



Fund supports training of lab assistants

Union secures agreement for government- and employer-funded medical lab assistants' educational program for Facilities members

Last week, the Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA), led by the Hospital Employees' Union (HEU), secured funding from the Ministry of Health and the Vancouver Island Health Authority to train 47 Facilities' members to become qualified medical lab assistants (MLAs).

This new program sets the stage for additional educational opportunities for members to be rolled out over the term of the recently renewed Facilities collective agreement.

During collective bargaining in 2018, HEU established a working group with employer and government representatives to create career-laddering opportunities for FBA members and attract new workers to occupations facing severe shortages. As a result, members have benefited from the Health Care Access Program and Medical Device Reprocessing Program. This provincial recruitment and retention working group was renewed in the latest Facilities collective agreement.

For this new MLA program, participants will complete a six to ten-month certification program at a post-secondary institution. In place of wages, employers will fund a weekly stipend of \$845 for the duration of the program for participants, as well as provide full compensation for tuition, fees, and the cost of necessary books.

Upon graduation, members will first be placed on the MLA casual list, while they seek to fill regular full-time or part-time MLA vacancies available at the worksite where they completed the education program. If none are available, they can look for opportunities at other worksites the employer operates.

For those interested in participating, you will be required to meet the post-secondary institution prerequisites and apply through your employer. As part of a commitment to greater diversity and inclusion in the health care system, applicants who identify as Black, Indigenous, or persons of colour are encouraged to apply.

Details on the application process will be posted to HEU's website at <https://www.heu.org/>.

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