

October 25, 2023

To whom it may concern,

The Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) has received a request to provide a summary of information and recommendations in regards to the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program to the The House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA).

I would like to thank you and Service Canada for the funding that we received to hire summer students at the Rick Hansen Foundation. Without the financial help, we would not have been able to hire the bright and helpful students that joined us over the 4 month period. It was a great opportunity for both our organization and the students, particularly our co-op students.

The CSJ students support the important work of the Foundation, helping us to increase efficiency, and move projects and initiatives forward. As employees they gain beneficial skills in administration, office etiquette, remote work, and building professional relationships. They are also exposed to and taught various software programs that will support them in their future careers. Just as importantly, they learn about the work of the Foundation to break down barriers for people living with a disability, and learn what accessibility and inclusion mean in this context. We prioritize hiring candidates who have disclosed having a disability.

We have hired through the CSJ program for over 10 years and we have been able to hire many CSJ employees beyond their term.

The Foundation truly appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on this program. Based on our experiences, we would like to offer some recommendations for the program.

- If possible, allow for some position terms to be up to 12 or 16 weeks. We find the term goes very quickly. For the employee, we would be able to provide a better learning opportunity within 12 to 16 weeks.
- It would be helpful to allow a longer duration in which to complete the 280 hours. This would accommodate vacation and sick time requests of participants. Currently, we have to request special permission when an employee has a vacation planned, and this slows down the hiring process.
- It would be helpful to allow a choice to work full time or part time hours, as we find part time hours work best for some employees who have disclosed having a disability. Perhaps if there was a way to pre-approve accommodation requests for employees with a disability, it would streamline the hiring of these individuals. Currently, we have to request special approval for accommodations.
- For the last few years, funding has been approved at the end of April. If the notification could be sent by the end of March, it would allow the Foundation to recruit candidates in time for a May 1 start date.
- Past years have occasionally allowed the Foundation to hire CSJ students outside of the summer months. This arrangement worked very well.

A brief description of RHF:

Barriers limit the things people with disabilities can do, the places they can go, or the attitudes of others toward them. Removing these barriers is why the Rick Hansen Foundation exists. The Foundation was established in 1988 following Rick Hansen's Man In Motion World Tour with two big dreams; to remove barriers for people with disabilities and find a cure for paralysis. Ever since, we've worked to fund spinal cord injury research, increase awareness, change attitudes, and remove one of the most fundamental barriers people with disabilities continue to face every day: physical barriers in the places we live, work, learn and play.

Thank you again for this opportunity, and please let me know if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

Amanda Abrams  
HR Coordinator  
Rick Hansen Foundation