

MEDIA ADVISORY

MindFuel receives a grant from the RBC Foundation and the Future Launch initiative to empower Alberta youth for the jobs of tomorrow

\$50,000 over one year in support for Alberta students to gain new skills and grow their networks while solving real-world problems through their research-based projects

October 17, 2018 – Calgary, AB – [MindFuel](#) (Science Alberta Foundation) is pleased to announce its continued support of the next generation of Alberta’s scientists, innovators and entrepreneurs through its geekStarter program, with \$50,000 in funding received from the RBC Foundation within RBC’s Future Launch initiative.

MindFuel’s programming focuses on skills development in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) to advance Canada’s innovation agenda. The funding from the RBC Foundation will specifically help high school students enrolled in the geekStarter program gain new skills and grow their networks while learning how to use STEM to address real-world problems and drive innovation.

The RBC Foundation grant, awarded to MindFuel for the second year, will be used to support student teams to develop projects using synthetic biology, robotics or computational thinking that solve real-world issues and to present solutions at prestigious international events such as iGEM (International Genetically Engineered Machine) and BIOMOD (Biomolecular Design) competitions. Among exemplar projects this year, the University of Alberta team is focused on solving bees’ diseases, using synthetic biology to target parasites that affect bees, while the team from the University of Lethbridge is working to create a nanoscale tool that limits the growth of invasive species in waterways. Projects like these are critical to supporting Canada’s innovation agenda, and RBC Foundation’s investment provides vital support for students today to become the researchers, leaders and entrepreneurs of tomorrow.

“As Canada’s largest science centre without walls, MindFuel’s mission for three decades has been to support students, both inside and outside of the classroom to develop critical STEM skills,” said Cassy Weber, MindFuel’s CEO. “Our programs such as [geekStarter](#) and workshops in innovation and design thinking, provide mentoring and skills training opportunities for students. Support from RBC Foundation is greatly appreciated as it helps us advance our mission through continued program development and delivery.”

“RBC is committed to helping young people gain the skills that will help them thrive in a drastically

changing workforce,” says Jerilynn Daniels, Regional Director, Community Marketing and Citizenship, RBC Alberta and Territories. “We’re proud to partner with organizations like MindFuel who are creating opportunities for Alberta’s next generation of innovators, disruptors and entrepreneurs.”

For further information, please contact:

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Quick Facts about MindFuel:

- Canada’s largest science centre without walls. Reached over 15,000 communities across Canada in 2017 and delivered over 2.4 million student learning sessions through STEM programming in French and English.
- geekStarter summary: Workshops, mentor-supported student research, and real-world problem-solving programming included:
 - 23 middle/high school teams; 433 students, 86,600 hours of student learning
 - 12 collegiate teams; 262 students, 52,400 hours of student learning
 - 36 multiyear projects; several have spun out into venture capital backed tech & biotech companies

Notable awards won internationally and in Canada, by the geekStarter teams:

- **University of Calgary iGEM team**
 - 2016 iGEM Giant Jamboree in Boston: Winner in the Best Integrated Human Practices category;
 - 2017 iGEM Giant Jamboree in Boston: Gold Medal winner and nomination for Best Manufacturing Project;
 - CAN-RGX 2018, Canadian Reduced Gravity Experiment Design Challenge: Selected as one of only four teams for participation in Canada’s first microgravity research competition for students, in collaboration with the National Research Council and the Canadian Space Agency.
- **University of Alberta iGEM team**
 - 2017 iGEM Giant Jamboree in Boston: Gold Medal winner
- **University of Lethbridge iGEM team**
 - 2017 iGEM Jamboree in Boston: Gold Medal winner and nomination for Best Integrated Human Practices, Best Education & Public Engagement, and Best Software.

- **Lethbridge High School team**
 - 2017 iGEM Jamboree in Boston: Silver Medal winner
- **Urban Tundra High School team, Edmonton**
 - 2017 iGEM Jamboree in Boston: Bronze Medal winner
- **APEX high school team, Calgary**
 - 2017 First Robotics Western Regionals: Ranked 6th out of 50 teams
- **Our Lady of the Snows high school team, Canmore**
 - Recently recognized by APEGA (Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta), as one of the eleven recipients of the first-ever *Innovation in Education Awards* for innovative, STEM-focused projects. Learnings the students gained through the geekStarter program helped them greatly to win this award.

About [RBC](#)

Royal Bank of Canada is a global financial institution with a purpose-driven, principles-led approach to delivering leading performance. Our success comes from the 81,000+ employees who bring our vision, values and strategy to life so we can help our clients thrive and communities prosper. As Canada's biggest bank, and one of the largest in the world based on market capitalization, we have a diversified business model with a focus on innovation and providing exceptional experiences to our 16 million clients in Canada, the U.S. and 34 other countries. Learn more at rbc.com.

We are proud to support a broad range of community initiatives through donations, community investments and employee volunteer activities. See how at rbc.com/community-sustainability/.

More information on RBC Future Launch at rbc.com/futurelaunch.

About [MindFuel](#)

Established in 1990 by James (Jim) Gray, O.C., as Science Alberta Foundation, MindFuel is a registered charitable organization focused on creating future generations of innovators and problem-solvers – directly related to helping Canada diversify its economy through a focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education and career paths. MindFuel supports teachers with award-winning programs and helps immerse students in the fun world of STEM through blended learning, which includes both digital and hands-on training, critical to advancing Canada's innovation agenda. For more information on programming, please visit mindfuel.ca.