



Program Guide

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WHAT IS THE Seafood Business Accelerator?

Introduction

The Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) is a BC-based training and mentoring program that helps small scale fishers, farmers, and processors succeed. If you want to start or improve a seafood business, the SBA offers food business training, coaching, and expert advice. SBA coaches and mentors provide help with market research, business planning, product development, social media, grant writing, and more.

There are two ways for seafood entrepreneurs to get help from the SBA:

1. **[SBA Online Resources](#)** – Expert mentors guide you to create your roadmap to success.
Watch this short video to learn more: [SBA Innovation Plan](#)
2. **[SBA Hybrid Program](#)** – 4-month custom in-person and online training and mentoring program.
The fall 2024 program will focus on Indigenous seafood entrepreneurs
Watch this short video to learn more: [SBA Journey](#)

*This program guide focuses on the **SBA Hybrid Program***

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SBA Introductory Workshop (2023)

Hybrid Program Goals & Objectives

The Seafood Business Accelerator helps seafood entrepreneurs become more innovative, profitable, and sustainable. Over 4 months, you'll learn about the food supply chain, focus on an achievable project and create your own [Innovation Plan](#) – ***your roadmap to success***. By the end, you'll make valuable connections and present your ideas, products or services to community and industry leaders at the final SBA Showcase.

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Partners & Funders

The SBA is a new program that is generating a lot of interest.

Coastal Nations Fisheries, T. Buck Suzuki Foundation and Vancouver Island University have partnered to offer the fall 2024 program. Funding was received from New Relationship Trust, Island Coastal Economic Trust and Clear Seas Indigenous Internship Program.

The SBA was first developed in 2023 by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University in partnership with the BC Commercial Fishing Caucus. Initial funding was provided by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Island Coastal Economic Trust, Food Processing Skills Canada's Student Work Placement Program, and the T. Buck Suzuki Foundation.

Many organizations and communities support the SBA.

Broad Support

"I support the Seafood Business Accelerator because it aligns with our mission, vision, and values, by promoting sustainable seafood practices, innovation, and economic growth within the seafood industry, while addressing crucial environmental and economic challenges."

Gary Wilson, CEO and Director of Economic Development, Tiičma Enterprises - Businesses with Heart.

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Support Team

SBA trainees are supported by an all-star team.



Debra Hellbach and **Olivia Alexander** are the chief organizers (a.k.a. “~~cat~~ otter herders”). With excellent connections, strong organizational skills and lots of laughs they will keep everyone on track!



Josephine Olivier plays a very special role in the SBA and is someone that every participant will get to know! Josephine is professional photographer and journalist who will be photographing and interviewing each and every trainee.

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Our coaches and mentors are all experts in their field with a keen interest in helping every participant reach their goals. Mentors will be selected based on trainee needs and may include a food development chef, a seafood marketer, a grant writer and more.

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

Visit the [Our Team](#) page on the SBA website to see who will be helping you.

Confidentiality



Everyone that works on trainees' individual projects signs a non-disclosure agreement to keep 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).

Above: Trainees sharing at SBA workshop (2023)

It's up to you how much you share

All trainees agreed, when completing their application, to keep the Confidential Information of other trainees confidential. However, it's ultimately up to you how much you choose to share in a group setting. Generally, the benefits of sharing information with your peers outweigh the risks.

*the benefits of sharing information with your peers
typically outweigh the risks*

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Trainee Benefits (What You Get)

The SBA program helps small-scale, early-stage seafood entrepreneurs in building more sustainable and profitable businesses. Through this program, you'll benefit from expert training and guidance from experienced coaches and mentors.

By joining the SBA fall 2024 session you'll receive approximately \$5,500 worth of free services. However, while the program is free, participants are expected to commit their time. The program requires a time investment of about 164 hours over the 4-month duration (roughly 10 hours per week). For example, you will need to follow up on your coach's and mentor's recommendations or you might have to do market research and more.

SBA training and services are outlined in the following table:

Estimated SBA Program Benefits	
Business coaching	\$600
Innovation Plan support	\$1,000
Mentoring	\$2,000
Introductory workshop in person	\$250
4 Virtual workshops	\$400
3 Webinars	\$300
Final Showcase event	\$250
Professional Photographs (trainees and /or products)	\$200
Professionally written article/story and inclusion in a digital marketing brochure featuring SBA trainees	\$500
Total	\$5,500

SBA graduates will also receive a Certificate of Completion. This certification proves that you completed a business accelerator program. It shows that you are serious about your project, that you have received industry-specific training and that you are planning for success.

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Eligible Applicants & Activities

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for the fall 2024 hybrid SBA you must:

- Be a B.C.-based small-scale, Indigenous seafood harvester, or processor, that is not owned by a large or international company
- Be available to participate in a 30-45 minute virtual interview by **September 20, 2024** to determine if the program is a good fit (we will call you)
- Have access to a computer, laptop or tablet and a reliable internet connection (or you can figure out how to arrange access to technology with the help of the SBA Team or your community resources)
- You or your business partner, can participate in SBA activities as outlined in the following section of this guide, **Expectations of Trainees**.

Eligible Activities

Eligible activities are those activities trainees want to work on with Mentors. Our Mentors will specialize in post-harvest activities, business and marketing. Eligible activities may include improving business systems, adding value to harvests, product development, scale-up, processing, marketing, etc.



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Expectations of Trainees

As an SBA trainee 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 can't make it to an in-person event, you might be able to participate virtually.

If you miss live events, you may miss the opportunity
to ask questions and share information

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

Your coaching and mentoring sessions will be over the phone or by Teams/Zoom. Your Coach will help you with scheduling coaching and mentoring sessions.

You must attend scheduled appointments.

If you cannot make an appointment, try to give at least 24 hours' notice so that coaches/mentors can help other people.

Cancelling without notice or no shows will result in your losing coaching/ mentoring time.

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Program Schedule

The SBA schedule is summarized in the following table.

Seafood Business Accelerator Schedule		
Activity	Date	Format
Introductory Workshop	October 10, 2024	In-person Deep Bay Marine Field Station 370 Crome Point Rd. Bowser, BC
Optional Fieldtrip – To be confirmed	October 11, 2024	Dock Plus 3140 Harbour Rd, Port Alberni
Workshops 10 am – 12 pm		
Session 1 Market Opportunities & Market Research*	October 17, 2024	Virtual Via Teams
Session 2 Food Regulations*	October 24, 2024	
Session 3 Packaging and Processing Options*	October 31, 2024	
Session 4 Funding and Finance Options*	November 7, 2024	
<i>* topics may change based on trainee needs</i>		
Webinars 10 am to 12 pm		
Session 1 Topic TBA	November TBD, 2024	Virtual Via Teams
Session 2 Topic TBA	November TBD, 2024	
Session 3 Topic TBA	January TBD, 2025	
Final Event	February 6, 2025 10 am – 4 pm	In-person Vancouver Island University 900 Fifth Street. Nanaimo, BC

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Time Commitment

The Seafood Business Accelerator will take place from October to February 2025. We estimate that it will take 164 hours (about 10 hours per week) to participate in the 4-month SBA program. The more you put into your project, the more you will accomplish!

You will have homework!

You will have homework! For example, you need to get ready before meeting with your Coach or Mentor. This might mean following up on their advice or writing down your questions before the meeting. Always remember to take notes when talking to coaches and experts.

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Code of Conduct

Guiding Principles

At the SBA, we value different cultures and perspectives. We aim to create a community based on respect, support, and the well-being of everyone involved. These guidelines help ensure that your interactions with coaches, mentors, staff, and fellow trainees are respectful and supportive.

Expected Behavior in Group Settings

- Show respect and kindness to everyone, recognizing the value of each person.
- Work together and support one another by actively listening and giving helpful, kind feedback.
- Protect the privacy of others by keeping their stories and experiences confidential.

When Working with Coaches and Experts

- Treat Coaches and Mentors with respect.
- Keep your scheduled appointments.
- If you need to cancel or reschedule, try to give 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 if you are eligible for the program ([see page 5 regarding eligibility](#)). If you are eligible you will be contacted by the SBA Team after you submit your application.

If you get a message that you are ineligible and you have questions, please [contact us](#).

Needs Assessment

SBA training materials, experts and special guests are customized based on trainees' needs. The first step is a conversation with an SBA Team member to assess your needs and see if the program is a good fit for you. This will be a 30-45 minute call.

A SBA Team member will contact you via email or telephone to set a time for a call.

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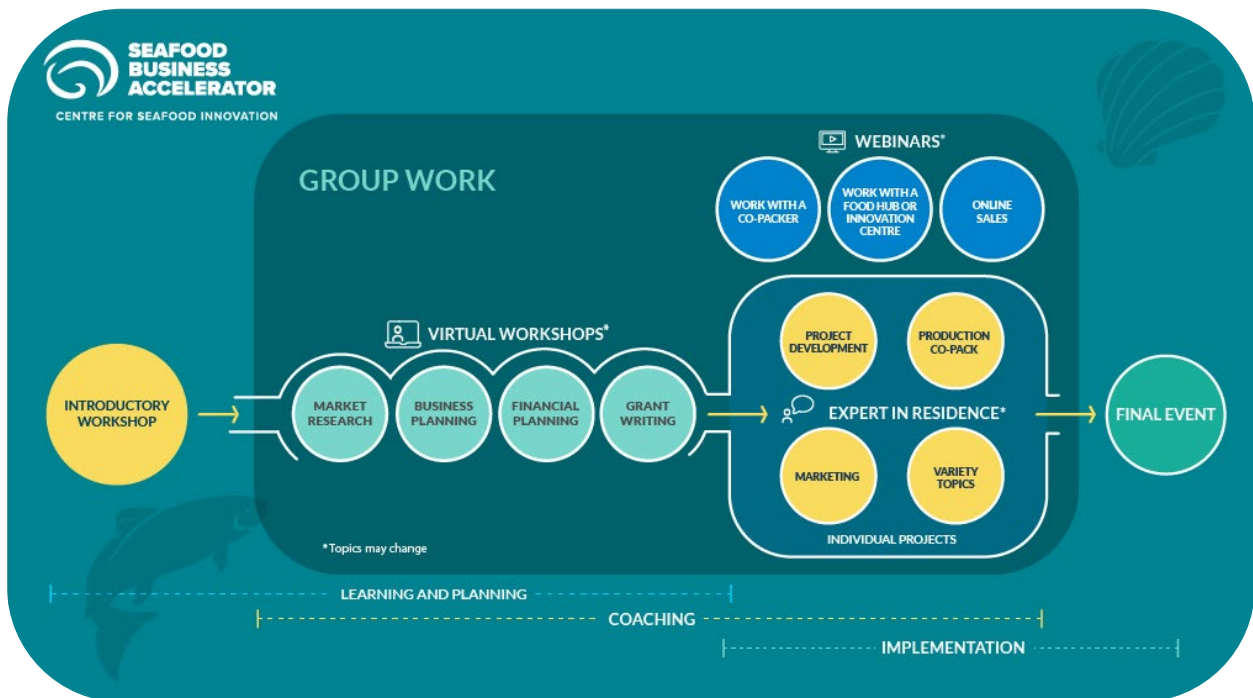
Program Phases



The SBA consists of four phases:

1. Introductions
2. Learning and Planning
3. Project Implementation (getting to work)
4. Communicating Results

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



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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 **October 10, (10 am to 4 pm)** at the VIU Deep Bay Marine Field Station in Bowser. The workshop will include:

- Program outline
- Trainee introductions
- Coach introductions
- Coaches assigned to trainees
- Planning tools circulated and explained
- Success Story - A seafood entrepreneur will present on “Been There, Done That”
- Photographer will take photographs of trainees
- Lunch and snacks

Note that trainees will be introduced to their Coach at the introductory workshop. The Coach’s role is to help you complete your Innovation Plan. Each trainee gets about 8 hours of coaching.

come to the first workshop prepared to give an
elevator speech!

Trainees should come to the first workshop prepared to give an elevator speech. This is a short, under 2-minute description of who you are and what you want to do as an SBA Trainee. Also, be prepared to be photographed. We will be taking professional photographs that trainees can use for marketing and promotional purposes.

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PHASE 2

Learning & Planning

The learning and planning phase of the SBA is designed to give trainees the knowledge they need to succeed in the food industry. This phase will be virtual.

*Get started now by watching the
SBA online resource modules!*

Trainees can get a jump start on their learning by watching the [SBA online resource modules](#).

Workshops

Workshops will teach trainees about different parts of the food supply chain so they can use this knowledge in their Innovation Plan. For example, after learning about funding, a trainee can include that information in their project plan.













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Innovation Plan

Trainees should complete a draft of their Innovation Plan before they start working with a Mentor. This way, no time is wasted, and you can get straight to work! In other words, your plan will clearly show what you want to focus on.

Innovation Plan Canvas				Designed For:	Date:	
 SBA Project Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create 1 shelf stable product by Dec. ##### Increase revenues by 30% Reduce seasonality within 2 years 	 Market Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry reports say the market for seafood is growing Consumer surveys indicate people are looking for recyclable packaging 	 Regulations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOMESTIC - Island Health Authority, CFIA Safe Food for Canadians License, HACCP INTERNATIONAL - FDA Certificates CUSTOMER DRIVEN - Organic Certification 	 Business Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to track production, sales and expenses Use Sage 50 for bookkeeping and inventory control Consider outsourcing in future 	 Marketing Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value Proposition: "Sustainably harvested seafood from the pristine waters of the central coast of British Columbia thoughtfully prepared and packaged for year-round enjoyment." Channel: Direct sales via online store 	Example	
 Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require \$75,000 for product development Potential Source: Food Security Grant 	 Target Market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remote communities Outdoors enthusiasts People seeking high protein foods 	 Distribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conversations started with distributors Direct to Consumer Farmers Markets E-Commerce Website 				
 Product Development & Production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create new shelf stable product utilizing filleting line trim Work with product development expert & explore production options (food hub or custom processor) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ultimate goal to process in community. 			 Next Steps/Milestones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact CFIA and learn more about regulations by Mar ###. Secure funding by Sep ##. ##### 			

What is an Innovation Plan?

Your Innovation Plan is like a roadmap for your project. Your Coach will help you create this plan. It's based on Lean Canvas principles and gives you a one-page, flexible plan that you can update as things change. You'll use your Innovation Plan to work with Mentors to focus on what you need to work on. You can also show your plan to potential buyers, investors, financiers, or community leaders so they can quickly understand your project.

Watch this short video to learn more: [SBA Innovation Plan](#)

Webinars

Webinars are scheduled during the Implementation Phase to keep trainees in touch with each other and learn more about other topics. Webinars may feature an industry expert or panel of speakers. Possible topics include a co-packer speaking on how to work with a co-packer, packaging experts on packaging options, or a panel of funders.

Both workshops and webinars will be virtual and recorded. It is best if you can attend live sessions so that you can ask questions. The sessions will be recorded so you can watch anytime.

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Peer Learning

Learning from each other is a key part of the SBA experience, reflecting the importance of community and shared knowledge. During workshops and webinars, be open to learning from your peers, as we all have wisdom to share. This process often leads to new partnerships and lasting business relationships, strengthening our connections.



2023 SBA Trainees learn from other seafood entrepreneurs and service providers at Dock Plus

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Phase 3

Implementation

Getting to work on individual projects

The Mentors' role is to guide, not to do

The implementation or “getting stuff done” phase is where trainees work with Mentors to put their innovation plan in motion. Trainees will have approximately 16 hours over 8 weeks to get guidance from their Mentors. Some people may work with more than one Mentor.

The Mentors' role is to guide, not to do. It is up to trainees to follow up on what Coaches and Mentors recommend. They will follow up with you at your next session to make sure you did what you agreed to do!

Phase 4

Communicating Results

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

The event is scheduled for February 6, 2025, at VIU's Nanaimo Campus.

Industry experts and community leaders will be invited to watch trainees present their projects and they will provide constructive feedback to help trainees succeed. Trainees will give a polished elevator speech at this event. This will be a 2-minute pitch that clearly explains your project and next steps. You will have your Innovation Plan to guide you!

The SBA Showcase is a magical event.
Many valuable connections will be made!

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Participants will also display their innovation plan, products or services at this tradeshow style event.

Vancouver Island University Culinary students and staff will prepare trainees products for showcase guests to sample.

The SBA Showcase is a magical event for both trainees and guests. Many valuable connections will be made!

Activities at the final event will include:

- Trainee Presentations
- Industry Expert/Community Leader Feedback
- Awarding of Certificates
- Lunch
- Networking
- Photobooth



VIU Culinary at SBA showcase (2023)

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Wrapping Up

Reporting to Funders

As with any funded project the partners must report to the funders. Trainees will be asked to provide information about their experience and may be asked if they can be photographed and quoted in social media and promotional materials.

Program Evaluation and Feedback

Trainees 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 Frequently Asked Questions ([FAQS](#)) section of our website.

Contact Information

Feel free to contact [Olivia Alexander](#), SBA Coordinator, at olivia.alexander@viu.ca if you have additional questions or comments.

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