Education and Training

Human Resources

Best Practice Guide
Recruitment and Selection

Last updated 10 February 2020

March 2019

State of Victoria
Department of Education and Training

This document and a non-accessible version are available on the Department of Education and Training's HRWeb.

The material guide has been drawn from a range of sources in partnership with EY People Advisory Services. Intellectual property has been attributed to the original author where possible.

Published in Melbourne, Victoria

Contents

Overview

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this Recruitment and Selection: Best Practice Guide (the Guide) is to provide best practice methods and tips for managers, selection panel members and others involved in the recruitment and selection of staff at the Department of Education and Training (the Department).

This Guide uses the generic term 'hiring manager' to refer to any manager, executive officer, selection panel member or other person involved in a recruitment and selection process. It is intended that this Guide can be applied to recruitment and selection processes across the public service.

The Guide is complementary to the Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service guide, which establishes all policy and processes in relation to recruitment and selection at the Department. This Guide does not create any new policy or obligations beyond what is provided for in this document, and does not repeat in detail any policy or process advice it contains. The purpose of this Guide is to assist hiring managers to understand and apply the principles of best practice recruitment.

SCOPE

This Guide relates to all recruitment and selection processes in the public service excluding:

- information about modes of employment or classification
- secondments, transfers and promotions
- record keeping requirements
- processes for employment of casual staff and labour hire/agency staff.

More information about the above topics can be found on the Department's HRWeb.

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

This document is structured according to the recruitment and selection best practice framework set out on page 7, which is comprised of four stages. Each stage of the framework has a dedicated section in this Guide, which starts by asking:

- What is the objective of that stage in the framework?
- When should you do it?
- How should you do it?

The answers to these questions appear below the following headings:

- Objective
- When should you do it?
- How should you do it?

There are also 'Tips' and 'What does good look like?' sections, which appear underneath the following headings:

- Tip
- What does good look like?

Finally, there are appendices with additional resources and information. References to the appendices are made throughout the Guide, mapping them to relevant content.

INTRODUCTION

Our people are our biggest asset, and recruiting new employees represents a significant investment of time and effort. In addition to the cost of advertising and recruitment, the value represented by selecting the right employee for the position can be found in higher performance, increased team morale and increased productivity. A robust, well-planned recruitment process means that we are better placed to select the best person for the position and the needs of the Department. We are also more likely to select someone who is happy to be in the role and able to flourish.

This Guide follows a four-stage structure that is informed by best practice. The following list illustrates the hierarchy of legislation, policies and practices, and links the Guide to Department-wide policies and work area-specific processes:

1. Department recruitment policy, strategic and legislative instruments
    - Public Administration Act 2004
    - DET organisation policy and strategy
2. Department recruitment guides
    - Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service Guide
    - Recruitment and Selection: Best Practice Guide (this Guide)
3. Work area processes
    - Specific recruitment processes across the four framework stages and key activities that underpin each sub-process
    - Processes may vary based on geography and business

Legal requirements

Applying best practice to recruitment and selection also ensures that our processes are aligned with legislative obligations, the Department's values, and the principles of merit and equity (i.e. public sector employment principles, established under the *Public Administration Act 2004*).

Recruitment at the Department is governed by a legal framework that includes the *Public Administration Act 2004*. More information about the legal requirements for recruitment can be found in the Department's Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service guide, the Department's values HRWeb page, the Legislation HRWeb page, and in Appendix 1.

Diversity and inclusion

The Department is committed to supporting diversity and inclusion in our workforce. This Guide promotes diversity and inclusion as an integral part of all recruitment and selection practices – not just as a standalone consideration.

Hiring managers are encouraged to think broadly about the benefits of a workforce with diverse skills and perspectives, which represents the community that we serve. Thinking about this at the beginning of the recruitment process will enable you to consider whether you wish to target some groups in your recruitment processes – for example Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander applicants, or applicants with disability. It will also assist you to be mindful of using inclusive language in job advertisements and position descriptions, to encourage a diverse range of applicants and avoid any stereotyping.

The Department has nine diversity and inclusion focus areas:

- inclusive and diverse leadership
- inclusive systems and processes
- workforce flexibility
- gender equality
- Koorie
- generational diversity
- cultural diversity
- LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex)
- disability.

Fair and inclusive recruitment practices are critical to achieving diverse and representative workplaces. We each have the responsibility to make sure we are using inclusive practices every time a vacancy occurs.

This includes making sure that we are able to attract the best applicants from all diversity groups. It also means that we use consistent, fair and equitable selection practices to recruit a diverse workforce. Unconscious bias can play a major factor in recruitment decision-making. It is important to be aware of common unconscious biases and stereotyping found in recruitment processes. More information can be found on the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion HRWeb page.

Tip

- Use different channels to promote your vacancy, to ensure you attract a diverse pool of applicants. More information about advertising can be found in Stage 2: Attract.
- Be explicit about the Department's commitment to diversity and inclusion. Encourage underrepresented groups to apply, particularly if they would be ideally suited to the role (e.g. including 'we strongly encourage Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people to apply'). All Department position descriptions include a statement about diversity.
- For more information about diversity requirements in recruitment and selection at the Department, please refer to the Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service guide.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION – A BEST PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

A clear, well-defined recruitment and selection process can help to ensure that all the necessary elements have been covered. The four key stages to best practice recruitment and selection are outlined below.

Each stage of the recruitment and selection process is explored in further detail in this Guide, and additional Department-specific checklists and tools are provided in the appendices.

Stage 1: Analyse

Employment decisions should aim to support the achievement of the Department's vision and objectives. Job analysis is a systematic examination of the purpose, responsibilities and scope of a position in supporting business objectives. It can help you to assess whether a position is required and what you wish to achieve in filling it. The hiring manager prepares for the recruitment process by considering current and future staffing needs, undertaking a job analysis and developing a position description.

Stage 2: Attract

In attracting applicants to a role, it is important to promote the Department as a great place to work which stands out from the competition. Our objective is to attract applicants who want to work in the public sector and who understand the Department's values. Consider leveraging social media and the Department's online presence to attract job seekers and show that the Department offers competitive benefits, a great work culture and room for professional growth.

Attraction includes the following steps: determine application requirements in advertisements, advertise to attract diverse applicants, engage and attract prospective applicants and plan the selection process.

Stage 3: Assess and select

When determining assessment and selection methods, it is important to know your audience. Make sure you have a robust approach that will enable you to effectively differentiate between prospective applicants and assess their suitability for a role with the Department. At the same time, any biases should be eliminated.

When selecting an applicant, negotiation is a critical part of the recruitment process. This section of the Guide includes practical tips on negotiating with preferred applicants.

Stage 4: On-board and evaluate

Once the offer of employment has been formally accepted, it is time to on-board the new employee. On-boarding refers to the procedures and actions to effectively integrate a new employee into an organisation. It is important to start the engagement positively – effective on-boarding has a significant impact on employee productivity, retention and safety. A smooth on-boarding process gives a good first impression of the Department and helps the employee adapt more quickly to their new job.

Stage 1: Analyse

OBJECTIVE

Job analysis is a systematic examination of the purpose, responsibilities and scope of a position in supporting business objectives. It can help to assess whether a position is required and what you wish to achieve in filling it.

The job analysis provides a foundation for the position description and helps to establish the standards (capabilities, knowledge, skills and personal attributes) and any selection criteria needed to perform the position.

A thorough job analysis will support you to:

- produce a high quality position description that gives clear information to potential applicants and hiring managers, and informs how the position is classified
- attract suitable applicants and select the best person for the position
- consider options that would make the position accessible to a diverse pool of applicants (e.g. flexible work arrangements or workplace adjustments)
- design assessments around the selection criteria for the position.

When should you do it?

Myth: Job analysis prior to recruitment is only required for new positions.

Myth busted: It is considered best practice to undertake a job analysis for every position you plan to fill.

When filling new positions, job analysis is conducted when the need for a new position is identified. You may be able to adapt an existing position description from a similar position.

When filling existing positions, a vacancy provides an opportunity to review the position to decide whether it is still required, or if the outcomes of the position can be delivered in some other way. Jobs are not static and it is important to take this opportunity to review and update an existing position description to reflect changes to priorities, structure, regulatory framework, strategy, operating environment or technology.

How should you do it?

1. Consider the team's current and future operational needs
2. Review existing position description
3. Speak with key stakeholders
4. Consider the objectives and purpose of the position
5. List key responsibilities and accountabilities of the position
6. List the capabilities required to succeed in the position
7. Consider level of competency
8. Develop selection criteria

CONDUCTING A JOB ANALYSIS

To conduct a job analysis, the manager should draw on a range of information about the position and the organisational context. Each job analysis will be unique, however the following steps provide suggested actions for a successful job analysis. Please note that job analysis is optional – only take those actions which are appropriate to the type of position you are recruiting to.

1. Consider the team’s current and future operational needs
    - Consider any relevant business plans or strategic plans, and how this position would fit with other positions in the team
    - Discuss your team’s goals with your manager to consider if a vacancy should be filled, or whether it first needs re-design
2. Review existing position description
    - Review the existing position description or a similar position description from the team
    - Research and compare similar positions by searching the Jobs and Skills Exchange website.

3. Speak with key stakeholders

- Speak with stakeholders who understand the purpose and outcomes of the position (such as managers, leadership, clients, team members, and persons currently in the position or a similar position)

4. Consider the objectives and purpose of the position

- Refer to any discussions with stakeholders, and consult business plans and strategic plans
- Consider the objectives and purpose of the position in the broader context of the team's goals over the short and long term

5. List key responsibilities and accountabilities of the position

- Responsibilities are what organisations use to define the work that needs to be performed in a role and the functions that an employee is accountable for.

6. List the capabilities required to succeed in the position

- Based on your research, develop a list of the capabilities an applicant needs to succeed in the position, including knowledge, skills and personal qualities. For example:
  i. knowledge and skills could include people management, written communications, advanced computer skills, specialist expertise in data analysis
  ii. personal qualities could include conceptual and analytical ability, relationship building, detail focus, influence and negotiation.
- For more information on capability-based position descriptions, please refer to the Position Description Tool and Capability Framework.

7. Consider the level of competency

- Consider the position's work value, to help you determine the right classification. For more information on classifications, please refer to the Victorian Public Service Career Structure HRWeb page.

8. Develop selection criteria

- Selection criteria should indicate the capabilities – knowledge, skills and personal qualities – essential to succeed in the position.

Tip

The job analysis should:

- Be objective and based on a range of evidence
- consider any essential requirements that the successful applicant will need to perform the position from day one
- look beyond the current position structure and consider options for reshaping the position to open it up to a more diverse field of applicants (e.g. redistributing specific, incidental tasks which are not key requirements of the position).

It is important to identify the right recruitment need

- Define the position's capabilities – consider job classification, role profiles, skills and competencies
  - Each job classification demands different capabilities and types of people. Keep this in mind when defining capabilities required for the role or classification.
- Understand requirements over time
  - Use workforce data to estimate and forecast the number of resources required over time, based on forecasting techniques, current attrition rates and growth.
- Prioritise critical skillsets and roles
  - Prioritise hiring for critical skillsets based on growth, demand, attrition rates and future need. Determine where investment and efforts will be focused.
- Identify the right talent - not just the best, but the best for the job
  - Based on the requirements, and priorities – determine what talent is the best suited to meet the need.

Job analysis should be tailored based on the complexity of the role

For critical or complex positions, you may wish to use additional techniques to establish a clear picture of the position and the required capabilities, such as:

- critical incident interviews to define behaviours that will differentiate between success and failure in the position
- forward-looking interviews with senior managers to anticipate future directions
- structured position analysis questionnaires
- direct observation of someone performing the role.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

The main output of a job analysis in recruitment is the position description. Its main purpose is to inform applicants about the position and promote the Department as a great place to work.

A position description should include accountabilities, responsibilities, organisational information, and selection criteria – that is, the knowledge, skills and personal qualities required to succeed in the position. The position description should be relevant to the current position, but also consider future operational needs, to ensure that you are able to attract people who can adapt to changing work.

Why are position descriptions important?

A good position description effectively sells a job. It provides accurate information to potential applicants and helps them decide if they have what it takes to do the job (and therefore apply). It also sets the organisational context, the context of your team, and expectations around employee behaviour such as the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct and the Department's values. A good position description benefits you and your team because:

- it actively encourages applications from people with the potential to be an asset for the Department now and in the future
- applicant assessment is more accurate, appropriate and objective
- clear and meaningful descriptions minimise surprises for the successful applicant once they start the role.

What good looks like

The expectation is that position descriptions are clear, concise, motivating, and easy to understand for a wide variety of potential applicants. Position descriptions can be used to source and recruit applicants to apply for future roles, distributed to stakeholders involved in the selection process, and shared with potential applicants and applicants for more information on the role. These position descriptions may also be used by managers for various purposes, including performance management. The position description consists of four elements:

1. The **Position Summary** is a holistic description of the job position, its primary function and major objectives related to the vision of the Department and should include:
    - information on expected outcomes of the role as well as reporting relationships
    - standard language to explain Department-wide requirements
    - information about the Department's values (available on the Department's values HRWeb page).
2. **Knowledge, skills and abilities** are characteristics that enable an employee to accomplish the activities that need to be performed in their job. Together, they should:
    - measure how well an applicant is suited for the job they currently hold
    - target 5-10 succinct statements and differentiate the knowledge, skills and abilities specific to each position
    - be evaluated during the interview process.
3. **Responsibilities and duties** describe the scope, complexity and level of accountability for the position and should:
    - be comprehensive but concise and easy to understand
    - use active verbs to describe the duties, not how the duties are performed
    - be used primarily by the applicant to learn about the position
    - be adaptable so that they may be used as a part of performance management activities.

4. **Qualifications** represent the minimum and/or preferred experience, education, certifications and/or work experience required in an ideal applicant for the position:
    - PDs must include all minimum qualifications required to perform the position
    - hiring managers have discretion to define preferred qualifications based on the requirements of the position
    - required qualifications will be used to establish an adequate talent pool; preferred qualifications will be used during the selection process.

Stage 2: Attract

OBJECTIVE

In attracting applicants to a role, it is important to promote the Department as a great place to work, and one that stands out from the competition. Our objective is to attract applicants who want to work in the public sector and who understand the Department's values. Consider leveraging social media and the Department's online presence to attract job seekers and show that the Department offers competitive employment benefits, a diverse and respectful work culture with an emphasis on room for professional growth.

When should you do it?

Steps should be taken to attract a diverse pool of suitable applicants after a thorough job analysis has been completed and the resulting position description has been reviewed and finalised.

How should you do it?

Attraction includes the following steps:

1. determine application requirements in advertisements
2. advertise to attract diverse applicants
3. engage and attract prospective applicants
4. plan the selection process.

DETERMINE APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS IN ADVERTISEMENTS

The hiring manager is responsible for determining application requirements, such as addressing selection criteria in a separate document or making a presentation to the selection panel. There are benefits to limiting application requirements, including:

- reducing the cost and burden of the recruitment process for the applicant and the selection panel
- attracting a broader pool of applicants as a result of applicants seeing the process as less onerous
- increased opportunity to attract diverse applicants who meet the selection criteria, including those from outside the public sector or from a culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Application requirements should be clearly stated in the job advertisement and position description.

Myth: Applications must address the selection criteria in a separate document.

Myth busted: While applicants should address the selection criteria in their application, this does not have to be in a separate document. The applicant may choose to address the selection criteria as part of their resume, or the selection panel may determine that applicants should complete a questionnaire embedded within the application form. Regardless of the selection tools used, the selection panel must ensure they assess applicants against the selection criteria consistently and objectively.

ADVERTISE TO ATTRACT DIVERSE APPLICANTS

The advertisement is your first opportunity to give prospective applicants a clear idea of the position and attract them to it. Just as you would expect an applicant to carefully craft their application, writing a job advertisement requires careful thought and preparation. Putting a little time into developing an engaging and informative job advertisement can help to attract high quality applicants who have a good understanding of the position for which they are applying.

The following steps will help you to develop a job advertisement to attract diverse, suitable applicants.

Position title: this is the first thing that a prospective applicant will see when searching for a job. Make the position title as descriptive and as accurate as possible. For example, instead of 'Project Officer', include the name of the team or project where the position is situated, such as 'Project Officer, Student Engagement'. This can help capture an applicant's attention and distinguish your position from others.

Job summary or role: this provides the next opportunity to engage with potential applicants. This should be an interesting snapshot of the position designed to attract high-quality applicants and persuade them to apply.

Job details or responsibilities: this section provides a brief description that successfully promotes the position. Further job details will be provided as a link to the position description. Provide an overview of what the job involves, including priorities, opportunities, challenges, responsibilities and reporting lines.

ENGAGE AND ATTRACT PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS

The aim of the advertisement is to engage and attract as many high quality, diverse applicants as possible, giving you a strong pool of applicants from which to select.

Highlight the benefits and reasons to work for the Department

Be specific: providing specific information boosts your persuasiveness and credibility as omitting this can lead to confusion for applicants:

- Before: You will lead a large team.
- After: You will lead a team of approximately 20 people.
- Before: You will report to senior management.
- After: You will report to the Director.

Tell job seekers what they will gain and what they will contribute to:

- Before: Provide human resources support in the area of diversity and inclusion.
- After: Make an impact where it counts – help to shape workplace cultures of inclusion and respect at one of Victoria's largest employers while furthering your career.
- Before: Contribute to the educational outcomes of students.
- After: Collaborate with staff from across the Department to develop excellence in educational practice, targeted to individual learning and development needs.

Attract applicants who want to work in the public sector:

- Before: The successful applicant will share our organisation's values.
- After: The successful applicant will understand the Department's values, want to work in the public sector, and will abide by the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct.

Use accessible language and formatting

Job seekers are more likely to respond to advertisements they are able to understand.

- Be concise:
  - use short, simple sentences or dot points and avoid repetition
  - you do not need to include every conceivable task that might be undertaken, or embellish the position by overstating the tasks.
- Use the first person:
  - speak directly to prospective applicants by using the first person
  - saying 'you' instead of the 'successful applicant' helps the job seeker to imagine themselves in the position and assists the applicant to begin building a relationship with the team.
- Use plain English:
  - use language that is clear and easy to understand
  - limit sentences to 25 words or less. If a person has to read a job advertisement several times to understand it, they are less likely to apply.
- Avoid any jargon or acronyms:
  - jargon makes it harder for the applicant to really understand the position and can make it difficult for applicants from diverse backgrounds or professional fields to apply
  - technical or specialist terms are suitable for positions requiring that expertise and can be useful to screen out unqualified applicants.
- Format for accessibility:
  - use subheadings to help applicants navigate the advertisement
  - break up large blocks of information with paragraphs and use bullet points where possible
  - more information can be found on the Department's Accessibility Information and Resources intranet page.
- Inclusive language:

- choose words that do not marginalise people because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, socioeconomic status, appearance, gender or any other factor
- more information can be found in the Victorian Public Sector Inclusive Language Guide.

What good looks like

The Department's *Writing Style Guide* outlines how to produce consistent and professional written communication. The following is an example of what to include in a job advertisement template. For more information about advertisement requirements, please refer to the Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service guide.

- Start with a few dot points and a lead line to grab the reader's attention – emphasising why the Department is a great place to work:
    - Enjoy a career that makes a difference by helping to shape the education experience for Victoria.
    - Be part of a vibrant Department culture with a strong sense of community and inclusion.
    - Join the Education State.
    - At the Department of Education and Training, we are committed to giving every Victorian the best learning and development experience, making our state a smarter, fairer, more prosperous place.
- Add a short paragraph, with a maximum of 2-3 sentences, with an overview of the Department, division, or team. The People Division may be able to assist you with this.
- Add information about the role:
    - classification
    - Ongoing or fixed term (until which date)
    - full time or part time (number of hours per week)
- Add a short paragraph, with a maximum of 2-3 sentences, with an overview explaining what the role is and what tasks will need to be undertaken in the position (this should align with the position description).
- Add information about the successful applicant. To be successful in this role you will have the following:
    - skills
    - experience
    - qualifications
    - and should systematically address the selection criteria in your application.
- Add contact details:
    - name, position title
    - email address
    - telephone number
- Specify the application close date
- Inform the applicant that further information can be found at www.education.vic.gov.au.

Edit and review the advertisement before posting

Any job advertisement should be reviewed before posting on job sites. Show the advertisement to a colleague to ensure that it is clear and accurately describes the position. Ask the reviewer to double check that all details – position title, classification and salary range – are consistent with the position description as approved by the hiring manager.

Any errors in spelling or grammar and any inconsistencies in the details of the job will deter high-performing applicants, or may cause confusion. Take the opportunity to ask the following questions:

- Is the advertisement engaging?
- Does it accurately describe the position?
- Is the language clear, inclusive and free of jargon?
- Could anything be phrased more concisely?
- Have I consulted the Department's *Writing Style Guide* for advice?
- Will the advertisement attract the best applicants for the position?
- Will the advertisement attract applicants that understand the Department's values, want to work in the public sector, and will abide by the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct?
- Has a peer or stakeholder reviewed the advertisement, or even someone from outside your team or the Department?

Tip

Consider using a variety of channels, including social media, in order to attract the best applicants:

- 52 per cent of job seekers first visit a company's online properties – website, social media, etc. – to gain insight into the organisation and its culture.
- 74 per cent of employers reported using their personal and/or professional social media accounts to promote their organisation.
- 62 per cent of job seekers visit social media channels to evaluate an employer.
- 76 per cent of companies choose social media to communicate.

  Data source: CareerArc.

Tip

It is important to be strategic to ensure you have the best applicant pool for each role.

- Social media: one of the newest – and most successful – avenues for communicating your brand, social media is a useful component to today's recruitment strategy.
- Local or national media: submit recruitment advertisements to local newsletters or apply for 'best place to work' competitions. It can help the Department gain recognition and public exposure.
- Your employees: employees can help identify job applicants and communicate what it's like to work for the Department. Research demonstrates that word of mouth is perceived as at least twice as credible as advertisements.
- Intranet: ongoing internal communications about job opportunities enables employees to identify potential career pathways. Intranet systems distribute important information and can address department-related questions.
- Job advertisements: job advertisements can be the first introduction job seekers have to the Department as a prospective employer. Include the Department's vision and objectives and include recognition the Department has received as an employer.
- Jobs and Skills Exchange: all job opportunities are advertised on the JSE where applicants can find Department vacancies. For more information about advertising, please refer to Appendix 1.

Tip

General tips:

- understand and promote the Department as a public sector employer – throughout the recruitment process, convey what is expected of employees who work for the Department (for example, abiding by the Department's values and the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct).

Position-specific tips:

- compile a list of success factors for the job
  - profile current and former employees successful in the role to gather similar characteristics
- focus on what needs to be done on the job
- determine and articulate why a top performer would want the job
- make the applicant process easy to access and complete.

PLAN THE SELECTION PROCESS

Once you've completed the job analysis and advertisement, it's important to start planning for the selection process, including 'applicant care'. In a tight labour market, maintaining regular contact and a good relationship with applicants, where possible, is important. It helps to give a good first impression of the Department. Good applicants may be pursuing several other vacancies, so make sure your selection process is efficient and professional.

Identify a key contact

Ensure that a key contact has been nominated to receive applications and respond to any queries regarding the selection process, including any requests for reasonable adjustments that applicants might need to apply for the position. At the application stage, this could include making changes to the way that assessments are conducted so that a person can fully demonstrate their ability to perform the role.

Make sure the key contact is:

- knowledgeable about the position, capabilities, selection criteria and other attributes required of suitable applicants

- receptive to enquiries from all sections of the community
- readily available to answer enquiries during business hours
- proactive in communicating information about workplace adjustments.

Identify the selection panel

It is important that recruitment and selection decisions are based on merit and free from bias. Establishing a diverse and balanced selection panel, responsible for identifying the preferred applicant, will ensure that decision-making upholds these principles.

A selection panel should have an appropriate number of members. At least one member of the selection panel must be trained by the Merit Protection Boards in the principles of merit and equity, and provision should be made for gender representation. For more information about requirements for the composition of selection panels, please refer to the Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service guide.

Best practice is to have a panel that reflects the diversity of the community, as far as practicable. This means including people of different genders, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and intersex people.

All panel members should:

- declare and resolve any conflicts of interest
- be aware of potential biases to ensure they do not directly or indirectly discriminate
- observe confidentiality throughout and after the process.

Conflict of interest

Risks of conflict of interest are significant during the recruitment and selection process. For more information on how to declare and resolve conflicts of interest, please refer to the Conflict of Interest policy and toolkit on managing conflict of interest in recruitment.

Organise assessments

The hiring manager should reserve tentative times for assessments and inform the other panel members so they can organise their diaries to accommodate the selection process.

The selection panel should identify which assessment techniques will be used to assess applicants.

Assessment tools may include:

- behavioural interviews
- psychometric assessments
- work sample exercises.

Stage 3: Assess and select

OBJECTIVE

In assessment and selection, it is important to know your audience. Make sure you have a robust approach to determine whether the skillset of prospective applicants and their suitability for a role with the Department is being thoroughly explored through this process, while ensuring you eliminate bias at the same time.

Assessment is also an opportunity to ensure that any corruption risks are addressed. Conducting thorough pre-screening checks and managing conflicts of interest will reduce the risk of recruiting applicants on falsified or inaccurate information. Positions with high integrity risks, such as though with significant financial delegation or access, should be subject to the most rigorous pre-screening checks.

When selecting an applicant, negotiating is becoming the norm throughout the hiring process. This section of the Guide includes some practical tips on negotiating with applicants who have been advised they are the preferred candidate.

When should you do it?

Assessment and selection activities can begin after the advertising period closes and the panel has received all applications, including any late applications that may have been accepted by the hiring manager.

How should you do it?

Assessment and selection involves:

1. shortlisting
2. assessing applicants' suitability for the position
3. making workplace adjustments (where required)
4. performing referee checks
5. scoring assessments
6. consolidating assessment results
7. ranking applicants
8. making a decision
9. making an offer

SHORTLISTING

Shortlisting is the first stage of the assessment process.

Myth: We cannot accept late applications.

Myth busted: Late applications may be accepted during the selection process at the discretion of the hiring manager. Where a late application is accepted, a record of the reasons for acceptance must be kept. Where a late application is rejected, the applicant must be informed of the decision.

Myth: We cannot consider an applicant who hasn't included responses to all the selection criteria in their application.

Myth busted: The aim of shortlisting is to identify applicants who meet the selection criteria and/or are likely to have the knowledge, skills and personal attributes to succeed in the position. The decision to shortlist an applicant should be made on the basis of their resume and any other relevant information.

Reviewing resumes and applications

The first step is to screen out applicants who do not meet essential requirements clearly stated in the job advertisement and position description, such as holding a specific qualification, having the right to work in Australia. A structured approach can help to streamline the review of resumes and responses to the selection criteria.

Tip

Refresh your understanding of the position by reviewing the position description and job advertisement, with a focus on the selection criteria. Familiarise yourself with the agreed assessment techniques, such as reviewing the proposed interview questions, so you know what you are looking for.

It is a good idea to make draft notes on the selection panel report, while you are reviewing. This will save you time when finalising the selection report.

You may choose to review resumes and applications at the same time. This can help you to determine whether the applicant meets the selection criteria and will be a good fit with your requirements based on all available information.

Alternatively, you may choose to review all responses to the selection criteria, side by side and de-identified (if possible). Otherwise known as 'blind recruitment', this helps to reduce the likelihood of unconscious bias and can help you gain a better understanding of the breadth of applicants. Blind recruitment is easier when applications are received in a consistent template, such as responses to a form.

Gathering evidence

When reviewing resumes and applications, you are gathering evidence to help you decide whether applicants are likely to have the capabilities, knowledge and experience required for the position. Resumes on their own are not a strong predictor of job performance; they are an initial indicator of whether applicants are eligible and potentially suitable for the position.

Tip

When assessing experience you are looking for the applicant's achievements and activities that relate to the position, such as:

- personal contributions and achievements, including those where you were part of a team
- quality or level of experience and skills, as well as amount of time spent in a job
- transferrable skills, even if these were in a different industry, type of position or in personal experience.

When reviewing a resume, consider:

- the relevance of education, skills and work experience to the current position
- evidence of an individual's impact, contributions and accomplishments whilst in their current or previous position
- how the applicant demonstrates 'written communication' and 'attention to detail' if these capabilities are important aspects of the position.

Be open minded about previous experience. For example, don't assume that an applicant needs to have performed in a similar position previously, or think that because an applicant held a position with a similar name, they will be able to perform the role to which you are recruiting. Look for examples of transferable capabilities and achievements, rather than titles.

Tip

Red flags in applications

Be aware of the following red flags in cover letters or resumes:

- unclear employment dates
- decreasing responsibilities over time
- frequent unexplained job changes
- enrolment in higher education program without graduation
- company emails ending in generic domains, (e.g. @gmail.com, @hotmail.com), which may indicate falsified contact details
- limited or poor online presence of previous employers, which may indicate 'letterbox' companies.

Hiring managers should verify the background of applicants by conducting referee checks, and verifying qualifications and employment history. It is acceptable to call an applicant to clarify information in the cover letter and resume.

Finalising the shortlist

Once the panel has reviewed all applications, it can then decide which applicants should progress to the assessment stage. Be mindful of the need to create an environment where all panel members feel that they can frankly discuss the merits of each applicant, without feeling pressure to conform to the views of the group.

A selection panel report is used to document shortlisted applicants. It must also be used to clearly document those applicants who are not shortlisted for assessment with reasons outlining why they have not been successful. This will help the panel to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants. The word 'assessment' is used here and could mean 'interview' or other assessment type.

The selection panel should consider whether the shortlist is balanced and reflects the diversity of the applicant pool.

Setting up assessments

After finalising the shortlist:

- book rooms for the assessments
- confirm all panel members are available to attend the assessments
- ensure panel members are provided with all necessary information (such as applications, interview questions and scoring methodology)
- advise shortlisted applicants of the time and place of the assessment and details of the assessment techniques
- ask the shortlisted applicants if they need any reasonable adjustments to participate in the assessment (e.g. assistance accessing the building).

ASSESSING APPLICANTS' SUITABILITY FOR THE POSITION

The selection panel has an important role in ensuring the selection process is conducted fairly and uses principles of merit. This means that selection decisions are made solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge and skills of each applicant measured against the selection criteria. To enable this, selection decisions should be made in an environment where applicants have the opportunity to perform at their best. Assessments should be conducted and scored in a consistent way for each applicant, to allow panel members to make well considered and defensible selection decisions. Conducting, timing, scoring and interpreting results in the same manner each time a particular assessment is conducted allows the panel to fairly and meaningfully compare the results of different applicants.

Myth: Interviews are essential.

Myth busted: There is a range of assessment techniques you may use to determine the suitability of shortlisted applicants. This may include interviews and other techniques, such as psychometric assessments or work sample exercises.

Behavioural interviews

Best practice interviewing involves structured interviews with 'behavioural questions'. These are questions which ask that the applicant draws on their prior experience to demonstrate capability in a particular area. This has been shown to be the most effective way to assess an applicant's capabilities, experience and knowledge against those required for the position. For more information on how to conduct behavioural interviews, please refer to the Behavioural Interviewing Guide at Appendix 2.

Behavioural interviews can be structured or unstructured.

- Structured interview:
  - aligned with selection criteria
  - asks applicant to describe experiences and actions that demonstrate competency
  - asks technical questions to assess competency.
- Unstructured interview:
  - asks applicant questions that subjectively seem relevant to the role
  - not aligned with selection criteria.

If an applicant is not available to attend the interview in person and agrees to alternative arrangements, it is acceptable to conduct the interview by telephone or via Skype. The same selection panel and interview questions as for the face to face interview must be used.

If alternative arrangements are not possible, it is at the hiring manager's discretion whether to use the available information to assess the applicant or delay the decision until the applicant is available for an interview and delay the decision.

In making the decision to delay selection, the hiring manager should consider the following factors:

- the length of the potential delay (as a general rule, more than two weeks may be too long to expect the selection process to be delayed)
- the effect of any delay in completing the recruitment process within reasonable timeframes

- the effect of any delay on good recruitment outcomes
- the reason for the potential delay (pre-booked holiday, illness)
- the strength of the applicant field overall
- the strength of the particular applicant
- considerations of merit and equity
- fairness to other applicants and the team.

Tip

To get the most out of behavioural interviews:

- understand the Department's culture:
  - define 'how things actually get done' and the Department's values.
- create a behavioural profile to:
  - evaluate model employee behaviours and develop a profile based on these behaviours
  - decide on the most important behaviours for job success
  - verify the determined behaviours with everyone involved in the selection process
  - determine if an applicant's characteristics and motivations are a good fit and align with the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct.
- as an interviewer, ask good questions:
  - develop an understanding of how questions are mapped to desired competencies
  - be open to asking follow-up questions
  - look for evidence that shows behavioural patterns.

Permissible / non-permissible questions to ask an applicant

Subject	Permissible	Not permissible
Cultural and linguistic diversity	• Are you legally eligible for employment in Australia? • Have you ever worked under a different name?	• What is your national origin? Where are your parents from? • What is your maiden name?
Religion	• What days are you available to work? • Are you able to work with our required schedule?	• What religion do you practice? • What religious holidays do you observe?
Age	• Are you over the age of 18? • What are your long-term goals?	• How old are you? • How much longer do you plan to work before you retire?
Marital/ Family status	• Have you worked or earned a degree under another name? • Are you available to work overtime on occasion? Can you travel?	• Are you married? • Do you have or plan to have children? • Are you pregnant? • Do you have kids?
Education	• Do you have a high school certificate or equivalent? • Do you have a university or college degree? (if relevant to job performance)	• What year did you graduate from high school or university?

Work sample exercises

Work sample exercises can be used to determine specific skill levels required to perform a role, such as those that cannot be learnt on the job. They are a practical test of an applicant's performance on key accountabilities and activities of the position. Work sample exercises are recommended for senior or technically-oriented positions where specialist skills are required prior to a person starting the job, but can be used for any role.

Tip

Key features of work sample exercises include:

- tasks are designed to simulate on-the-job tasks and time constraints
- the applicant is required to prioritise and complete tasks in the time allowed
- behavioural activities (e.g. presentations, client discussions) are observed and rated against the capabilities being assessed
- technical written activities can be assessed after completion of the simulation
- they effectively assess a person's ability to do the job, not just talk about it
- they provide a realistic job preview, which has been shown to lead to higher job performance and less attrition.

There are a range of different types of work sample exercises including written tasks, presentations, role plays, group activities and case interviews. The role of the selection panel in administering and scoring exercises will depend on whether the exercise requires observation or review of a written response by the selection panel.

It is important that the work sample exercise has clear instructions for both the selection panel and the applicant. It is a good idea for a panel member to read the applicant instructions aloud to applicants, to make sure they fully understand what is required and have the opportunity to ask questions.

The time limit and conditions for completing a work sample exercise need to be the same for all applicants, unless you are making a workplace adjustment. Where a workplace adjustment is to occur, the selection panel should be advised so they can adjust the administration of the exercise.

Details on how to administer the exercise, can include:

- resources required by the selection panel, e.g. paper and pen
- resources or equipment to be provided to the applicant, e.g. case study materials or a computer for a written exercise
- time limit, including the full time allocated for the task (e.g. 60 minutes) and how the time is to be split up (e.g. 10 minutes reading time, 50 minutes to complete the task).

Other types of assessments

- **Situational judgment assessments**: give applicants scenarios and evaluate how they respond
- **Culture fit assessments**: measure applicants' styles and preferences as they relate to the Department's culture
- **Aptitude tests**: measure applicants' abilities to learn a new skill or skills.

MAKING REASONABLE WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS (WHERE REQUIRED)

The exception to the principle of standardising assessment processes for all applicants is where one or more adjustments to the process are needed to ensure that it is equitable for all applicants. In these cases, changing the way the assessment is administered for a particular individual, or the assessment itself, can remove barriers so that all applicants can perform on an equitable basis.

Examples of reasonable adjustments may include:

- conducting assessments in a wheelchair-accessible room
- allowing applicants to take a rest break during an interview
- providing written materials in an alternative format
- allowing applicants to be accompanied by a support person.

Preparing your process for workplace adjustments

It is good practice to remind applicants at each stage of the process that they are able to request an adjustment or assistance with assessment activities.

If an applicant shares information about their needs prior to an assessment, it is the responsibility of a selection panel member to talk to the applicant to understand what adjustments or assistance they need. This will enable suitable arrangements to be made in advance of the assessments. Be aware that this information is confidential and should only be used to organise an adjustment. Be flexible about making adjustments because applicants may not tell you until the day of the assessment that they need an adjustment.

If an adjustment can be made and is reasonable, you should make it. Doing so reduces the risk of indirect discrimination and ensures the recruitment process is inclusive. If an adequate adjustment cannot be made at the time, consider rescheduling the assessment after consulting with the applicant.

For more information on making reasonable adjustments during recruitment and selection, please refer to the Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service guide.

INCONSISTENT INFORMATION FROM ASSESSMENTS

Sometimes there will be conflicting or inconsistent information obtained from various selection tools. Consider the examples for different selection criteria below:

- **Communicate effectively**: an applicant may communicate effectively in writing but not when presenting ideas in a case interview.
- **Stakeholder management**: an applicant may perform well in one task when responding to a general inquiry from a pleasant stakeholder, but may not perform well when dealing with a difficult stakeholder in another activity.
- **Display resilience and courage**: an applicant may misunderstand the requirements of a work sample exercise and not demonstrate the behaviours required, yet a personality questionnaire indicates that this capability is likely to be a strength for the applicant.
- **Project management**: an applicant with limited work experience might find it difficult to demonstrate this capability in a behavioural interview, despite having sound theoretical knowledge of project management frameworks.

Tip

Inconsistent information is not necessarily a problem and can provide useful clues into the contexts in which an applicant is likely to perform better and where they may need to further develop. Inconsistencies that the selection panel considers problematic can be examined further in referee checks.

PERFORMING REFEREE CHECKS

Referee checks are an essential step in the recruitment and selection process and critical for:

- obtaining independent information about an applicant's capabilities, experience and knowledge from managers, peers or other people who have observed their performance in a relevant context
- verifying information gathered from the application, resume and assessments
- examining any inconsistencies or red flags identified in the application
- providing insight into an applicant's strengths and developmental needs, which may be used to assist with their on-boarding and day-to-day management.

For more information on how to perform referee checks, please refer to the Referee Check Guide at Appendix 3.

SCORING ASSESSMENTS

To maintain a fair and defensible process, it is important to score assessments in a consistent way. Interviews and work sample exercises require human judgement and can be affected by biases and errors.

To objectively rate an applicant's performance and reduce the possible impact of biases it is a good idea to:

- use a template to record responses which includes the standards for assessment, such as the selection criteria
- write down factual notes on what was said, rather than recording your impressions or making judgements
- use a descriptively-anchored rating scale with definitions and apply it consistently to all applicants (see below for an example).

Tip

Below are some tips for scoring assessments:

- be consistent in evaluating applicants
- be prepared by familiarising yourself with the rating scale and behavioural indicators relating to each selection criteria
- be aware of biases such as:
  - 'halo' effect: after one excellent answer, the applicant is seen as a strong applicant overall
  - 'horn' effect: after performing poorly against one criterion, the applicant is seen as weak overall
  - 'central tendency': favouring middle ratings such as '3' or 'meets requirements'

- be aware of attributing:
  - statements about what the team or 'we' did as evidence of what the applicant personally did
  - vague assertions as facts, e.g. 'they were all pleased…'
- be aware of:
  - allowing stereotypes (e.g. gender, cultural and linguistic background, disability, age) to affect your judgement of an applicant's strengths and weaknesses
  - the ways in which prior knowledge of an applicant can affect your judgement of their assessment performance.

Rating scale

The use of a descriptively-anchored rating scale is considered best practice as it provides a greater level of rigour to the assessment process. These rating scales use a description of the selection criteria to correspond with a numerical rating. They should be developed for each interview question to assist the selection panel in rating responses.

When this rating scale is used, the level of reliability between selection panel members increases, which in turn increases the validity of the assessment tool (i.e. there is a better alignment between ratings given by selection panel members).

Tip

Below is an example of a descriptively anchored rating scale:

1. **Does not satisfy** [insert selection criteria being measured].
2. **Partially satisfies** [insert selection criteria being measured].
3. **Fully satisfies** [insert selection criteria being measured].

CONSOLIDATING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Selection decisions should take into account the full set of information (results) for applicants who have progressed through the selection process. Assessments must be considered alongside written applications and referee checks – selection decisions should not be made solely on the basis of interview performance.

One way to consolidate results is by using a selection grid for each applicant (see example below). The selection grid allows you to calculate an average score for each selection criteria based on the applicant's performance across the selection process. This requires using the same rating scale for all selection tools.

Selection tool	Selection criteria 1	Selection criteria 2	Selection criteria 3	Selection criteria 4	Selection criteria 5	Comments
Resume and application review	2	3	3	3	2	Add as applicable
Interview	2	2	3	3	3	Add as applicable
Work sample exercise	2	2	1	3	3	Add as applicable
Referee checks	3	3	3	2	1	Add as applicable
Average score	2.25	2.5	2.5	2.75	2.25	Add as applicable

Alternatively, you may choose to add up the ratings to give an overall score for each applicant. This is necessary when you have not used the same rating scale for all selection tools.

RANKING APPLICANTS

Once an applicant's results have been consolidated, the selection panel records their average or overall scores in a selection panel report and ranks all suitable applicants in order of merit.

Suitability assessments

The selection panel may decide that a shortlisted applicant is not suitable if they don't meet one or more of the selection criteria. However, suitability assessments are about more than just the applicant's assessment results. It is important to consider assessment results together with other information you have gathered through the selection process to decide who is best suited to the position and the needs of the team.

Tip

Consider:

- Does the position meet the applicant's expectations?
- Is the applicant motivated to perform the tasks required in the position?
- Does the position allow the applicant to display their preferred work style?
- Will the applicant work well in the team?
- Is there alignment between the applicant's values and the Department's values?

If you have concerns about whether the applicant is suited to the position, or if the selection panel does not unanimously agree on the selection recommendation after discussion of each applicant, the selection panel may:

- conduct further assessments including additional interviews, other assessment activities or additional referee checks
- recommend the applicant be placed on higher duties, temporarily transferred or seconded to assess their performance for a set period (only applicable for an internal applicant of the same employment type)
- recommend the position be re-advertised.

MAKING A DECISION

The final selection decision is an opportunity to bring someone into your team who will be happy and productive in the position. The selection panel's role is to recommend the best applicant based on evidence gathered in the selection process. The guiding principle for making a good selection decision is that the process is clear and transparent.

Tip

The person responsible for signing off on the recommendation (the delegate) should consider:

- Was the selection process consistent and reasonable?
- Have all applicants been kept informed of the process?
- Were all applicants treated in a fair, equitable and respectful manner?
- Were open and transparent recruitment processes and practices maintained?
- Is the selection decision a logical outcome of the assessment process?
- Were appropriate assessment methods, selection criteria and scoring processes used?
- Did the process respect and value diversity and was it inclusive?

Applicant management principles

- **Consider the Department's reputation as an employer**: you don't want word to get out that you routinely ignore applicants. Take the time to show you appreciate candidates' efforts and the time they took to apply.
- **Don't burn the bridge**: today's rejected applicant could be next year's new recruit! If you leave an applicant on a good note, they may consider applying again.
- **Take the time**: each applicant is more than a resume and wants to be treated as such. By quickly and politely informing applicants where they are (or aren't) in the process, you'll be generating applicant goodwill and strengthening the perception of the Department as an employer of choice.

1. Immediately after the interview:

- give applicants a timeframe within which a decision will be made
- clarify whether the selected applicant will be notified exclusively, or all interviewed candidates will be notified

2. In the interim:

- notify all applicants if the timeframe for a decision is extended or a major change has been made
- otherwise, interviewers don't need to contact applicants during the timeframe they initially established

3. Offer of employment:

- notify the selected applicant first by phone and then follow up with a formal letter of offer
- manage all of the little things that need attention prior to an employee's first day in a new role

4. Unsuccessful applicants

- unsuccessful applicants will automatically be notified
- for high performing applicants who were not successful for the position, you may wish to additionally write, call or meet with them to thank them for applying and wish them luck with their job search.

Selection panel report

A selection panel report documents the selection process, why applicants were or were not shortlisted, and why shortlisted applicants were ranked unsuitable, suitable or recommended. It provides essential information for the delegate to make a final selection decision, and may be relevant in any formal appeal process. The delegate may accept, reject or seek review of a panel's selection recommendation. A sample selection panel report is available on the Recruitment in the Public Service HRWeb page.

Be mindful of record-keeping requirements to retain the final selection panel report and other selection documentation, such as the position description, for at least two years after the selection decision is confirmed. For more information on record-keeping requirements, please refer to the Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service guide.

What good looks like

A selection panel report should demonstrate with rigour how the selection panel used an evidence based selection process to arrive at its conclusion. It may be used when providing feedback to individual applicants if they request it, or if the selection decision becomes the subject of an internal review. Note that unsuccessful applicants may request their individual selection report. Other characteristics include:

- The report does not need to be lengthy, but should accurately reflect the assessment process and clearly state the reasons for the panel's recommendation.
- It is good practice to attach a copy of interview questions or other assessment tools (e.g. work sample tests), referee checks or other evidence gathered during the assessment process.
- There is no obligation to appoint – if the selection panel believes that no shortlisted applicant is suitable for the role, and that the hiring process should be opened again so that other applicants may be considered, this should be stated clearly in the report.
- The ranking of applicants is a constructive and worthwhile process – e.g. if the preferred applicant declines an offer, it helps to enable an offer to be extended to the next most suitable applicant.
- Be careful when using absolute expressions such as 'not suitable', as opposed to 'less suited/suitable' – ratings should be supported by and reflect the evidence gathered through the assessment process and align to the selection criteria for the role.
- The panel should provide a clear rationale for its recommendation and be mindful they are providing a recommendation and not making a decision – the purpose of the report is to arm the decision maker with a meaningful assessment of the shortlisted applicants and a point of view regarding the best applicant(s) – the minimum requirement of the report is to show why the recommended applicant is preferred.
- The report should also capture steps taken to make adjustment and accommodate any applicant's needs.

MAKING AN OFFER

An offer of employment can be made when the selection process is complete and the recommended applicant has been endorsed by the delegate. Consideration should be given to whether an appeal period applies. For more information about appeals or grievances, please refer to the Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service guide.

Ideally, the successful applicant should be contacted as soon as possible (this can initially be by phone) – a delay of one or two days can result in losing an ideal applicant to another offer.

The successful applicant should not commence in a position until the offer of employment has been formally accepted. Once a person has accepted the offer, it may be necessary to seek a workplace assessment to determine if reasonable adjustments are required. For more information on making reasonable adjustments, please refer to the Disability and Reasonable Adjustments HRWeb page.

Negotiation

You should be prepared for the applicant to negotiate – top applicants in high demand for other roles may have a strong bargaining position. Things to consider include:

- areas that may be the subject of negotiation include salary, classification, position title, commencement date, responsibilities and tasks, length of employment, flexible working arrangements and allowances
- being clear on what details of employment can and cannot be altered allows a better outcome.

For more information about best practice negotiation, please refer to the Negotiation Guide at Appendix 4.

Tip

Below are some tips for effective negotiation.

Do:

- be clear about what you are offering and what you need from the other person
- be prepared to think about what is important to the candidate
- be consistent with how you present your goals, expectations and objectives
- set guidelines for the discussion and ensure that you and the applicant stick to them throughout the entire process
- use effective communication skills including positive body language
- prepare for compromise, thinking carefully about what your parameters are
- consider whether you should seek wider advice
- pay attention to detail
- once appropriate approval has occurred, always confirm in writing.

Don't:

- confuse negotiation with confrontation - you should remain calm, professional and patient
- become emotional - remember to stick to the issue, don't make it personal, and avoid becoming angry, hostile or frustrated
- place or imply blame on the other person if you are unable to reach an agreement on a desired outcome
- discriminate – consider the requests and make sure your answer does not discriminate against an applicant.

Unsuccessful applicants

As soon as the position is accepted, unsuccessful applicants should be advised of the outcome of their application.

Remember always to treat applicants with care and respect. Best practice is to give shortlisted applicants the courtesy of a phone call, especially those who made it to the last stages of the selection process. Your aim should be for unsuccessful applicants to come out of the experience with a good impression of the Department and to consider applying for positions in the future.

Giving feedback

It is best practice to offer feedback to unsuccessful applicants who made it through to the final stages of the process. Feedback helps applicants learn from the experience and improve for their next application. Feedback should be based on the applicant's assessment results as they relate to the position requirements.

Feedback should not be offered to unsuccessful applicants until the appeal period has passed.

Tip

When offering feedback, it is important to:

- be prepared – review assessment results before the feedback session and have relevant documentation on hand
- be objective and focus on the behaviours displayed
- be specific when talking about the applicant's strengths or areas for improvement
- avoid commenting on other applicants' performance, including the successful applicant
- use rating scale descriptors rather than numerical scores when giving feedback on assessment results. For example, 'Your response partially satisfied this selection criteria' rather than 'You scored two for this selection criteria.'
- give the applicant an opportunity to ask questions.

Remember that shortlisted applicants may request a copy of their individual selection report once the selection decision has been announced.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT SCREENING CHECKS

Any relevant pre-employment screening checks must be completed prior to a person commencing employment. If these checks are not satisfactory, the person is not able to commence employment and the offer of employment will lapse.

Prior to a formal offer of employment being made to a preferred applicant for a public service position, a Pre-employment Statutory Declaration and Consent Form must be completed by the applicant.

It is best practice to make sure there is separation between those collecting the information and the selection panel to prevent discrimination or the perception of discrimination in employment.

The screening checks needed for the position should be stated clearly in the position description and explained during the assessment process. Applicants need to be made aware that their employment is dependent on the results of the screening checks. A best practice pre-employment screening model might involve the selection panel checking an applicant's:

- identity and right to work
- relevant qualifications
- previous employment history including dates and position
- misconduct and/or disciplinary history
- criminal history
- any conflicts of interest.

For more information on pre-employment screening, please refer to the Suitability for Employment policy, VPS Executive Pre-employment Screening policy and Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service guide.

Stage 4: On-board and evaluate

OBJECTIVE

On-boarding and evaluation refers to procedures and actions to effectively integrate a new employee into an organisation. It is important to start the engagement positively – effective on-boarding has a significant impact on employee productivity, retention and safety. A smooth on-boarding process gives a good first impression of the Department and helps the employee adapt more quickly to their new role.

When should you do it?

Once the offer of employment has been formally accepted and employment confirmed, it is time to on-board the new employee.

How should you do it?

Best practice on-boarding includes:

- structured induction of new employees
- using a buddy system
- managing new employees' expectations.

STRUCTURED INDUCTION OF NEW EMPLOYEES

Hiring managers are responsible for ensuring an effective and smooth process to welcome all new employees to the Department. Quality induction and orientation starts before the employee arrives at work and continues beyond their probation period. For more information on induction and orientation, please refer to the Induction and Orientation - Public Service HRWeb page and Appendix 1.

Tip

Supporting new starters to understand the Department's culture and to develop informal relationships with their immediate and broader team members will help them to feel empowered to connect with other staff members earlier on in their employment.

- Build relationships:
  - relationships with support network and teams
  - informal networks which help navigate complexity
- understand the Department
  - culture and how we do business
  - processes and systems.

Effective on-boarding focuses on actively engaging new starters to accelerate their early performance by tailoring on-boarding programs based on information gathered during the selection process. Additionally, having a new starter define objectives for achievement for the first 90 days of employment encourages speedier delivery and a clear measurement framework for management to support the development of any capabilities required for the role.

- Clarify expectations
  - role and goals
  - resources and support
- remove barriers
  - roadmap for the probation
  - logistics, IT and administration
  - workplace adjustments.

Induction should cover administrative issues such as access to the building, IT and phones; setting up the work station; document management; and team meetings. It should also cover operational and strategic matters such as team or Department business plans; Department values; professional development opportunities; and performance and development plans (PDPs).

What good looks like

Below is a best practice example of an on-boarding checklist:

- initiate on-boarding and provisioning process
- organise pre-commencement forms and ask if any workplace adjustments are required
- set commencement date
- set up new starter location, equipment and workplace adjustments (as required)
- manage week 1 communications and administration
- manage the employee's first day
- organise team induction and integration
- manage ongoing on-boarding communications
- evaluate on-boarding program
- set up buddy/team introductions
- initiate integration meetings with senior staff members
- manage new starter document administration
- ensure that the new starter's personal details are correct, including diversity data
- manage and organise induction
- provide information on the Department values and the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct
- evaluate on-boarding and integration
- manage transition coaching or support (optional).

USING A BUDDY SYSTEM

Using a buddy system can be beneficial in supporting new employees in their transition into the workplace. It involves an existing staff member being assigned to act as a support to the new employee. It is an opportunity to directly and positively impact the experience new employees have with the organisation.

Ideally, the buddy should be from a similar classification (or role) as the new employee and have sufficient experience and capacity to competently assist the new employee when they first arrive at the Department.

What good looks like

Important aspects of the buddy relationship:

- confidentiality and trust
- development of rapport and respect
- ongoing interest in, and communication with the new employee
- accessibility of the buddy to the new employee
- sharing knowledge and experience
- supporting the new employee in accessing resources and information to perform the role effectively.

Tip

The buddy relationship will change over time. During the first month of employment, it is likely that the new employee's reliance on the buddy will be strongest. The buddy's responsibilities may include:

- calling the new employee before they start the position to welcome them to the team
- greeting the new employee when they arrive on their first day
- organising a team lunch or morning / afternoon tea in the new employee's first or second week
- introducing the new employee to key contacts in the team
- helping the new employee organise building, phone and IT access
- ensuring the new employee is invited to team meetings
- assisting the new employee with their induction program.

As the new employee becomes more confident and familiar in the workplace, the buddy's responsibilities will become less evident. The buddy can continue to provide support and assistance as required.

Tip

Consider what the new team member may be feeling or thinking and help them with navigating the following common questions:

- I'm anxious about joining.
- What is the Department's culture?
- How do I go about getting a detailed insight into the team?
- Will equipment be available for pick up on the first day?
- Are there guidelines or activities that can be completed beforehand to reduce time?
- What will be covered during induction?
- What are the differences when transferring from one team to another?
- I hope for easy and fast integration within the team.
- I need to know about the differences to my previous job/role.
- Who and where are the key contacts to carry out my role?

MANAGING NEW EMPLOYEES' EXPECTATIONS

Managing the expectations of a new employee is critical in ensuring the success of an applicant's placement in the team. Effective management of expectations reduces the risk of disengagement and possible resignations and improves employee productivity and morale.

To align a new employee's expectations with the reality of the role, feedback should be obtained from the person after a specified period of time in the new position. Any feedback received must be treated confidentially.

Feedback sought should focus on obtaining the new employee's perceptions of the induction and on-boarding processes and on any areas that could be improved or further developed. This process can be a mixture of informally seeking feedback and/or more formal approaches such as a survey.

Appendix 1: Links to Department policy and resources

In the table below, specific links have been provided, categorised under the relevant stage of the recruitment and selection framework outlined in this Guide (where applicable).

General links

Item	Detail
Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service[1]	Policy guide for public service recruitment

Links relating to Stage 1: Analyse

Item	Detail
Capability-based position descriptions[2]	Outlines the five steps to creating a capability-based position description
Career Structure – Victorian Public Service[3]	Includes grade descriptors for VPS, allied health, nurses and legal staff, value range descriptors for VPS, and a grade and value range assessment tool
Capability Framework[4]	Suite of materials related to the Department's Capability Framework
Leadership Capability Frameworks[5]	Includes the Department's Leadership Charter and Leadership Capability Framework

Links relating to Stage 2: Attract

Item	Detail
Development at DET[6]	Home page for development activities and programs at the Department
Selection panels[7]	Information related to setting up selection panels for all employee types
Jobs and Skills Exchange	Site where all Victorian Public Service vacancies are posted

Links relating to Stage 3: Assess and select

Item	Detail
Selection process templates[8]	Department-specific forms and templates including request to advertise, reference check and selection panel report
Workforce Diversity and Inclusion collaboration site[9]	Department-specific information about initiatives to support employees and managers to value and respect diversity in the workforce and to develop inclusive teams
Disability and reasonable adjustment HRWeb page[10]	Department-specific information including the Disability Action Plan
Flexible work HRWeb page[11]	Department-specific information on flexible work and family friendly policies
Conflict of interest HRWeb page[12]	Link to information on conflict of interest, including Department policy and toolkit
Suitability for employment HRWeb page[13]	Outlines requirements and processes for screening checks Also refer to the Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service guide
VPS Executive pre-employment screening[14]	Information on pre-employment screening for people seeking executive employment in the VPS
VPS pre-employment screening	Information on pre-employment screening for people seeking employment in the VPS

Links relating to Stage 4: On-board and evaluate

Item	Detail
Induction and orientation HRWeb page15	Links to information on induction and orientation processes for staff
LearnED Learning Management System16	Accessible via EduPay, this includes an online induction module for public service staff
Performance Development Plans (PDPs)17	Links to processes related to performance development of staff
Merit Protection Boards (MPBs)18	MPBs are independent boards which hear staff grievances
Grievances HRWeb page19	Details for staff on processes for handling grievances related to employment (and other)

Links to advice and support from People Division

Item	Detail
Corporate People Services20	Service centre for employment, payroll and recruit Contact vps.hr.services@edumail.vic.gov.au for centrally located staff and the following email addresses for each region: vps.hr.nev@edumail.vic.gov.au (North Eastern Region) vps.hr.nwv@edumail.vic.gov.au (North Western Region) vps.hr.sev@edumail.vic.gov.au (South Eastern Region) vps.hr.swv@edumail.vic.gov.au (South Western Region)
Workforce Diversity and Inclusion HRWeb page21	Policy advice, support, information tools and resources, including the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Contact diversity@edumail.vic.gov.au

Links to related resources

Item	Detail
Learning and Development Calendar22	Links to upcoming training opportunities offered by the Department
DET Writing Style Guide A–Z23	A–Z index to support staff in writing materials according to Department protocols
Department's Values HRWeb page24	Link to information about the Department's Values
Equal Opportunity HRWeb page25	Equal Opportunity is a requirement under Victorian and Commonwealth legislation
Enterprise bargaining HRWeb page26	Links to relevant industrial agreements
Employee conditions HRWeb page27	Department information on salaries, allowances and leave
Quick guide: recruitment and selection process for public service hiring managers28	Key actions for public service managers with links to relevant forms, templates and supporting documents
Legislation HRWeb page29	Includes links to all legislation relevant to the Department
Manager Assist30	A hotline for managers seeking support and coaching Phone 1300 361 008
Careers at the Department31	Department website homepage to search for jobs and information on qualifications, scholarships and employment conditions
Careers and Recruitment HRWeb page32	Generic website on HRWeb leading to relevant pages

Appendix 2: Behavioural interviewing guide

As discussed in Stage 3, best practice interviews are structured and use behavioural questions. Preparing for interviews ensures the process runs smoothly and enables applicants to perform at their best. The basis of behavioural interviewing is that past performance is a good predictor of future performance. Questions are therefore developed to elicit responses from interviewees that include specific examples of previous actions and behaviours that relate to the capability or behaviour.

There are three stages to conducting an effective behavioural interview:

1. **Prepare**: develop behavioural questions and a methodology for the interview
2. **Conduct**: ensure the interview is structured so that it runs smoothly
3. **Score**: follow the scoring assessment practices in the Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service guide.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

This Guide provides a checklist for conducting interviews and a methodology for behavioural interviews. For more information on requirements during the interview process, please refer to the Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service guide.

Selection panels should make time to discuss the process before the interview, including:

- length of interview
- who will receive and introduce applicants and who will ask which questions
- the rating scale
- any workplace adjustments to be made.

Behavioural questions

The selection panel should develop a set of questions based on the selection criteria. Behavioural interview questions aim to extract specific examples of what applicants have done in the past, allowing applicants to demonstrate, through past behaviour, that they meet the selection criteria for the position.

Myth: You need to prepare one question for each selection criteria.

Myth busted: Behavioural questions should be based on the selection criteria, but you may be able to cover two or more selection criteria in each question.

Tip

Behavioural interview questions should:

- be capability-based, allowing you to assess behaviours expected for the position
- be appropriate for the classification of the position
- be clear, brief and unambiguous
- be open-ended
- use past tense, e.g. ‘how did you…?’ or ‘tell us about a time when…’
- ask for facts, not an applicant’s feeling or opinion about something
- ask about practical situations, not hypothetical (how they think they might behave).

Behavioural interview methodology

When using behavioural questions, remind applicants to answer according to the SBI/STAR methodology and explain it to them if they are unfamiliar. This will allow you to easily record and score the applicant’s response against the selection criteria.

- **Situation/Task**: the applicant needs to succinctly explain the situation they were in, and the task they needed to accomplish to provide context and motives for their actions.
- **Behaviour/Action**: the behaviour or action the applicant took to handle the circumstance is the key to understanding the applicant’s capabilities, and their level of competence in those capabilities.
- **Impact/Result**: what the outcome was, how effective or ineffective the applicant’s behaviours were.

- The applicant's comments about the impact can also reveal their level of self-awareness, as well as their insight and understanding of things like organisational context.

Be aware of false or partial responses to behavioural questions, for example:

- **Vague statements**: general statements that sound good, but provide no specific details of what the applicant actually did
- **Opinions**: personal beliefs, judgements or views that tell us what the applicant thinks or feels, but provide no information about their behaviour or actions
- **Theoretical statements**: future-oriented statements that tell us what the applicant would do or would have done, not what they actually do or did.

A good behavioural question allows applicants to draw on their work experience. Think about the types of situations that are encountered in the position and develop a question based on potential challenges that may arise, for example:

- **Selection criteria:** stakeholder management
  - feature of the position: involves working with senior executives
  - sample behavioural question: Tell us about a time when you had to negotiate with senior stakeholders with differing interests. What was the situation, what did you do, and what was the result?
- **Selection criteria:** policy advice
  - feature of the position: involves working relatively autonomously and under time pressure
  - Sample behavioural question: Describe a situation where you had to provide policy advice with limited direction and information. How did you approach this task and what was the outcome?

Probing questions such as 'what did you do?' and 'what was the result?' prompt applicants to answer questions using the SBI/STAR methodology.

It is important to avoid making questions too specific by asking about situations applicants may not have encountered or that are unique to your team. Questions should allow all applicants to demonstrate relevant experience that is transferable to the position being filled.

Depending on the position, you may wish to provide a copy of the interview questions to applicants when they arrive for the interview and allow 5-10 minutes of reading time. This can help applicants gather their thoughts and provide more structured, considered responses.

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

There are important steps in opening, conducting and closing the interview to ensure a smooth process:

1. opening the interview
2. during the interview
3. taking notes
4. closing the interview.

Opening the interview

A well prepared introduction to the interview will help put applicants at ease and make it clear what is expected of them. This may include:

- introducing the selection panel
- briefly outlining the position and the team
- explaining how the interview will be run, including timing, number and style of questions and the opportunity to ask questions at the end
- explaining that the selection panel will be taking notes so there may be less eye contact than usual
- providing tips for applicants, including reminding them to use the SBI / STAR methodology to structure their responses.

During the interview

The selection panel is responsible for providing an open, respectful and safe interview environment, where applicants are more likely to actively participate and share in-depth information. During the interview, try to:

- maintain a conversational flow to allow the applicant to be at ease

- let the applicant do the talking: only interrupt if you have to direct them back to the question
- actively listen to all answers and try to alternate between making eye contact and taking notes so that applicants feel you are actively listening to what they are saying
- confine your questions to the position requirements.

There are a number of ways you can manage the interview and keep answers focused on relevant information.

Follow-up questions can be used to direct an applicant to specific areas of information. For example, 'You mentioned a monthly report you produced for your manager. Can you tell us more about that?'

Follow-up questions can also be used to dig deeper when applicants provide false or partial responses. For example: 'You have provided several examples of how the team managed a particular project. What specific role or task did you manage?'

Taking notes

Taking notes is important as it keeps you focused on the applicant's responses. Structuring your notes according to the SBI/STAR methodology allows the selection panel to see if there are any gaps in the applicant's response and prompt them as required. Tips for thorough note-taking include:

- be objective: write down what the applicant said or did rather than your own interpretation
- ensure that assessment of applicants is based on their responses and is not reliant on your memory
- be aware of any possible unconscious bias.

Closing the interview

It is a good idea to ask applicants if they have any questions for you. Remember that the interview process is also about applicants deciding if this opportunity is the right fit for them.

At the end of the interview you can let applicants know about next steps e.g. any further assessments, referee checks, screening checks and when they should expect to hear about the selection outcome.

SCORING THE INTERVIEW

Following the interview, the selection panel should rate applicants against each of the selection criteria using a descriptively-anchored rating scale. Best practice is for selection panel members to rate responses separately first before discussing with each other. Responses can then be consolidated for each applicant to determine the selection panel's overall rating.

Appendix 3: Referee check guide

Referee checks are generally used to obtain or verify three types of information:

- general employment information (e.g. dates, position, qualifications)
- appraisal of an applicant's claim against the selection criteria
- estimates of an applicant's job performance capabilities.

There are three stages to conducting an effective referee check:

1. preparing for the referee check
2. conducting the referee check
3. assessing the referee check.

PREPARING FOR THE REFEREE CHECK

It is important to prepare for referee checks so that you can obtain quality information about the applicant's capabilities, experience and knowledge from independent observers. Preparation includes reviewing the applicant's resume, application and assessment results as well as preparing questions to ask. The SBI / STAR method can also be used for developing questions for the referee.

Always let applicants know in advance that you would like to contact their referees. This is not only courteous, it also gives applicants the chance to let their referees know about the position and for the referee to prepare for your contact.

Verbal referee checks are encouraged because:

- you can ask questions that are specific to the applicant and the position requirements, such as verifying claims made by the applicant in their interview or application
- you can follow-up with probing questions to get the information you are looking for.

When should you do it?

Referee checks are best completed in the final stage of the recruitment process for the preferred applicant or applicants. Referee checks may be done for more than one applicant where the selection panel needs more information to separate the leading applicants.

Who can be a referee?

The applicant should have nominated referees who can clarify, verify or add to the information gathered throughout the recruitment process. Referees ideally will have known the applicant for a reasonable amount of time (e.g. six months) and have good knowledge of the person's performance in a relevant context (e.g. work or education) to provide an objective assessment of their capabilities, experience and knowledge.

It is ideal for at least one referee to have been a direct manager of the applicant in the past two years. However, some applicants do not include their direct manager as a referee. It is okay to ask the applicant why they have not nominated their direct manager.

The use of referees who have not been nominated by applicants may assist to confirm information obtained at application or interview, or to provide more balanced information. The selection panel should inform the applicant if they are going to use a referee not nominated by the applicant prior to conducting the check.

Best practice may also include obtaining the applicant's permission to contact the human resources department of their previous or current employer. This enables you to confirm employment dates, previous or current position, and whether a nominated referee was a direct manager.

For senior positions, it is best practice to complete a 360-degree referee check. This means undertaking referee checks not only with managers but also with direct reports, peers, clients or other stakeholders who have regular contact with the applicant. Ideally, this would involve one or more referees from each category.

Questions to ask referees

You are looking to obtain from referees their observations and experiences of working with the applicant. Different questions can be used to extract the information you need.

- **Employment-related questions**: relate to the applicant's employment and may include:

  - the nature of the referee's relationship to the applicant and amount of time they have known/worked with them
  - the applicant's dates of employment
  - confirmation of the applicant's position
  - the applicant's responsibilities
  - the applicant's reason for leaving (where applicable).
- **Assessment results**: where discrepancies and inconsistencies occur in assessment results, it is important to use the referee check to explore possible reasons for these discrepancies.
- **Development areas**: Ask referees about the applicant's development areas rather than weaknesses. This will help you to find out whether they could benefit from training or support which can be built into their performance management plan, should they be successful.
- **Probing questions**: Don't be afraid to probe for more information or to ask the referee whether the applicant has performance issues or has been the subject of any grievances. If you can gather accurate and balanced information (that addresses both positives and negatives) from several previous employers, colleagues and stakeholders, the chances of avoiding costly mistakes will be reduced, as people will be appointed who are capable of performing well.

CONDUCTING THE REFEREE CHECK

How should you do it?

You should always conduct referee checks in the same way you would a structured, behaviour-oriented interview. Questions should be administered and assessed the same way for all applicants to allow you to make consistent and defensible decisions.

Introduce yourself and explain your role in the recruitment process. Briefly outline the position and the structure of the referee check, including the opportunity for the referee to provide additional information at the end. Checks of around 15-20 minutes are an appropriate demand on a referee's time.

Let the referee do the talking and listen to all answers objectively. Prompt the referee to provide specific examples of the applicant's behaviour to support their response.

Take notes of your discussion with the referee. You can then share your notes with the other panel members and keep a copy for the recruitment record.

ASSESSING THE REFEREE CHECK

The results from referee checks should be considered together with the application, resume, interview and other assessment results. Taking all of the information into account helps the selection panel take a holistic view of each applicant and make informed and balanced selection decisions.

Consider the full range of information

It is best practice for the selection panel to evaluate evidence from all referee reports on an applicant together. This allows it to recognise patterns of behaviour rather than putting undue weight on isolated incidents.

Where discrepancies arise between what was said by the applicant and the referee:

- consider the circumstances
- contact another referee
- evaluate the significance of the discrepancy – is it a minor exaggeration or blatant dishonesty?

Tip

Traps to avoid:

- using referee checks to confirm a decision you have already made regarding the preferred applicant
- considering referee checks a 'tick the box' recruitment step by failing to prepare questions tailored for the position or applicant – if you aren't prepared to ask the right questions, you won't get value out of the referee checks
- asking referees questions of a personal nature about applicants or that do not relate directly to the position – e.g. questions related to age, cultural and linguistic diversity, disability or marital status.

Appendix 4: Negotiation guide

Negotiation skills are important in both informal interactions with applicants and formal transactions such as negotiating offers of employment, remuneration, flexibility conditions and other legal clauses as part of the individual's employment with the Department.

Using negotiation practices to finalise an offer of employment is important because it:

- helps you build a better relationship with a successful applicant
- delivers a lasting and meaningful offer of employment - rather than a poor outcome that doesn't satisfy the needs of either party
- helps you avoid future problems and conflicts.

Negotiating requires give and take. You should aim to create a courteous and constructive interaction that is a win-win for both parties. Ideally a successful negotiation is where you can make concessions that will not impact negatively on your team and organisation, while giving something to the other person that means a lot to them. Your approach should foster goodwill, regardless of the differences in party interests. Good negotiation leaves each party satisfied and ready to engage with each other again professionally.

Always approach negotiations with a clear set of strategies, messages and tactics that can guide you from the planning phases to closing phases (or stages).

There are three stages to conducting an effective negotiation:

1. **Plan**: plan your approach to the negotiation, including your tone and communication style
2. **Engage**: set the agenda and be anchored by your objectives when engaging the candidate
3. **Close**: look for closing signals and formalise the agreement reached.

PLANNING YOUR NEGOTIATION

Plan both your approach to the subject under negotiation, and your tone and communication style. In approaching the subject of your negotiations:

- set your objectives clearly in your own mind (including your minimum acceptable outcome, your anticipated outcome and your ideal outcome)
- determine what you'll do if the negotiation, or a particular outcome, fails
- determine your needs, the needs of the applicant and the reasons behind them
- list, rank and value your issues (and then consider concessions you might make)
- analyse what you already know about the applicant (including their objectives and the information they need)
- conduct research and consult with colleagues and partners
- draw up a quick agenda to help guide the discussion
- ask applicants if they need any adjustments for the negotiation meeting, if you are meeting to negotiate.

In deciding your communication style, familiarise yourself with successful negotiating strategies. Prepare yourself to conduct the discussion in a calm, confident tone and have a set of considered responses and strategies to the tactics you anticipate.

ENGAGING WITH THE APPLICANT DURING THE NEGOTIATION

Steps and tips include:

- introduce yourself and articulate the agenda, demonstrate calm and confidence
- the other party will make proposals. You should rarely accept their first offer. Evidence suggests that people who take the first proposal are less satisfied and regret their haste
- check your understanding of the applicant's proposal to be clear on what they're asking for
- paraphrase the applicant's suggestions to clarify and acknowledge their proposal
- remember your objectives and consider any policy or delegation constraints to any offer you make
- consider appropriate compromises, then make and seek concessions
- suggest alternative proposals and listen to offered suggestions.

CLOSING THE NEGOTIATION

Take a moment to revisit your objectives for the negotiation. Once you feel you are approaching an outcome that is acceptable to you:

- look for closing signals:
  - fading counter-arguments
  - converging negotiating positions
- articulate agreements and concessions already made
- make 'closing' statements:
  - 'That suggestion might work.'
  - ‘Great. I’m happy with that.'
- get agreements in writing as soon as you can
- follow-up promptly on any commitments you have made.

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