

# Work-Able: Graduate Internship Program

## OVERVIEW

Work-Able is a 12-month paid internship program with the BC Public Service for recent post-secondary graduates (within the last three years) who self-identify as having a disability. Watch the program video for more information: [Work-Able](#)

## OBJECTIVES

The Work-Able internship program has multiple objectives from both the employer and employee perspective, including to:

- Increase the number of employees who self-identify as having a disability in the BC Public Service.
- Provide post-secondary graduates a paid work experience opportunity that will help build their resume and skills.
- Help recent graduates build their knowledge about public service roles and how the BC Public Service job application process works.
- Maintain or enhance current employees' understanding of working with co-workers who have disabilities.
- Increase the capacity of hiring managers in recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities.
- Increase understanding of best practices related to accommodation in the workplace.
- Promote a culture of diversity, inclusion and respect in the BC Public Service.

## Working to Create Positions

Up to 15 ministries are recruited to participate:

- One job posting goes live for 2 months in March/April with all 15 positions.
- Applicants complete a personal essay which is assessed by the Employee Accessibility Advisory Council (an internal employee committee).
- Successful candidates begin the application process to any of the 15 positions they believe they are qualified for (see next page for details).

### Candidates go through Recruitment Process

Applicants go through an application process that is as similar as possible to the application process for any position in the BC Public Service.

#### To be accepted into Work-Able:

- Applicants must provide a written essay between 500-750 words, which includes:
  - Examples of how two to three of their personal values align with the [BC Public Service values](#);
  - A description of how their strengths will enable success; and
  - A description of what will be a challenge.
- The essays are reviewed and assessed based on:
  - Alignment with BC Public Service values;
  - Self-awareness; and
  - Written communication.

#### Next steps:

- Applicants apply for positions they believe they are qualified for.
- Recruitment begins for each position.
- All positions are hired by the end of August.

#### Coaching and support to all applicants throughout the recruitment process include:

- Practice interview.
- Feedback, if requested.
- Accommodation to attend information sessions and interviews.
- All written assessments have an information session beforehand, so that applicants can ask questions to clarify expectations of the assignment.
- Interview questions for those invited to interview are provided 24 hours in advance.

For each position, the successful candidate has 24 hours to decide if they wish to accept the offer. If they accept, they are withdrawn from the other positions they have applied to.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

2015-16:

- Six out of nine employees continue to work in the BC Public Service

2016-17:

- Six out of 13 employees continue to work in the BC Public Service

## LESSONS LEARNED

In the two years this program has been in place, lessons learned include:

### Communication with Candidates

- Explain the recruitment timeline for the 15 different positions.
- Offer feedback at any time during the recruitment process.
- Be clear on timelines.
- Inform candidates whether they are successful or not as soon as possible.
- Offer information sessions to explain any written assessments.
- Offer practice interviews for applicants – competency based interviewing can be challenging for anyone.

### Preparing Mentors, Supervisors and Co-workers

- Upcoming mentors and supervisors are invited to respective orientation sessions where they meet current mentors and supervisors in this role so that they can learn from their peers.
- Advice from current mentors and supervisors includes everything from conversations on accommodation to how to navigate government data bases.
- Co-workers are invited to an “intentional conversation” to learn about the common barriers that employees with disabilities may face in the workplace. Common assumptions are challenged in addition to learning about different disabilities and available accommodation.

### Coaching

- Monthly individual check-ins with interns, supervisors and mentors allow each party to share confidentially how things are going.
- Coaching is provided as needed to support each party.

## NEXT STEPS

Work-Able has finished recruiting for the third cohort and is looking forward to recruiting ministries in the fall for the 2018-19 cohort.