

VCC

Eco Grants

**Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group
Three-Year Program Highlights and Legacy Report**

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Environmental Advisory Group

2023/2024 - 2025/2026

Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that Vancouver Community College (VCC) is located on the traditional unceded territories of the x̱w̱məθkw̱ə́y̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and səlíl'w̱ətaʔṯ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples who have been stewards of this land from time immemorial.

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Introduction

The VCC Eco Grants program is an internal sustainability funding initiative designed to support students, faculty, and staff in bringing environmental ideas to life on campus. Through small-scale projects, events, educational initiatives, and campus improvements, the program encouraged collaboration, creativity, and community engagement while supporting VCC's broader sustainability goals.



Photo: Diana Cabrero Purata

Program Evolution

Originally launched in 2019/2020, the Eco Grants program supported small sustainability initiatives based on ideas from students and staff. After a pause, the program was reintroduced in 2023/2024 with expanded funding and increased institutional support.

As the program evolved, sustainability engagement became more visible across campus through Welcome Days, mentorship opportunities, and collaborative implementation support. Many projects relied on coordination and mentorship support from the environmental advisory group and operational support from different departments.

Over time, Eco Grants contributed to visible and lasting sustainability features on campus, including the sustainability hub, sustainability study room, pollinator initiatives, recycling education resources, and biodiversity-focused projects that continue contributing to campus culture today.

Eco Grants Overview

Fiscal Year	Applications Received	Projects Completed	Projects
2023/2024	9	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Culinary Composting -Office Supply Recycling -Sustainability Hub -Refillable White Board Pens -Library Sustainability Book Collection
2024/2025	5	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sustainability Study Room -Recycling Champions -VCC Bee Project -Butterflyway
2025/2026	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sewing Machine Lending -VCC Bee Project

Projects varied in scale and level of participation. Some applicants led initiatives from conception to completion, while others contributed ideas, implementation support, or collaborated under mentorship.

Eco Grants and the Sustainable Development Goals

The Eco Grants program supports Vancouver Community College's commitment to sustainability by empowering students, faculty, and staff to develop projects that create positive environmental and social impacts on campus.

While each project addresses unique sustainability challenges and opportunities, together they contribute to several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including education, responsible consumption, biodiversity, climate action, and community engagement.

The following projects demonstrate how small, locally driven initiatives can contribute to broader global sustainability objectives.

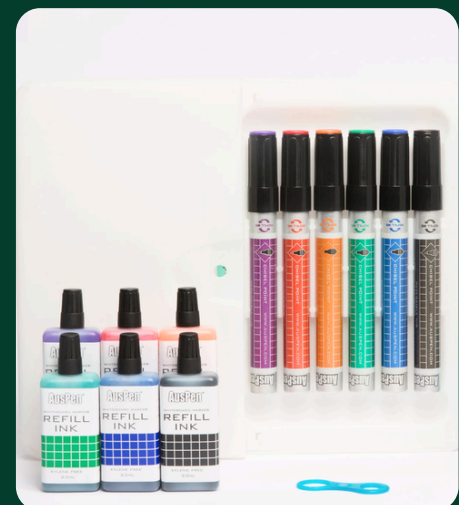


The sustainable development goals.
Illustration: un.org

Waste Reduction

Refillable Whiteboard Pens

The Biology and Math departments piloted refillable whiteboard markers, exploring opportunities to reduce plastic waste and promote more sustainable classroom practices.



Initiated by faculty member
Jennifer Kelley
Supported by Emily Drew

UN Sustainability Goals



Recycling Champions

A fun and creative video showcases how to recycle various products on campus following City of Vancouver waste guidelines, and explains why recycling is important. It also highlights the challenges students and staff may face when arriving from different municipalities, each with its own recycling protocols.



Initiated by student Harleen Kaur (pictured). Self supported project.

UN Sustainability Goals



Office Supply Recycling

Starting in September 2024, as a pilot program, recycling bins for school and office supplies were provided in common areas at both campuses. Students and employees can recycle items such as pens, scissors, paperclips, and staplers, promoting a more sustainable campus environment.



Photo: Richard Fishman

Initiated by student Marcus Ng (pictured) and faculty member Emily Simpson. Supported by Facilities Management.

UN Sustainability Goals



Sustainability Spaces and Student Well-being

Sustainability Hub and Books

Located at the Broadway campus Learning Centre, the Sustainability Hub provides a space for students to explore sustainability topics and connect with environmental learning resources. The Hub features a sustainability book collection developed through Eco Grant funding, with selected titles displayed nearby to encourage curiosity and learning.

The tent, donated by Heritage Furniture, has also become a flexible space where students can rest, learn, play guitar, and connect with others, helping create a more welcoming and engaging campus environment.



Photo: Mari Paz Vera

Initiated by faculty member Mari Paz Vera.
Supported by the Learning Centre and
Facilities Management.

UN Sustainability Goals



Sustainability Study Room

On a busy downtown campus, nature can feel distant. To foster calm and connection to nature, the library created an eco-inspired study space featuring a forest mural and a height-adjustable table to support accessibility. The space supports student well-being and inspires learning.

The mural material is fibre-based and contains at least 30 percent recycled content.



Photo: Fionna Chong

Initiated by faculty member Mari Paz Vera.
Supported by the Library and
Facilities Management.

UN Sustainability Goals



Building a Pollinator Culture

Bee VCC Project

Over multiple years, Eco Grants supported the development of pollinator-focused initiatives that evolved into a broader sustainability and biodiversity culture at VCC.

In 2024, VCC became a Bee City Campus and in 2025 hosted Bee Fest activities including bee hatchings, pollinator education, honey tasting, wildflower planting, and community engagement.



Photo: Emily Drew

Initiated by administrator Diana Cabrero.
Supported by Facilities Management.

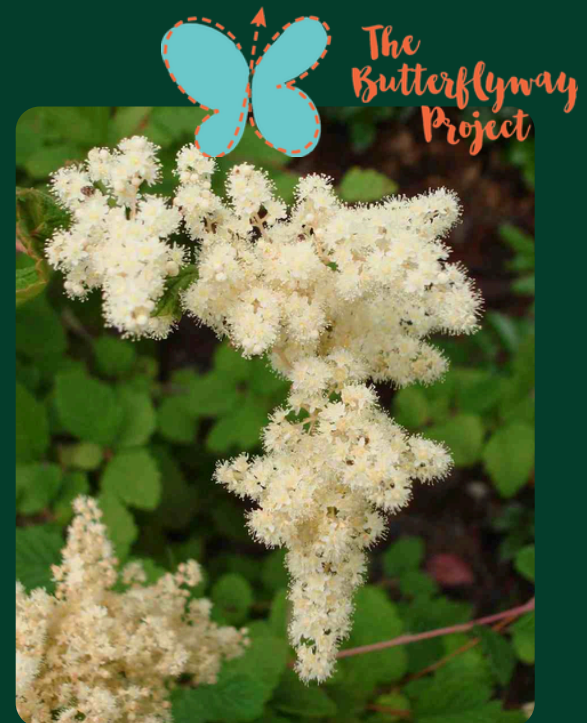
UN Sustainability Goals



Butterflyway Project

VCC's Broadway campus is now a David Suzuki Butterflyway Project site. The already well-established Indigenous Garden and campus landscaping feature many native plants. By adding more butterfly-friendly plant species, VCC is enhancing courtyards and supporting biodiversity locally and globally. This aligns with student Jashan Sandhu's proposal to plant more trees.

UN Sustainability Goals



Initiated by student Jashan Sandhu
Supported by Emily Drew
and Facilities Management.

Circular Economy

Sewing Machine Lending

Two sewing machines have been added to the library's lending collection. Staff and students can borrow them for personal or school-related projects and repairs. This supports a circular economy through sharing, reusing, repairing, and reducing textile waste.



Photo: Mari Paz Vera

Initiated by faculty member Mari Paz Vera.
Supported by the Library.

UN Sustainability Goals



Culinary Composting

Two food composters were added to the Broadway kitchen, allowing culinary students to compost food waste and add it to the culinary gardens, helping complete the food production loop. These composters run twice daily, ensuring a continuous and efficient process for managing food waste.



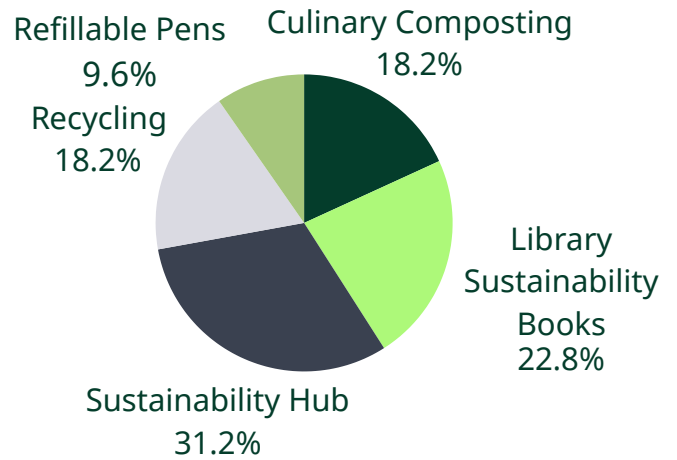
Initiated by student Yuliia Uhriumova.
Supported by Culinary Department.

UN Sustainability Goals

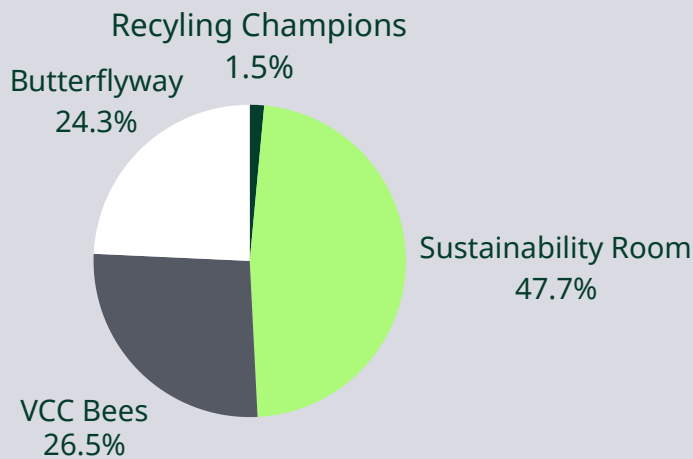


Eco Grants Budget 2023/2024

- The total budget for the Eco Grants was \$10,000 with \$9,600 spent.



Eco Grants Budget 2024/2025

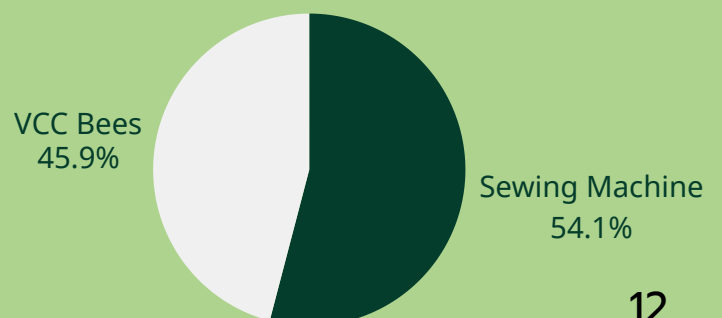


- The total budget for the Eco Grants was \$10,000 with 100% spent.
- Facilities contributed an additional \$10,000 to support these projects.

Eco Grants Budget 2025/2026

- The total budget for the Eco Grants was \$10,000 with \$3,100 spent.

Note: The remaining funds were not allocated due to reduced staff capacity





Achievements

Photo retrieved from: myVCC Instagram

Over three years, the Eco Grants program contributed to sustainability-focused campus spaces, pollinator education initiatives, recycling resources, biodiversity partnerships, mentorship opportunities, and increased visibility of sustainability across VCC.

The program also established operational knowledge, collaborative relationships, and engagement approaches that may support future sustainability initiatives at VCC.

ESAG is exploring pathways to collaborate with the VCC Foundation to establish an Eco Grant Leadership Award to formally recognize and highlight student participation. We hope this initiative will increase student involvement by offering a monetary incentive and providing formal recognition that students can highlight on their resumes.

Emerging Ideas and Exploratory Proposals

Several proposals contributed valuable sustainability ideas and conversations even when they were not operationally feasible at the time. These included, to mention a few, student Veerpal Dhaliwal's textbook and lab kit buyback proposal, instructor Pearly Tang's electronics repair and reuse concept, student Caden Dignard-Campbell's nature-inspired campus art proposal, and textile reuse and repair-based sustainability concepts.



Photo: Richard Fishman

Be an Eco Hero

Bring your sustainability
ideas to life at VCC

Contact us: eco@vcc.ca

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