand how and where food is produced!

Visit the Team page on the SBA website to get more information about the SBA Team.

Confidentiality

All staff and contractors that work on participants' individual projects will be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement to keep their confidential information safe.

Confidentiality can be a concern in a group setting. On one hand, exchanging information results in sharing of best practices and building business relationships, on the other hand, someone might take your idea(s). While all participants have agreed, when they completed the application, to keep other participants' Confidential Information confidential it will be up to you as to how much you share in a group setting. In general, the benefits of sharing information with your peers exceed the risks.

Privacy Policy

The Centre for Seafood Innovation is part of Vancouver Island University and as such is governed by the university's privacy policy. VIU falls under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). The personal information we gather from you is for the sole purpose of facilitating your participation in the SBA and for the planning and evaluation of the SBA. For more information, please visit [VIU's website](#).

Participant Benefits (What You Get)

The SBA program will help small-scale early-stage seafood producers develop more sustainable, profitable businesses by providing training and services from knowledgeable professionals. The SBA registration fee is \$250. For this small investment, you will receive approximately \$6,500 of goods and services. SBA program benefits are outlined in the following table:

Estimated SBA Program Benefits	
12 hours of coaching	\$1,200
Innovation Plan	\$500
Expert services	\$3,000
Introductory workshop	\$150
4 Virtual workshops	\$400
3 Webinars	\$300
Student assistance	\$100
Final “Pitch” event	\$150
Professional Photographs (participants and /or products)	\$200
Professionally written article/story and inclusion in a digital marketing brochure featuring SBA participants	\$500
Total	\$6,500

Participants who finish the SBA will also receive a Certificate of Completion. This certification will be of value to participants wanting to demonstrate that they have completed a business accelerator program. Proof that you have completed the SBA will demonstrate that you are serious about your project, that you have received industry-specific training and that you are planning for success.

Eligible Applicants & Activities

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for the SBA you must be:

- A B.C.-based small-scale seafood harvester that is not a subsidiary of a national or international company
- Available to participate in a 30-45 minute virtual interview to assess suitability and needs by **February 24, 2023**
- Have access to a computer, laptop or tablet and a reliable internet connection
- You or your business partner, can participate in SBA activities as outlined in the following section of this guide, [Expectations of Participants](#).

Eligible Activities

Eligible activities pertain to activities undertaken with Experts in Residence. The Experts in Residence will primarily specialize in post-harvest activities and marketing. Eligible activities may include adding value to harvests, product development, scale-up, processing, marketing, etc.

Expectations of Participants

As an SBA participant you are expected to participate in all SBA activities as outlined in the following schedule. However, we understand that life happens and know that you may need some flexibility. If you absolutely can't make it to an in-person event, we will arrange for you to watch speakers and make presentations virtually.

All virtual workshops and webinars will be recorded so that you can watch them on your own time. Note that if you miss live workshops and webinars, you will miss the opportunity to ask questions and share information.

You will arrange your own appointments with your Coach and Experts in Residence based on your and their availability. Most of your appointments will be over the phone or by Zoom.

Program Schedule

The SBA schedule is summarized in the following table.

Seafood Business Accelerator Schedule		
Activity	Date	Format
Introductory Workshop	March 1, 2023	In-person Deep Bay Marine Field Station 370 Crome Point Rd. Bowser, BC
Workshops 10 am – 11:30 am		
Session 1 Market Opportunities & Market Research*	March 7, 2023	Virtual Via Zoom
Session 2 Food Regulations*	March 9, 2023	
Session 3 Packaging and Processing Options*	March 14, 2023	
Session 4 Funding and Finance Options*	March 16, 2023	
<i>* topics may change based on participant needs</i>		
Webinars 10 am to 11:30 am		
Session 1 Topic TBA	March 23, 2023	Virtual Via Zoom
Session 2 Topic TBA	April 6, 2023	
Session 3 Topic TBA	April 20, 2023	
Final Event	May 4, 2023 10 am – 4 pm	In-person Vancouver Island University 900 Fifth Street. Nanaimo, BC

Time commitment

The Seafood Business Accelerator will take place from February to May 2023. We estimate that it will take 54 hours (plus travel time to the two in-person events) to attend all the SBA activities. However, the more you put into your project, the more you will accomplish.

There will be homework. For instance, you need to prepare prior to meeting with your Business Coach, or Expert in Residence. This may include following up on your coach's and expert's

recommendations, writing down your questions before meetings and taking notes while speaking with coaches and experts.

Code of Conduct

The SBA involves interactions with coaches, experts, staff and other participants. A Code of Conduct provides guidelines to help participants get the most out of the SBA.

Expected Behaviour in Group Settings

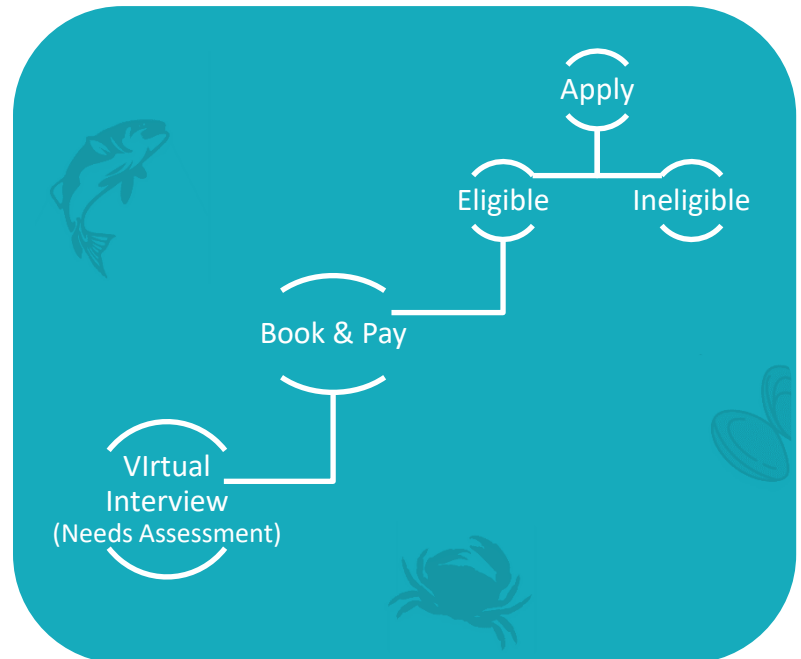
- Treat one another with respect and dignity
- Collaborate and support each other with active listening and constructive feedback
- Respect the personal information and privacy of others

When working with Coaches and Experts

- Treat Coaches and Experts with respect
- Use online calendar scheduling tool to set up appointments
- Keep scheduled appointments
- If you must cancel or reschedule an appointment, try to provide at least 24 hours notice

Application Process

The SBA application form is available through the [SBA website](#) or by clicking this link: [SBA Application Form](#). Your responses to the application form will determine whether you are eligible for the program (see [page 5 regarding eligibility](#)). If you are eligible you will automatically be directed to an appointment scheduler where you will book your Needs Assessment appointment and pay your SBA fee. If your responses indicate that you are ineligible and you have questions, please [contact us](#).



Needs Assessment

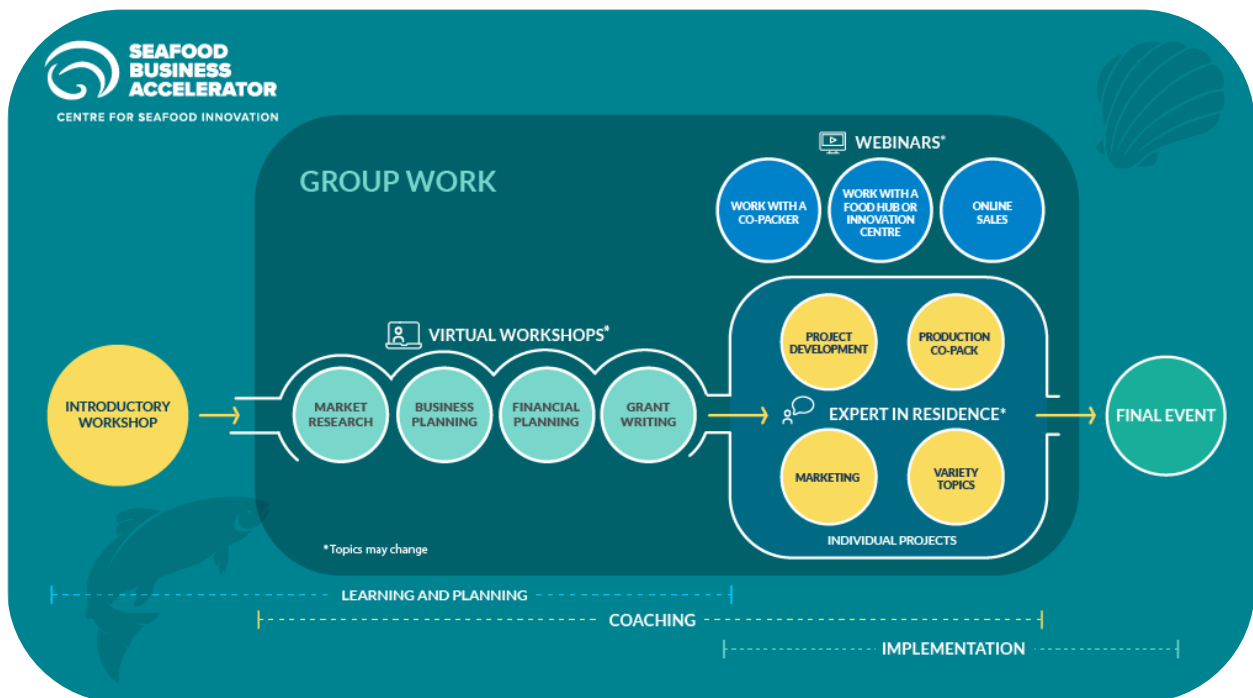
SBA training materials, experts and special guests will be based on the assistance participants need to achieve their goals. The first and perhaps most important step of the SBA is a virtual interview to assess your needs. Once you have completed your application you will be invited to book a virtual interview. This will be a 30-45 minute interview during which your needs will be assessed through a series of questions.

Program Phases

The SBA consists of four phases:

1. Introductions
2. Learning and Planning
3. Project Implementation
4. Communicating Results

Phases 1, 2 and 4 will involve participants learning together. In Phase 3, Project Implementation, participants will work on their own with SBA Experts in Residence. Details about SBA phases are provided below and the following diagram summarizes the program.



PHASE 1

Introductions

Phase 1 of the SBA is all about learning about the accelerator and each other. An in-person introductory workshop will be held on **March 1, (10 am to 4 pm)** at the Deep Bay Marine Field Station in Bowser. The workshop will include:

- Program outline
- Participant introductions
- Coach and Expert introductions
- Coaches assigned to participants
- Planning tools circulated and explained
- Success Story - A seafood entrepreneur will present on “Been There, Done That”
- Photographer will take photographs of participants
- VIU students invited to observe and learn about the seafood industry
- Lunch and snacks

Note that participants will be introduced to their business coach at the introductory workshop. The business coach’s role is to help participants complete their Innovation Plan. Each participant is allocated 12 hours of coaching (including the coach’s prep time) throughout the SBA program.

Participants should come to the first workshop prepared to introduce themselves and describe what they want to achieve through the SBA. Also, they should be prepared to be photographed. The intent is to take professional photographs that participants can use for marketing purposes.

PHASE 2

Learning & Planning

The learning and planning phase of the SBA is geared toward providing participants with information that will help them succeed in the food industry. This phase will be virtual.

Workshops

Workshops will be designed to teach participants about aspects of the food supply chain so that they can apply these learnings to their Innovation Plan. For instance, after learning about food regulations, a participant can apply this learning to their project plan.

Innovation Plan

Participants should have a draft version of their **Innovation Plan** completed before they start working with an Expert in Residence. Having this plan in place will ensure that no time is wasted before getting to work! In other words, your plan will clearly show what it is you want to work on.

What is an Innovation Plan?

Your Innovation Plan is your guide to how you will get to where you want to go with your project. Think of it as a road map. Your coach will help you to develop your plan and to help you create a simple project model. This model will be based on Lean Canvas principles and provides you with a one page living plan that you can modify as circumstances change. You will use your Innovation Plan to work with Expert(s) in Residence so that you can home in on exactly what you need to work on. You can also present your plan to potential buyers, investors, financiers, or community leaders to quickly help them understand your project.

Webinars

Webinars will be scheduled during the implementation phase to keep participants in touch with each other and to provide information of interest to the group. Webinars may feature an industry expert or panel of speakers. Anticipated topics include a co-packer speaking on how to work with a co-packer, packaging experts on packaging options, or a panel of financial experts.

Both workshops and webinars will be virtual and recorded. While it is highly recommended that people attend live sessions so that they can interact and ask questions, the sessions will be recorded for viewing later.

Peer Learning

Learning from each other will be a valuable outcome of the SBA. While participating in workshops and webinars participants should be open to learning from their peers. Often accelerators result in new collaborations and lifelong business relationships.

Phase 3

Implementation

Getting to Work on individual projects

The implementation phase is where participants will work with Experts in Residence to implement their innovation or project plan. Participants will have approximately 30 hours over 8 weeks to work with an Expert. Some projects may benefit from input from more than one Expert. It is anticipated that much of this work can happen virtually. More details to follow.

Phase 4

Communicating Results

The SBA final event will be a celebration of what has been accomplished throughout the program.

The event is scheduled for May 4, 2023, at VIU's Nanaimo Campus. Based on participants' interests, industry experts will be invited to watch participants present their projects and provide constructive feedback to help participants succeed. For example, potential buyers, funders, financiers or community leaders may be invited to the final event. Feedback will be provided publicly so that all participants benefit from the Experts' knowledge and recommendations. Experts may also arrange for future interactions with individual participants. Arrangements for future interactions may include a buyer requesting a meeting with a participant for a formal product presentation. Coaching on how to make effective presentations will be available through the SBA.

Activities at the final event will include:

- Participant Presentations
- Industry Expert Feedback
- Awarding of Certificates
- Lunch
- Networking
- Photobooth

Wrapping Up

Reporting to Funders

As the project lead, the Centre for Seafood Innovation is required to report to project funders. Participants may be asked to provide information.

Program Evaluation and Feedback

Participants will be asked to complete a program evaluation and provide feedback at the end of the SBA.

Frequently Asked Questions

If you have questions after reading the Program Guide, please check the FAQ section of our website.

Contact Information

Feel free to contact [Olivia Alexander](#), SBA Coordinator, if you have additional questions or comments.