

# Insight

January 2020



## 2020 policy workplans

The PRRD will be continuing work on the 2019–2021 workplans



## Innovation at Work: A look back and a look ahead

A review of projects funded in 2019 and information about the current competition



## 2020 Roberta Ellis Award for Excellence

WorkSafeBC practicum student wins award for occupational exposure research

## Did you know?

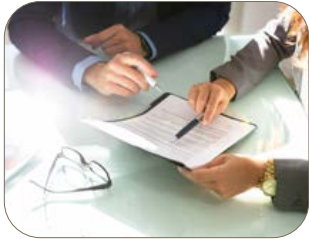
Research Services is accepting applications for two research grant competitions. For more details, visit [worksafebc.com](https://worksafebc.com).

## New this year

Research Services is offering grant application writing sessions for Innovation at Work applicants. Learn more at [worksafebc.com](https://worksafebc.com)

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## 2020 policy workplans

WorkSafeBC's Policy, Regulation, and Research Division (PRRD) generally consults with stakeholders annually to develop policy priorities and workplans, including the Compensation and Occupational Disease Workplan, the Assessment Policy Workplan, and the Occupational Health and Safety Policy Workplan.

The PRRD will not be undertaking stakeholder consultation on new policy items to be added to the workplans in 2020. Instead, the PRRD will continue to work on policy issues set out in the 2019–2021 workplans, approved by WorkSafeBC's Board of Directors in 2019.

The PRRD consulted extensively with both internal and external stakeholders to identify the projects and priorities included in the 2019–2021 workplans.

The decision not to undertake stakeholder consultation this year was made in light of the reviews of the workers' compensation system, initiated in 2018 and 2019, which may inform policy direction. The PRRD consulted with the [Policy and Practice Consultative Committee](#), which consists of representatives from WorkSafeBC and the employer and worker communities, who were supportive of this approach.

You can view the 2019–2021 policy workplans on [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

Key projects underway in 2020 are:

- Chronic Pain
- Psychological Disability Awards
- Mental Disorder Policies
- Mental Disorders — Section 55
- Schedule D, Non-traumatic Hearing Loss
- Loss of Earnings Assessments
- Deemed Retirement Age

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- PDES — Range of Motion (ROM) Method and Disabilities of the Spine
- Disabled from Earning Full Wages
- Workplace Status
- Bullying and Harassment Policy Review
- Discriminatory Action Policy Review
- Exposure Limits

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## **Innovation at Work: A look back and a look ahead**

For more than 20 years, WorkSafeBC's Research Services grants have been an important part of the occupational health and safety research landscape in Canada. The projects that Research Services fund contribute to the development of high-quality, scientific knowledge on emerging issues and help make that knowledge available to the people who can use it. Innovation at Work grants, first offered in 2006, are aimed at supporting practical, innovative projects that are geared toward finding solutions for pressing workplace health and safety needs. Open to researchers from across Canada, Innovation at Work funding:

- Supports small-scale research projects that take novel approaches
- Encourages knowledge sharing among stakeholders
- Promotes collaboration between workplace parties and research experts

## **New ideas, new innovations**

Projects funded through last year's competition covered a wide range of topics, sectors, and methods. At WorkSafeBC's annual Research Day event, some recently funded researchers discussed their projects, engaged with stakeholders, and received input on their works-in-progress.

Event participants heard from researchers like Bernadette Quemerais. Bernadette is exploring a new method to assess if exhaled breath condensate samples — collected by breathing into a tube similar to a breathalyzer — can be used as a more accurate, less expensive way of assessing metal exposures.

Colin Collins described how he's using an inexpensive blood test to develop a new screening approach for early detection and monitoring of malignant mesothelioma. Malignant mesothelioma is a rare and aggressive cancer of the thin membranes that line the lungs and abdomen. The project also aims to evaluate experimental precision oncology, a technique that helps physicians create personalized cancer treatments tailored to a patient's unique needs.

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Edward Park talked about his work developing and testing a prototype of wearable exoskeleton technology as a rehabilitation tool.

"The wide variety of projects we support help us to understand emerging issues in occupational health and safety. We welcome applicants from any field, with a focus on workers and workplaces," says Lori Guiton, director of the PRRD at WorkSafeBC. "When workplace experts and researchers come together, it can lead to really interesting collaborations. It's always exciting to see how that can motivate change for us in workers' compensation, in clinical practices, and in workplaces."

## Feeling inspired?

The competition for the 2020 Innovation at Work grant is open now. Any Canadian resident with a research idea related to occupational health and safety can apply.

"We are always looking for new ways to support researchers," says Deepani Weerapura, manager of WorkSafeBC's Research Services. "We are proud to play a key role in fostering research capacity in British Columbia and beyond, and to support the development of a dynamic and diverse research community. I encourage those with an interest in getting a research project off the ground to contact us."

Applications for the 2020 Innovation at Work competition close on February 14, 2020. To learn more about the Innovation at Work grant, ongoing research, or how to apply for research funding, visit [worksafebc.com](https://worksafebc.com) or email [resquery@worksafebc.com](mailto:resquery@worksafebc.com).

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## 2020 Roberta Ellis Award for Excellence

In 2017, the Partnership for Work, Health and Safety between the University of B.C. and WorkSafeBC presented the inaugural Roberta Ellis Award for Excellence in the Study and Practice of Occupational and Environmental Health. The award is presented annually to a student from UBC's School of Population and Public Health (SPPH) who has demonstrated excellence in academic work or research in the field of occupational and environmental health.

The award was created to honour former WorkSafeBC vice-president Roberta Ellis, who retired in 2016. She is recognized as a champion for supporting and applying research evidence in policy and practice.

The 2020 recipient of the award is Aaron Agyeman. He served as student representative on the SPPH's coordinating committee and was a teaching assistant while studying at UBC. Through those roles, he demonstrated a capacity for scholarship, innovation, and leadership.

"After a few years of working in heavy industry and experiencing the ever-growing challenges in occupational safety and environmental health, and after losing my grandfather to chemical exposure, I was moved to make a difference," Agyeman explains. "I needed a new career that combined my skills in policy, community, and environmental well-being with my manufacturing experience."

Agyeman joined WorkSafeBC as a practicum student in the summer of 2019. In this role, he conducted research into prevention officers' exposure to technologically enhanced radioactive materials in the oil and gas sector. The study was the first of its kind and increased awareness of potential hazards.

As he moves forward in his career, Agyeman has impressive goals.

"I intend to employ my skills to improve risk assessment for occupational hazards. I plan to develop a web-based tool that can enhance the anticipation of occupational risk and improve the development of proper risk evaluation and controls."

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