

MEDIA RELEASE

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B.C.'s Life Sciences Sector Faces 10-fold Increase in Skilled Talent Gap

(Vancouver) A new labour market intelligence study conducted by Life Sciences BC shows a critical need for more skilled talent across British Columbia's life sciences sector.

The province's dynamic life sciences sector is the fastest growing in Canada and a source of high-quality jobs for British Columbians. The sector employs more than 28,000 people in approximately 1,800 companies and has been identified by the provincial government as a catalyst in providing British Columbians with an innovative, sustainable, and inclusive future. The 2023 provincial *Life Sciences and Biomanufacturing Strategy* is aimed at positioning B.C. as a worldwide life sciences hub and focuses on talent as one of its key pillars.

The study, [*Fostering a Globally Competitive Life Sciences Ecosystem in B.C.*](#), was funded through B.C.'s Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills Sector Labour Market Partnership program and conducted with methodology and project support by KPMG. It provides detailed workforce information at a critical time for the growth of the sector.

"B.C.'s life sciences sector has experienced record growth in part because of the talented, high calibre people that are working and conducting research here in our province," said Brenda Bailey, Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation. "Our government is continuing to work with our partners, post-secondary institutions, research centres, and industry to ensure we have the highly skilled and qualified people needed to innovate and advance health care for British Columbians and the world."

Key findings from the study include a labour supply and demand forecast, which indicates a widening labour supply gap and is projected to grow 10-fold by 2027. Currently B.C.'s life sciences sector faces a labour shortage of approximately 500 people. By 2027 the projection is 5,500.

The study has also produced an up-to-date B.C. life sciences workforce profile; overall skills training assessment; and recommendations for sector-led strategies.

While B.C.'s life sciences employees make higher than average wages, there are growing skills training gaps, indicating a significant need for new skills across the sector. Key areas include leadership and management skills needed to scale and grow companies and knowledge of quality and regulatory affairs, clinical trials, and biomanufacturing.

"This is a pivotal moment for our sector to address the growing gap between the projected supply of skilled talent and what the market in British Columbia requires now and into the future," says Helen Sheridan, Chief Human Resources Officer, STEMCELL Technologies and a member of the LMI study governance committee. "All of us in B.C.'s life sciences community look forward to working with partners across industry, academia and

government to develop the necessary talent required for our sector to thrive and continue advancing science for the benefit of all Canadians across the country.”

“Extensive engagement with leaders throughout the life sciences sector has enabled us to identify existing and emerging challenges, while aligning on strategic objectives and recommendations to ensure that British Columbia can attract, develop, and retain the talent we need, with the skills our ecosystem requires to maintain record growth,” says Wendy Hurlburt, President and CEO, Life Sciences BC, and executive lead of the project. “We thank the province for their ongoing support of our sector, and for funding this critical and timely labour market intelligence study to create a detailed understanding of our needs. We understand the work we need to do, and we look forward to the next step of immediately beginning to prioritize and implement the study’s recommendations.”

Seven recommendations are presented in the labour market study by sector stakeholders to address these challenges, including creating a talent council to speak as a single voice for sector needs, and enabling a responsive, best-in-class ecosystem that is focused on attracting, developing and retaining talent.

[Life Sciences British Columbia \(LSBC\)](#) is a member-based not-for profit, industry association that advocates, supports, and represents B.C.’s life sciences community provincially, nationally, and globally. Through numerous initiatives LSBC plays a large role in facilitating investment and collaborations, increasing awareness of B.C. as a centre for excellence for life sciences, and shaping the trajectory of the sector.

[The Sector Labour Market Partnerships program](#) helps industry and employers understand and respond to labour market changes, and provides funding to organizations within an economic sector, region, or population, to develop projects that help respond to workforce challenges.

BACKGROUND

Study Quick Facts

- B.C.'s life sciences sector is the fastest growing life sciences sector in the country and is a source of high-quality jobs for British Columbians, with 1,800 businesses with employees, employing 28,500 people (2022) and average compensation 21% higher than wages across B.C.
- Sector GDP - \$3.1B, 2022, up 27% from 2019-2022
 - Driven by the pace of discovery at academic and research institutions, advancement of novel therapeutics and platform technologies, and innovation in medical and digital health technologies, the sector is well poised for further growth.
 - This is complemented by an increasing number of rapidly growing life sciences companies; and supporting provincial and national life sciences and biomanufacturing strategies.
- Continued growth of the sector is challenged by an increasing labour shortage:
 - By 2027 the sector is expecting a 10-fold increase in its talent gap from 500 to 5,500.
- Together, the sector has recognized:
 - The current projected supply of skilled talent will not sustain projected sector growth.
 - There is a growing gap between talent skillsets and market need, creating a training gap for certain skills that help advance sector growth.
 - There is a lack of resources to support companies in attracting talent and limited awareness of the opportunities within the sector as a whole.
 - The sector can do more to promote and embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I), to foster an ecosystem that creates equal opportunities for individuals to thrive in the workplace.
- B.C.'s life sciences sector proposes seven strategic recommendations to lay the groundwork for a sustainable, highly skilled B.C. life sciences workforce:
 - Create a sector talent council to prioritize and act on life sciences sector labour and talent needs.
 - Promote the development of a competitive environment for B.C.'s life sciences sector to attract and retain skilled talent from other jurisdictions.
 - Develop a strategic talent attraction marketing plan for B.C.'s life sciences sector to promote the sector as a highly desirable life sciences employment and economic hub.
 - Develop a sector-specific DE&I strategy and resources to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive life sciences sector in B.C. and enable the sector to tap into underrepresented communities as an immediate source of talent.
 - Enable a responsive, best-in-class training ecosystem that builds on existing offerings to address current and future workforce needs at all career levels.
 - Begin consultations and relationship building with Indigenous organizations to understand how to foster meaningful sector engagement.
 - Enable the acceleration of top-tier talent development, attraction, and retention by exploring innovative ways to nurture and anchor more B.C. life sciences companies.

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