

# Diversity Internship Program



[hsbc.ca](http://hsbc.ca)

## OVERVIEW

HSBC Bank Canada (HSBC) is the leading international bank in the country. Throughout their history, HSBC has been where the growth is: connecting customers to opportunities, enabling businesses to thrive and economies to prosper, helping people fulfil their hopes and dreams and realize their ambitions. Today they serve companies and individuals across Canada through three global business lines: Commercial Banking, Global Banking and Markets, and Retail Banking and Wealth Management. With a footprint that spans the globe, diversity of thought, perspective and experience is part of HSBC's DNA.

A diverse and inclusive workforce is part of their organizational culture, reflecting their belief that diversity of thought, background and perspective make HSBC a stronger organization. Simply put, their diverse workforce allows them to benefit from a variety of perspectives and strengthens their local and global competitiveness. As part of their commitment to diversity, one of the projects HSBC recently took on is the Diversity Internship Program. This program aimed to create a pipeline of employees from the Indigenous and Persons with Disabilities community.

## OBJECTIVES

The Diversity Internship Program was designed to address a gap HSBC had in their workforce, based on the available labour market associated with persons with disabilities and indigenous people. It was also designed fulfill the following objectives:

- Build a diverse pipeline of future bank employees from persons with disabilities and indigenous people.

- Work towards an overall representation of persons with disabilities to 4.9% of the workforce (from 4.3%).
- Be corporate leaders, leading the way for employers across the country in diverse hiring.

## APPROACH

The program began in 2013, in an intentional effort to hire persons with disabilities, and build a pipeline of employees to move through the bank. Their approach included:

- Finding a strategic partner from the Disability Service Organization community.
- Hiring qualified interns with disabilities.
- Placing candidates in appropriate roles.
- Assessing any needed workplace accommodations.
- Encouraging newly hired employees to connect with Ability, an Employee Resource Group for persons with disabilities in the workplace.
- After the internship was complete, the commitment was to ensure that high performing interns would be given first consideration for open roles.

### Find a Strategic Partner

HSBC decided to work with Open Door Group on this pilot because of their work with other employers on hiring persons with disabilities. Open Door Group understood HSBC's needs and recommended candidates with the right skills to do the job. They were very organized, took time to understand HSBC's needs, and ensured that the candidates they put forward were the right fit

### Hired Qualified Interns

Candidates could apply online, some were recommended by Open Door Group, and some found the role through their own channels. A dedicated diversity recruiter from HSBC reviewed the resumes and applications, to understand and qualify their experience. The recruiter was tasked with looking for passion, grit, and an eagerness to learn – as HSBC can offer training on specific skills, but attitude is much harder to teach.

### Placing Candidates

It was important for HSBC to ensure that they were leveraging the skills and talents of the people they hired. Therefore, correct placement of the candidates was a big priority. No area of the bank was off limits and the main objective was to find a role that was mutually beneficial – where the candidate could utilize and develop skills, and in an area of the business that needed support.

### **Assess Workplace Accommodations**

HSBC worked directly with their hired interns to decide on any workplace accommodations that needed to take place. They worked with the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation & Work and the Job Accommodation Service on any requested accommodations needed, such as desk adjustments, accessible software, etc.

### **Connecting with Ability**

Once the employee was hired, they were introduced to the Ability Employee Resource Group. They are invited to participate in the events, communications, and the team. This allows them to connect with other employees who have a different ability – and get peer support as needed.

### **Transitioning to Permanent Roles**

The CEO Office had budgeted for the internship program and therefore interns were offered to each department, without it having a budgetary or head count implication on the department. However, part of the agreement with each department was to ensure that any successful intern was given first consideration for any permanent position that opened up in the department following the internship. This was key to ensuring that the interns were able to transition into permanent roles following their internship.

## **OUTCOMES**

As a result of the 2015 program, five interns from the disability community were offered internships, and all five of them transitioned to full time roles. Through this original pilot, HSBC developed a number of key relationships, which they sustained after the original pilot.

HSBC utilized the services of the Western Institute of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to support interpreting services. They have continued to utilize these services as part of their day-to-day business after the original pilot. In fact, as the number of Deaf employees has increased, the usage of ASL interpreters has also increased significantly.

HSBC also developed a relationship with the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation & Work and the Job Accommodation Service to meet any onsite workplace assessments and accommodations. They continue to utilize these services on an as needed basis.

In recognition of their recruitment efforts, the Head of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion was asked to keynote Open Door Group's annual employer's conference in summer 2015. The keynote centred on HSBC's experience with the internship program and physical accommodations HSBC made in their workplace.



As a result of the Diversity Internship Program and other initiatives relating to persons with disabilities, the total full-time population for persons with disabilities in the workforce increased by 3.6% and the total part-time population decreased by 4.5%.

## LESSONS LEARNED

In the four years of this program, HSBC has learned a great deal and is keen to share that information with other employers. Some of the key lessons learned are:

### **Dedicated Resource**

HSBC credits a large part of this project's success with having a dedicated person responsible for it. Due to HSBC's size and commitment, they have a dedicated Head of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. For smaller organizations, they would recommend assigning the program to someone specifically, so there is an internal lead responsible for its execution.

### **Being Measured Drives Results**

HSBC was audited by Canadian Human Rights Commission and it was recommended that they increase the representation of persons with disabilities in their workforce. The CEO's office was also closely tied to this project and it elevated the priority of the program for the organization. HSBC being measured externally, and leaders being measured internally, drove results. HSBC would recommend that other organizations embarking on a similar path introduce mechanisms to measure progress and results.

### **Critical to Create the Foundation First**

All managers went through respectful workplace and unconscious bias training. The culture of open-mindedness and mindfulness was important to develop before persons with disabilities were hired. The development of this culture meant that persons with disabilities were supported when they entered HSBC, and as they moved through the organization, increasing their retention and role fulfillment.

## NEXT STEPS

HSBC's dedicated diversity recruiter is seeking candidates with disabilities for open positions. HSBC's internship pilot program has ceased, and they are moving to integrate persons with disabilities into their workforce directly. The internship program taught them a great deal that they can apply to their normal hiring practices. HSBC feels it's important for the sustainability of diverse hiring to end the internship phase and integrate these practices into their hiring practices.