

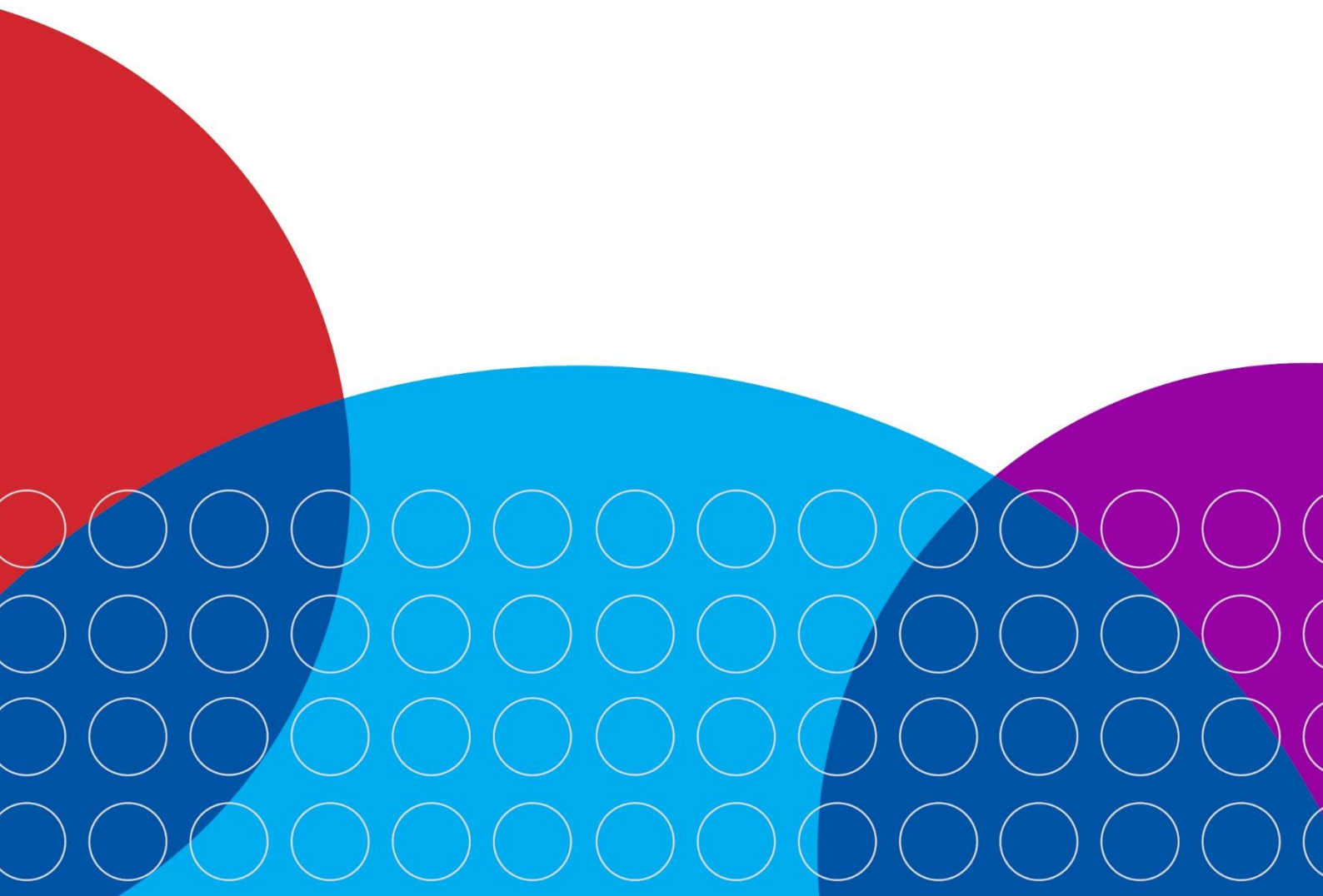


Government  
of South Australia

Office of the Commissioner  
for Public Sector Employment

# GUIDELINE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT

## RECRUITMENT



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## RECRUITMENT

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### Who is covered by this Guideline?

This Guideline is intended to outline good practice procedures and principles for recruitment. The Guideline has been written for application across the South Australian public sector, irrespective of employment arrangements.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

**A strong public sector is vital to delivering the strategic and economic priorities of the South Australian (SA) Government. These priorities set clear expectations for what the public sector does and how we do it.**

The SA public sector is committed to building a stronger South Australia. To continue to deliver outcomes and respond quickly to changing business priorities, our workforce must operate at maximum efficiency, be responsive, engaged and agile.

The decision to employ an individual as a public sector employee is one of the most important decisions a Chief Executive / agency head or delegate will make and constitutes one of the largest financial commitments for an agency. Getting recruitment right by selecting candidates best suited to the requirements of the role, the public sector, and the longer term capability needs of the agency, is fundamental to ensuring that the SA public sector and its agencies meet community expectations and deliver services effectively and efficiently. The SA public sector is committed to attracting and retaining high performing employees to deliver these outcomes. Recruitment processes should align with organisational design and workforce planning initiatives, consistent with *Working It Out - A Workforce Planning Guide*.

Under Section 14(1)(d) of the *Public Sector Act 2009* (PS Act) the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment may issue Guidelines relating to public sector employment matters.

This Guideline should also be read in conjunction with the *Premier's Direction: Recruitment*, issued pursuant to Section 10 of the PS Act which prescribes minimum standards SA public sector agencies<sup>1</sup> must follow. Additionally, *Commissioner's Determination 1: Merit, Engagement, Assignment of Duties and Transfer of Non-Executive Employees* also applies to certain public sector agencies<sup>2</sup>.

This Guideline provides a basis for each agency to develop its own approach to best suit its own context and people, and to integrate recruitment and selection within existing systems. It is acknowledged that with the size and diversity of agencies that comprise the public sector, agencies may operate a range of varying systems in line with the Premier's Direction: Recruitment and this Guideline.

The design of recruitment and selection processes should be determined by Chief Executives and agency heads in line with the business needs and workforce plan of the agency.

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the Courts Administration Authority, the Legal Services Commission, the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption and Office for Public Integrity.

<sup>2</sup> Commissioner's Determinations apply to: Employees in the Public Service employed in a public sector agency that is an administrative unit or attached office, as defined by the PS Act; and also Public sector employees whose employment has been declared by another Act or the regulations under the PS Act to be employment to which the above Section 16(1) of the PS Act applies. If you are in any doubt as to whether a Determination applies to your employment, please contact your agency's Human Resources unit.

## 2. MINIMUM STANDARDS

There are a number of Premier's Directions which all Chief Executives or agency heads of public sector agencies<sup>3</sup> must be mindful of in undertaking the recruitment of employees.

These are:

- *Premier's Direction: Recruitment;*
- *Premier's Direction: Flexibility for the Future;*
- *Premier's Direction: Restraints on re-engagement of former executive employees and other public office holders in certain circumstances; and*
- *Premier's Direction: Public Sector Employee Mobility Strategy.*

The *Premier's Direction: Recruitment*, requires all Chief Executives or agency heads of public sector agencies to implement an effective recruitment system that incorporates, as a minimum, the following measures prior to making an offer of employment to any prospective employee:

- ensure the applicant has completed a Pre-Employment Declaration consistent with the minimum standard issued by the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment;
- undertake reference checks;
- undertake a National Police Certificate or other;
- appropriate background screening where it is required for the role application, and
- consider the information derived from these checks.

The *Premier's Direction: Flexibility for the Future*, requires all Chief Executives or agency heads of public sector agencies to increase the opportunities for existing and future public sector employees to access flexible workplace arrangements and invest in the creation of additional new positions for trainees and graduates. This includes the requirement that all advertisements for vacancies must include the following statement about the possible availability of flexible workplace arrangements:

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*The South Australian public sector promotes diversity and flexible ways of working including part time. Applicants are encouraged to discuss the flexible working arrangements for this role.*

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The *Premier's Direction: Restraints on re-engagement of former executive employees and other public office holders in certain circumstances*, requires all Chief Executives or

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<sup>3</sup> With the exception of the Courts Administration Authority, the Legal Services Commission, the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption and Office for Public Integrity.

agency heads of public sector agencies to not offer employment to any former executive or other public officer whose employment was terminated or who was removed from office for any reason, entitling them to payment of a termination payment until the expiry of the equivalent number of months remuneration or the repayment of any remaining remuneration occurs.

For further information please refer to the Premier's Directions available on the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment's website.

### 3. WHAT IS BEST PRACTICE?

**Best practice recruitment and selection processes are based on a clearly defined methodology. The processes outlined in this Guideline aim to ensure that all necessary steps are given due consideration and occur in an efficient manner to support an effective and timely selection process.**

Best practice recruitment starts with workforce planning, which is a business planning process that aims to ensure there is sufficient and sustainable capability and capacity to deliver business objectives, now and into the future. This process requires an understanding of the current workforce composition (e.g. number of employees and roles within a business unit), and workforce management and development objectives (e.g. succession planning, talent management, performance management and development), to ensure that the necessary skills and capabilities will be available to deliver on current and future objectives.

The PS Act contains public sector principles that apply to all public sector agencies, including being an employer of choice. These principles oblige public sector agencies to treat public sector employees fairly, justly and reasonably, and prevent unlawful discrimination against public sector employees or persons seeking employment in the public sector. These principles also encourage public sector employees to undertake professional development and to pursue opportunities throughout the sector. The public sector principles are applicable in all recruitment and selection practices.

The public sector offers interesting, diverse and rewarding work and this should be leveraged as part of the compelling employee value proposition.

Having an effective recruitment strategy is essential to the success of any agency. Recruitment processes and practices should be approached in a systematic and proactive manner. A best practice recruitment and selection strategy outlines an agency's approach to attracting and recruiting high quality employees and may differ depending on the individual needs of the agency.

The following points may be considered in developing an agency recruitment strategy:

- any short, medium and long-term agency changes which may impact on staff levels and needs;
- skills, competencies, knowledge and attributes needed to meet current and future strategic and operational requirements;
- current skill gaps within the agency and strategies regarding how to fill these gaps;
- strategies to attract and recruit new employees, including increasing the pool of potential applicants;
- how roles will be advertised and promoted i.e. online, through social media, professional networks;

- how the agency wants to present itself to prospective employees in order to attract high quality employees i.e. the agency's 'employer brand';
- how gender equality will be embedded in recruitment and employment, including with reference to the *South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021*;
- the agency induction process and approach to training; and
- mechanisms to measure results and evaluate the success of the strategy.

Good planning will help to prevent poor recruitment practices that can lead to the costly mistake of selecting unsuitable applicants. The costs of poor selection decisions can be direct (e.g. advertising, remuneration) or indirect (e.g. unsatisfactory performance, lower team morale, decreased productivity).

## 4. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PRINCIPLES

Recruitment and selection is about sourcing suitable candidates for employment in the SA public sector, and selecting the best person for a role. The best person will demonstrate the competencies necessary for high performance in the role. The assessment of this is to be done equitably and on the basis of merit.

The principles guiding employment are formalised in relevant public sector legislation and employment instruments.

All public sector agencies should base selection decisions on a proper assessment of merit<sup>4</sup>.

Choosing whom to offer employment to based on merit means choosing the best person for the relevant role, based both on the candidate's abilities and their potential for development. The primary consideration in a selection decision must be based on an assessment of relative suitability, using a selection process that assesses qualities that are genuinely related to the work role; and suitability for employment in the SA public sector.

Regardless of what system is in place within an agency, the following recruitment principles should apply:

### MERIT

The PS Act defines merit in relation to selection processes as:

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*the extent to which each of the applicants has abilities, aptitude, skills, qualifications, knowledge, experience (including community experience) and personal qualities relevant to the carrying out of the duties in question; and*

*if relevant, the manner in which each of the applicants carried out any previous employment or occupational duties or functions, and the extent to which each of the applicants has potential for development.*

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### MOBILITY

The PS Act enables public sector employees to move within the public sector to gain work experience and undertake professional development.

### ETHICS

All behaviour and decision making must be in line with the [Code of Ethics](#) for the SA Public Sector and the SA Public Sector Values.

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<sup>4</sup> For employment under Part 7 of the PS Act, persons may only be engaged as a public sector employee or promoted to a higher remuneration level (excluding reclassification) as a consequence of a selection process conducted on the basis of merit, subject to exceptions contained in Regulation 17 of the *Public Sector Regulations 2010*

## DIVERSITY

Respect for diversity means providing opportunities to people from a broad range of backgrounds so that the SA public sector benefits from a variety of skills, experience and knowledge.

Agencies are encouraged to use recruitment approaches that achieve a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community. The Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment has recently launched the *South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2019-21* which provides a vision of a diverse, inclusive and safe public sector where everyone belongs.

## FAIRNESS

Fairness means treating applicants impartially. Treating everyone the same does not necessarily make a process fair. An individual's circumstances need to be taken into account to give them an equal opportunity.

## FLEXIBILITY

In order to increase opportunities for public sector employees to access flexible working arrangements, prior to advertising for any vacancy, serious and positive consideration must be given to whether (and if so, how) the role can be redesigned to enable access to flexible working arrangements including, but not limited to part-time and job-share.

Please refer to *Flexible Workplaces Guideline and Determination* and the *Premier's Direction – Flexibility for the Future* for further information.

## FREE FROM UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION

Unlawful discrimination occurs when a person, or group of people, are treated less favourably than others on the basis of a real or presumed characteristic specified in legislation. *The Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (SA) stipulates that unless it interferes with their ability to do their job, it is unlawful to consider someone or not consider someone, in a recruitment process because of their: age; caring responsibilities; chosen gender; disability; marital or domestic partnership status; pregnancy; race; religious appearance or dress; sex; sexuality; spouse or partner's identity.

The *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth), also protects people from discrimination based on their religion, social origin, political opinion, irrelevant criminal record, medical record, or trade union activity in employment (including in recruitment).

## FREE FROM PATRONAGE OR NEPOTISM

Patronage means granting favours to a person because of your position or exercising influence because of your relationship with that person. Nepotism means patronage occurring due to family relationships. These behaviours are unacceptable in the SA public sector.

## 5. EXEMPTIONS TO A STANDARD SELECTION PROCESS

When a vacancy arises, there are numerous possibilities to consider prior to conducting an advertised selection process.

### INJURED OR EXCESS EMPLOYEES

Work-injured or excess employees must be given priority consideration and placed in (or transferred to) a vacancy if they can reasonably achieve the required outcomes of the role. In some circumstances the enterprise agreement that applies to an employee declared excess to requirements will provide definition on the assessment of that employee for a vacancy.

### EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS

Agencies may directly access Employment Opportunity Programs established under section 65 of the PS Act. If a suitable candidate can be found within these pools, there is no requirement to advertise the role. The current eligible programs are available across the public sector and are listed in the *Commissioner's Determination 1 – Merit, Engagement, Assignment of Duties and Transfer of Non-Executive Employees*.

### EXCEPTIONS TO MERIT

For employment under Part 7 of the PS Act, all selection processes must be conducted on the basis of merit, however there are a limited number of instances when a Chief Executive/agency head or delegate may, upon consideration of an appropriate business case, decide not to follow a merit-based selection process. These include when<sup>5</sup>:

- special circumstances warrant an engagement without merit-based selection processes, taking into account the person's capabilities and organisational requirements;
- doing so would be an unnecessary administrative procedure because the candidate would be the best person for the role if it were advertised; and/or
- the role is of a critical or short-term nature.

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<sup>5</sup> For employment under Part 7 of the PS Act, these circumstances are prescribed under Regulation 17 of the *Public Sector Regulations 2010*. Please note that agencies are required to report to the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment any engagements made under sub regulation 17(1)(i) within one month after the end of the financial year in which they are made.

If any of these circumstances apply, advice and assistance should be sought from the agency's human resources unit and/or the Crown Solicitor's Office (CSO).

## 6. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESSES

Getting the best candidate within an efficient timeframe requires careful consideration of each phase of the recruitment process, especially the selection phase. Agencies should determine specific timeframes to complete each process. It is recommended that the selection phase take no longer than fourteen (14) days from the time that the job advertisement closes, to the engagement decision being advised to the recommended applicant(s). For specialised and/or large scale recruitment and selection processes, or multiple vacancies, this may not be possible. However, every effort should be made to progress the selection process as quickly as reasonably practicable.

Chief executives/agency heads or delegates have significant flexibility in conducting recruitment processes. This guideline provides step-by-step guidance on the stages of the recruitment process and selection options.



<b>DEFINE</b>	<b>Decision to fill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider if role is required, or if there are redesign opportunities</li> <li>Decide on engagement type (i.e. – ongoing, term, casual)</li> </ul>
	<b>Role Descriptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define the duties and develop or modify the role statement</li> <li>(if applicable)</li> <li>Obtain classification advice (if applicable)</li> <li>Role description approved</li> </ul>
	<b>Approvals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check FTE and funding availability</li> <li>Obtain approval to fill the role from delegate</li> </ul>
	<b>Methods to fill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider suitable priority candidates i.e. work injured, excess, unassigned, or equal opportunity programs</li> </ul>
	<b>Selection Panel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine panel composition</li> <li>Outline roles and responsibilities</li> </ul>
<b>ATTRACT</b>	<b>Recruitment and Selection Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a plan with timeframes</li> <li>Agree on selection techniques / processes</li> </ul>
	<b>Vacancy Advertisement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare job advertisement</li> <li>Submit vacancy request</li> <li>Manage applications</li> </ul>
<b>SELECT</b>	<b>Short listing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short-list applicants</li> </ul>
	<b>Selection Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct interview and / or other selection techniques</li> <li>Undertake employment screening including referee checks and pre-employment declarations plus any other necessary checks such as criminal history, qualifications, work visas.</li> </ul>
	<b>Selection Decision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider applicant rank and recommendation(s)</li> <li>Complete Selection Report</li> <li>Seek delegate approval</li> <li>Notify applicants</li> </ul>
<b>ENGAGE</b>	<b>On-board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check employment conditions such as probation and right of return</li> <li>Issue Employment Pack including contract letter and HR payroll forms</li> <li>Induction</li> </ul>

## 6.1 DEFINE

### ROLE ANALYSIS

Role analysis is the first fundamental step in determining the necessary and desirable skills and competencies required for a role. The role analysis informs the role description and identifies key selection criteria. This should be undertaken for new roles, and for existing roles, on vacancy to determine if the role is still required or needs modification. Consideration should be given to how the role could be split to allow for flexibility in filling the role on a full time or part-time basis.

When the requirements of the role are clearly defined, it is easier to identify what specific information agencies need from applicants and why it is needed. This is important because it helps to avoid seeking unnecessary and potentially unlawfully discriminatory information from applicants during the application or interview stage (where applicable).

Prior to advertising for any vacancy, serious and positive consideration must be given to whether the role can be re-designed and filled on a part-time basis or whether other flexible working arrangements are able to be accommodated. This must include consideration to how the role can be redesigned to support the employment of additional numbers of graduates or trainees.

### ROLE DESCRIPTION

The role description (also referred to as a role statement or job and person specification) is a critical document used to describe the role in order to assist in attracting candidates and, most importantly, it is used as a key basis for effective selection.

The role description converts characteristics, which the individual will need to perform the role, into criteria used for selection purposes.

The role description should also contain any essential qualifications, required pre-employment screening information, and the employment type and classification.

More information can be found in *Information Sheet 1 – Developing a Role Description*.

### REQUIRED PRE-EMPLOYMENT CHECKS

Informing applicants about pre-employment checks in the role description and advertisement will assist them to determine their suitability for the role and whether or not to apply. It may also discourage unsuitable applicants from applying. Pre-employment checks may include:

- Pre-Employment Declaration (required);
- personal associations that could present a risk for the agency and/or SA public sector;
- reference checks in respect of previous work performance and conduct;
- verification of employment history with previous employers including roles and dates;

- verification of qualifications and licences;
- Relevant pre-employment checks / screenings; and
- medical or functional capacity assessments.

## PRE-EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

In accordance with the Information Privacy Principles, agencies must not use the application process to collect data in respect of applicants unless it is directly relevant to an assessment of their suitability for the role that they are applying for. Additionally, in line with equal opportunity principles and anti-discrimination laws, applicants should not be asked questions during the application process which are not directly relevant to the role and their suitability for employment in the SA public sector.

## ENGAGEMENT TYPES

Once the role is established it is necessary to be clear on the employment type based on the requirements and nature of the role. In the SA public sector non-executive employment may be:

- ongoing;
- term/temporary; or
- casual.

## CLASSIFICATION / REMUNERATION

All roles are to be correctly classified and remunerated in accordance with any relevant industrial instruments and/ or the *Determination of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment: Classification and Remuneration for Employees*.

# 6.2 ATTRACT

## PLANNING RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESSES

A well planned recruitment process that considers all the steps from start to finish, i.e. scheduling of activities, resources, and time allocation; is important to ensure a streamlined process which benefits the agency, SA public sector and applicants. Good planning can positively impact on an applicant's experience and their perception of the agency and SA public sector.

When creating a timetable for recruitment, consider which steps can be run concurrently. Planning the entire process from the beginning, will expedite its progression by identifying which steps can be done simultaneously. For example, planning the selection process while the role is being advertised will allow you to complete the process quickly once applications close. Waiting to plan the selection process only after the close of applications can delay the process by weeks.

In some cases, agencies may use recruitment companies to assist with the advertising, sourcing and establishment of an applicant pool, and the selection process. Recruitment companies are more commonly used for executive roles, roles affected by skills shortages, or where large numbers of candidates are required.

## ATTRACTION

It is important to consider the opportunities to market and communicate the benefits of working for the SA public sector and individual agencies. Factors that influence an agency's ability to attract applicants include the employee value proposition, recruitment experience (including applicant management and timeliness), on-boarding approach, access to professional development opportunities, flexible working arrangements and career mobility.

Current recruitment processes and practices need to reflect the dynamic and changing role of Government and the SA public sector. Role descriptions and advertisements need to be in plain English and not discourage potential employees from applying by the use of bureaucratic, improperly discriminatory or gender-biased language and complex selection criteria.

Greater opportunities to work differently and more flexibly including hours of work, full/part-time options, location, etc. should be considered for SA public sector agencies to be competitive in the recruitment market.

Role information should be readily available and accessible to applicants, including guidance on how to apply. This will assist applicants with the content of their applications which will streamline the selection process. This information should inform applicants of what information the agency requires in an application (e.g. a *Curriculum Vitae* (CV) and a letter or application, or a lengthy statement demonstrating conformity to the selection criteria). The number of applicants expected may influence this decision.

In most cases a CV and two page cover letter or application should suffice in the first instance, particularly if a large volume of applications is expected. Further screening can follow this as required.

## ADVERTISING

Advertising a vacancy will be more successful if agencies reach the right applicants. The selected avenue for reaching potential applicants can have a big impact. Avenues for advertising could include; internal advertising through Expression of Interest or I Work for SA, or additional external advertising through recruitment sites, social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook), professional networks, other internet sites, newspapers, and specialist publications.

When roles are advertised through I Work For SA they can be advertised internally (SA public sector employees only) or externally (anyone from internal or external to SA public sector can apply).

In consistency with the *Premier's Direction - Flexibility for the Future*, the following statement should be included in all recruitment advertising, role descriptions, and on agency websites;

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*The South Australian public sector promotes diversity and flexible ways of working including part time. Applicants are encouraged to discuss the flexible working arrangements for this role.*

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## EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Short-term vacancies (up to 12 months) can also be advertised via an Expression of Interest either internally within each agency or on the I Work for SA website. It is best to get advice from the agency's human resources unit when considering this option.

## 6.3 SELECT

### THE SELECTION PANEL

Selection panels play a major part in ensuring the entire selection process is fair and equitable. The panel's role is to identify and recommend the applicant(s) who best meet the requirements of the role and are able to demonstrate the necessary experience, technical expertise and capabilities to carry out the duties of the role; and are appropriate for employment in the SA public sector.

More information regarding the role and make-up on the selection panel can be found in *Information Sheet 3 – Selection Panels - Roles and Responsibilities*.

A list of selection tools are outlined in *Information Sheet 4 – Selection Tools*.

## 6.4 ENGAGE

Agencies should have a pre-commencement checklist to identify the activities that must be completed prior to a new employee commencing work. The timeliness of these activities will influence an employee's commencement date and also reflect on their perception of the agency and SA public sector. Activities include sending the employment contract and other relevant paperwork to the employee, organising the employee's work station, and organising ICT requirements / relevant access to buildings.

Effective new employee induction and on-boarding processes are essential and have a number of benefits including:

- reducing the risk of staff turnover through early engagement with an employee;
- shaping an employee's understanding of the agency's purpose, culture and values and those of the SA public sector;
- sending clear and consistent messaging; and
- equipping a new employee with tools and knowledge to survive and thrive.

More information on induction can be found in the *Guideline of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment: Induction*.

If an employee is an existing public sector employee then a right to return may apply<sup>6</sup>.

## **CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT**

An employee must not be permitted to commence work until a properly executed written employment contract is in place, and all other pre-employment documentation has been received and appropriately scrutinised.

Contracts of employment are legal documents and agencies should utilise templates drafted with appropriate advice from the Crown Solicitor's Office.

## **GUIDELINE TO PROBATION PERIODS**

With the exception of some executive employees, all new employees to the SA public sector must be engaged at first on probation. In consideration of probation periods for executives, refer to employment arrangements of the individual employee.

The probationary period for employees engaged on a term contract may vary depending on the duration of the term of the contract and the relative complexity and seniority of the role. Probation periods should be up to a maximum 12 month period<sup>7</sup>.

The probationary period provides the opportunity for line managers to assess whether or not the recruitment process has resulted in a successful outcome for the agency, if an employee is suitable for employment in the SA public sector and has the requisite skills etc. relevant to the role. It is important that line managers actively manage the performance of an employee throughout the probationary period. Human resources and/or legal advice should be sought as necessary.

Chief Executives/agency heads or delegates should ensure that a performance management and development plan is in place for each employee within the first 90 days of employment, which will also assist line managers to actively manage the probationary period of new employees to ensure the employee has the support and tools required to be successful in the role.

A probationary period cannot be extended, and once a probationary period concludes the employee automatically becomes confirmed in the role.

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<sup>6</sup> Regulation 6 of the Public Sector Regulations 2010

<sup>7</sup> Refer to section 48 of the *Public Sector Act* 2009 noting that agencies may have specific requirements in their enterprise agreement(s) or own policies.

## 7. PRE-EMPLOYMENT SCREENING

In line with the *Premier's Directions: Recruitment*, all public sector Chief Executives or agency heads must comply with the pre-employment screening processes outlined below.

The reputation and performance of the SA public sector is dependent on the quality of the people it employs. Employment in the SA public sector should not be based solely on the skills and experience of individuals but must also take into account the character and past behaviour of a prospective employee.

Many of the people who rely on Government services are among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our community. In areas such as health; child protection; public housing; emergency services; and disability services; the safety and wellbeing of members of the community rely on the integrity of public officers. It is therefore the responsibility of agencies to ensure that its employees are suitable and qualified to undertake the role.

Chief Executives/agency heads or delegates must ensure that they undertake pre-employment screening to confirm the identity, quality and integrity of prospective employees and follow a diligent approach to performing reference and background checks before offering to employ a person. This information must be obtained from candidates during a selection process and appropriately considered prior to a decision being made to recommend an applicant for appointment/make them an offer of employment. Some agencies have additional requirements for pre-employment screening that need to be taken into consideration by applicants and agency staff running the recruitment process.

### PRE- EMPLOYMENT DECLARATION

Agencies must use the Pre-Employment Declaration issued by the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment (**Attachment 1**) as a minimum standard. Agencies can, with appropriate CSO advice, expand on this Declaration in order to meet their specific agencies requirements. The Declaration may also be recreated within agency online recruitment systems.

Information contained in a Pre-Employment Declaration is relevant to the eligibility and capacity of a candidate to undertake the functions of the role and their suitability for employment in the SA public sector.

It will be a matter for Chief Executives, agency heads or delegates as to when they require prospective employees (including existing public sector employees) to complete a Pre-Employment Declaration, based on agency operational requirements. However, all candidates who have progressed through to the final stages of the selection process, or persons whom a Chief Executive/agency head or delegate is contemplating to employ without having conducted a selection process; must have completed a Pre-Employment Declaration and this information must be considered by the agency, prior to any offer for employment being made.

The Chief Executive/agency head or delegate must ensure that any relevant disclosures in a Pre-Employment Declaration are identified and considered.

Notes to applicants have been incorporated into the Pre- Employment Declaration, explaining how to complete the document and why the information is collected.

Completed Pre-Employment Declarations and associated documents of the successful candidate(s) must be retained and should be stored on an employee's personal file. The Pre-Employment Declarations should be classified 'Sensitive: Personal' according to the agency information security classification scheme, and only be made available to employees on a need-to-know basis. Physical and electronic copies should be secured from unauthorised access according to the requirements of *Premier and Cabinet Circular 30 "Protective Security Policy Framework"*. An example of storage for Sensitive: Personal records in a typical office environment would be a locked, commercial-grade filing cabinet.

Any Pre-Employment Declarations collected from unsuccessful candidates should also be retained and disposed of in accordance with the *State Records Act 1997 and General Disposal Schedule No. 30*.

All employees responsible for handling Pre-Employment Declarations should be made aware of their obligations to securely handle official information described in the Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector, as well as the specific requirements of the *Information Privacy Principles, State Records Act 1997 and the DPC Protective Security Framework*.<sup>8</sup>

All disclosures made by a candidate in a Pre-Employment Declaration should remain personal and confidential. Disclosed information should only be used to determine the candidate's suitability to perform the duties and functions of the role/to be employed in the SA public sector and is able to be appointed to a role having regard to the candidate's qualities and background, Government workforce policies and any legislative requirements.

## DISABILITIES OR MEDICAL CONDITIONS

It may be unlawful discrimination to require an applicant to disclose details of disabilities or medical conditions that are not relevant to the performance of the duties of a role.

It is important that the role description accurately describes the outcomes and duties of the role. This will assist the candidate when responding to the relevant question in the Pre-Employment Declaration and enable the candidate to determine if they need to disclose any pre-existing disability or medical information as it may impede on their ability to perform the duties and functions of the role which they are applying for.

In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to require a medical or functional capacity assessment to determine whether a candidate is able to perform the duties, functions and demands of a role. The medical or functional capacity assessment should be conducted for a candidate(s) who has progressed to the later stages of the selection process (in most cases at the time of the interview or prior to an offer of employment).

Any medical or functional capacity assessment must be agreed to by a candidate and conducted by an appropriately qualified professional. The assessment must specifically

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<sup>8</sup> As of 1 July 2020

relate to the capacity of the candidate to undertake the duties, functions and job demands of the role and should not be conducted as a general test of health.

Where the candidate has a disability or condition that affects their capacity to perform the functions of the role, this does not necessarily exclude the applicant from being appointed. Where possible, agencies should consider making reasonable adjustments (including but not restricted to access, workplace design, modifications to equipment, job redesign) to allow an applicant with a disability to perform the role. Advice should be sought from the agency's human resources unit and/or the CSO, as necessary.

## **CRIMINAL HISTORY AND OTHER BACKGROUND SCREENING**

Screening is a process by which information is sourced and analysed to assess the integrity of a candidate.

Chief Executives/agency heads or delegates must actively consider whether a criminal history or other background screening is a requirement for particular roles, whether by force of legislation or policy. Agencies need to consider the type and purpose of such screening, which will depend on the nature of the role, duties, functions of the role (including, but not restricted to, clients and stakeholders, accessibility to confidential information and political environment).

National Police Certificates through the South Australia Police or other screening checks from the Department for Human Services (DHS) Screening Unit are common screening tools used within the SA public sector.

In addition to the above screening options, the Pre- Employment Declaration asks questions in relation to criminal offences and allegations.

Information disclosed in respect of criminal offences or current criminal charges should only be taken into account where the offences committed or alleged to have been committed by the candidate are relevant to the inherent requirements of the role/their suitability for employment in the SA public sector.

Criminal offences that a candidate has declared and which have no bearing on the suitability of the candidate having regard to the duties and functions of the role should be disregarded. Advice should be sought from the agency's Human Resources unit and/or the Crown Solicitor's Office, as necessary. Some agencies also have additional requirements for screening which will need to be considered when a candidate has declared a criminal offence.

More information can be found in *Information Sheet 5: How to deal with recorded conviction on a National Police Certificate* and *Information Sheet 6: Department of Human Services (DHS) screening*.

## **EMPLOYMENT HISTORY (INCLUDING REFEREE CHECKS)**

Chief Executives/agency heads or delegates must complete referee checks for all candidates who are being considered by the panel for recommendation, in order to verify past performance in employment, including conduct and behaviour. Reference checks

may also be conducted outside of those nominated by a candidate. It is appropriate to advise a candidate of the decision to conduct a reference check outside of nominated referees, although the candidate's permission is not necessary. Referee checks are an essential due diligence check to obtain information from someone who has direct personal knowledge of a candidate's experience, skills, knowledge and personal qualities. Referees are asked to provide information in respect of a candidate's performance against the selection criteria of the job role. Where possible, this should be a current or recent line manager. It is important to be sensitive about approaching a referee if doing so may jeopardise their current employment. Referees should also be advised that their comments may be provided to the candidate, should the candidate request this. The *Premier's Direction: Recruitment* also contains some mandatory requirements and should be reviewed when considering and planning referee checks.

To assist Chief Executives/agency heads or delegates in obtaining information about a candidate's employment history, the Pre-Employment Declaration asks candidates to disclose whether previous employment has been terminated or whether they have been subject to an investigation or allegations of misconduct or other unsatisfactory performance. These issues must be investigated through employment history and/or referee checks.

Where a candidate identifies that they are a former SA public sector employee who has had their employment terminated or been the subject of such an investigation or allegations, they should not be re-employed without adequate checks in respect of their employment history. Further information will be required and must be obtained from the relevant previous employing agency.

In line with the *Premier's Direction – Restraints on re- engagement of former executive employees and other public office holders in certain circumstances* – agencies must ensure that any former executive employee or public office appointee that has previously separated from the public sector, and whose employment was terminated entitling them to a termination payment, is not re-employed for a period consistent with the number of months of remuneration paid to them unless the individual repays the Crown the equivalent remuneration amount for the remaining period. Please refer to the applicable Premier's Direction for further information.

## QUALIFICATION VERIFICATION

If qualifications and/or licences are an essential requirement of a role, a Chief Executive/agency head or delegate must verify that an applicant possesses such qualifications and/or licences prior to them being made an offer of employment.

The onus is on the applicant to provide evidence of essential qualifications.

Information for applicants with overseas qualifications is available at:

<https://www.education.gov.au/international-students/get-your-overseas-qualification-or-skills-recognised-australia>.

## **ELIGIBILITY TO WORK IN AUSTRALIA**

Where necessary, the Chief Executive/agency head or delegate may need to check an applicant's eligibility to work in Australia.

The Pre-Employment Declaration asks candidates to advise if they have work rights in Australia and visa details, if applicable.

## **TARGETED VOLUNTARY SEPARATION PACKAGES (TVSP)**

Persons who resign from employment in the SA public sector upon accepting a TVSP are not eligible to be re-employed in the South Australian public sector for a period which corresponds with the number of weeks TVSP pay (based on 100% TVSP) paid to the employee.

Chief Executive/agency heads or delegates must ensure internal recruitment processes identify former public sector employees who are ineligible for employment as a consequence of accepting a TVSP.

The Pre-Employment Declaration asks applicants to declare if they have been in receipt of a TVSP, including the date of termination from previous employment.

## 8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLES	AND RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>Commissioner for Public Sector Employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue and maintain Determinations and Guidelines relevant to public sector employment.</li> <li>• Issue and maintain a Pre-Employment Declaration as a minimum standard to be used by all public sector agencies.</li> </ul>
<b>Chief Executives and agency heads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish and maintain effective recruitment and selection systems and processes, advised and supported by human resource management expertise and senior managers.</li> <li>• Ensure that recruitment and selection processes meet the requirements under the relevant industrial instruments and Premier's Directions.</li> <li>• Responsible for recruitment and selection processes being appropriately delegated.</li> </ul>
<b>Executives, senior and line managers and supervisors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support effective recruitment and selection processes within their agency by ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- comprehensive role analysis is undertaken prior to recruitment;</li> <li>- due consideration of work injured / excess employees has been undertaken prior to recruitment;</li> <li>- all required pre-employment screening is completed appropriately prior to an offer of employment to any prospective employee; and</li> <li>- recruitment and selection processes are conducted in a confidential and ethical manner.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Panel chair</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate the recruitment and selection process and ensure that recruitment principles are applied and implemented.</li> <li>• Ensure recruitment and selection processes are conducted in a confidential, fair and ethical manner.</li> <li>• Responsible for any required pre-employment screening and final panel report.</li> <li>• Ensure applicants are advised of outcomes including the provision of feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Panel members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the recruitment and selection process is conducted in accordance with the recruitment principles.</li> <li>• Ensure recruitment and selection processes are conducted in a confidential, fair and ethical manner.</li> </ul>
<b>Human Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the Chief Executive or agency head in the design and management of the agency's recruitment framework.</li> <li>• Provide executives, managers and employees with confidential support, advice and guidance in relation to recruitment and selection processes and practices.</li> <li>• Assist to facilitate a satisfactory resolution of any grievance between employee and manager, where support is requested.</li> <li>• Support the periodic review and evaluation of the agency's recruitment framework.</li> </ul>

## 9. REFERENCES

*Australian Human Rights Commission– Guidelines for the prevention of discrimination in employment on the basis of criminal record.*

*Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector.*

*Cabinet Administrative Instruction 1/89, also known as the Information Privacy Principles (IPPS) Instruction and Premier and Cabinet Circular 12.*

*Commissioner for Public Sector Employment Determination 1: Merit Engagement Assignment of Duties and Transfer of Non- Executive Employees: Government of South Australia.*

*Commissioner for Public Sector Employment Determination 5: Classification and Remuneration for Employees.*

*Commissioner for Public Sector Employment: SAES Competency Framework.*

*Commissioner for Public Sector Employment: South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy: 2019-21.*

*Department of Human Services (DHS) website – Screening Checks.*

*Diversity Council, Words and Work – Building inclusion through the power of language, 2016. Premier’s Direction: Flexibility for the Future.*

*Premier’s Direction: Public Sector Employee Mobility.*

*Premier’s Direction: Recruitment.*

*Premier’s Direction: Restraints on re-engagement of former employees and other public office holders in certain circumstances.*

*State Records of South Australia: General Disposal Schedule No. 30, State Government Agencies in South Australia, Disposal.*

*Working It Out: A Workforce Planning Guide*

# INFORMATION SHEETS

# INFORMATION SHEET ONE

## DEVELOPING A ROLE DESCRIPTION

**Role descriptions should be developed for all new roles and reviewed each time a role becomes vacant.**

The role description (also referred to as a role statement or job and person specification), is a critical document because it is used to describe the duties of the role, attract applicants and act as basis for selection and performance management.

It is usually the responsibility of the relevant manager, in consultation with the appropriate staff, to develop the role description.

Generally there are three main sections in a role description:

- general information (including the context of the role);
- key results / outcomes to be achieved; and
- competency profile.

To ensure the role statement is meaningful to a wide audience, authors should be mindful of using gender neutral and inclusive language. For more information please see the *South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2019-21* and the Office for Women's Gender Neutral Recruitment [Guidelines](#):

## GENERAL INFORMATION INCLUDING THE CONTEXT OF THE ROLE

The role description provides the basic contextual information relating to the role and may have a number of sub- headings, as an example:

### CONTEXT OF THE ROLE

The aim of the context is to provide information about the role, why it exists and where it fits within the agency and SA public sector. The context statement also details the scope of a role, and its responsibilities and accountabilities.

It may also be useful to outline the challenges for the role, particularly any actual or potential pressures or changes that may affect the role now or in the future. What is on the horizon will affect the context, the results expected and the competencies required.

### REPORTING / WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

This section should contain information about the reporting relationships, any staff the incumbent of the role is responsible for, and any significant internal and external working relationships or key stakeholders.

## SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

This part of the role description should describe any specific requirements of the role such as the work location, travel requirements, rostered hours or a frequent necessity to do overtime, pre-employment screening requirements, licences etc.

## KEY RESULTS / OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED

The key results / outcomes section of a role description incorporates outcomes, outputs, services, tasks and products arising from a role. The key results / outcomes may include information regarding the below:

- How does this role contribute to the work and goals of the team, unit, business group and agency?
- What is the primary responsibility of the role? i.e. management of team, program or project; is it technical or operational support and service delivery?
- Are there specific responsibilities for budget?
- What types of issues or problems need to be solved to successfully deliver expected results?
- Who are the role's key stakeholders?
- What are the immediate consequences of the results achieved? (a completed processor a direct service or product).
- What decisions are made by the role and what decisions are made by others in relation to:
  - selecting work methods;
  - setting work priorities;
  - planning and prioritising the work of others; and
  - allocating resources;
- What standards, targets and milestones are the results of this role measured against?
- Are there specific 'risks' that this role needs to manage, and how is this achieved?

## COMPETENCY PROFILE (PERSON SPECIFICATION)

Competencies describe the skills, knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes that the individual needs to perform the role.

Although most roles probably require a person to draw upon many different competencies it is impossible and undesirable to list every specific skill or aspect of knowledge required to perform the role. Instead, it is better to choose high-level selection criteria. For example, instead of listing each piece of legislation the person is required to adhere to, a higher level criterion such as 'manages compliance with legislation' would cover more information.

Using higher-level selection criteria makes it unnecessary to list every underlying skill. Accordingly, listing 'project management' as a selection criterion means that every project management skill, such as communication, time management or negotiation, does not need to be individually listed.

## ESSENTIAL AND DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS

Chief Executives, agency heads or delegates should demonstrate that qualifications listed as essential requirements are relevant to the inherent requirements of the role. This will ensure that the range of potential applicants is not unnecessarily restricted. If this cannot be clearly demonstrated, the agency will need to confine any qualifications to desirable requirements.

## SAES EXECUTIVE ROLES

A competency framework has been specifically developed for the South Australian Executive Service (SAES) group.

More information on the SAES Competencies can be found on the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment (OCPSE) website.

# INFORMATION SHEET TWO

## RECRUITMENT USING POOLS

**Instead of advertising a single vacancy it may be an option to choose from candidate pools. Depending on the type of pool, it may be possible to directly appoint from the pool without further assessment, or a full selection process being required.**

Using a pool enables agencies to source applicants without advertising each time a vacancy arises, resulting in a number of benefits particularly when recruiting to roles that are:

- one of several similar roles;
- likely to be filled again in the next 12 months;
- in a skills shortage area; and/or
- for casual employment periods.

A Chief Executive, agency head or delegate may select from an existing pool or establish a pool to suit the needs of the business unit or agency.

When used effectively, pools can:

- be less resource intensive - pools minimise the financial, time and administrative costs of re-advertising and opening applications.
- One selection panel can recommend or shortlist applicants for numerous potential vacancies;
- reduce the time to fill a vacancy - registered candidates have already undergone a selection process therefore in some cases, candidates can be appointed to a role without the need for further assessment;
- ensure an available supply for critical, specialist or high-turnover roles - using pools can help business units to identify potential suitable applicants before a vacancy needs to be filled; and
- create opportunities for applicants, to help the department reach its employment targets
  - for example, increasing opportunities for people with disability or from Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

# INFORMATION SHEET THREE

## THE SELECTION PANEL – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**A selection panel should be formed prior to applications closing for the vacancy. This will ensure that there are no delays in the selection process as times for shortlisting, conducting selection assessments and writing the panel report can be booked into calendars well in advance.**

The selection panel should be mindful of the agency's recruitment timeframe. As recommended above, it should take no longer than fourteen (14) days from the time that applications close, to the engagement decision being advised to the recommended applicant(s), acknowledging that for large scale recruitment and selection processes, or those with multiple selection assessments or multiple vacancies, this may not be possible.

The role of the selection panel is usually:

- shortlisting (ensuring there is gender balance throughout the process by using processes which drive diversity and inclusion);
- Establishing selection criteria;
- determining the selection process;
- pre-employment screening (see section 7 for detailed guidance on pre-employment screening);
- evaluation of applications;
- conducting interviews and the selection assessment;
- preparation of a selection report containing recommendations to the Chief Executive/ agency head or delegate; and
- proper maintenance and storage of documentation.

All panel members should participate in all stages of the selection process.

Consideration should be given to the level of training and support that panel members require (this may include training for mitigating unconscious bias to support fair and equitable processes). It is good practice for agencies to offer recruitment and selection training to panel members to ensure they understand the guiding principles and the recruitment and selection processes and practices.

A selection panel plays a major part in ensuring a selection process is fair and equitable. The aim of the selection panel is to identify and recommend the applicant(s) who best meets the requirements of the role and is able to demonstrate that they have the experience, technical expertise and competencies to carry out the duties of the role; and are suitable to be employed in the SA public sector.

Panel members are required to consider work injured or excess employees from across the public sector as well as to ensure processes are inclusive of the principles in the *South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2019-21*.

A well balanced selection panel should consist of:

- A minimum of two panellists;
- A panel chair who holds a detailed knowledge of the position and oversees the whole process including keeping applicants informed of the progress of the selection process and outcomes;
- at least one panel member of each gender with a 50/50 gender representation wherever possible;
- An independent / stakeholder representative; and
- An equity member (disability / indigenous / cultural).

## SHORT LISTING

All selection panel members should participate in the shortlisting process and agree which applicants should be considered further. Applicants must be shortlisted against the essential minimum requirements or competencies listed in the role description.

Desirable attributes should only be used in the final selection stages to distinguish between applicants who meet all the essential requirements to the same degree.

Selection panels need only shortlist and further assess those applicants that demonstrate the best match to the role.

## EVALUATION AND DECISION MAKING

Panel members should consciously attempt to suspend judgement on candidates until all information is gathered, being as open minded as possible about candidates responses during the selection process.

Once all information is available the following approach is preferred in making the selection decision:

- each panel member determines their order of merit of applicants against the role description requirements;
- panel members then detail their decision using an evidence based approach on the information gathered to substantiate their opinions;
- panel members should be aware not to agree automatically with the most vocal or forceful member. Any initial agreement should be viewed as open to change and discussed to make sure that panel members have arrived at similar conclusions for the same or complimentary reasons; and

- see differences of opinion as positive and helpful rather than a hindrance. Generally the more ideas presented, the greater the discussion which will ultimately lead to a more thorough consideration of all available information.

This approach will assist a panel to make a final group decision with clear reasons for the result and provide information that will contribute to the preparation of the selection report.

## SELECTION PANEL REPORT

A selection panel report is a recommendation to the Chief Executive, agency head or delegate who has the authority to approve or not approve the panel's recommendation. The panel report should be a succinct and logical presentation of the material necessary for the delegate to make an informed decision.

The selection panel report summarises the process that was undertaken and ranks the comparative strengths of the candidate to support the recommendation.

As a minimum requirement the selection panel report should:

- describe the advertising arrangements;
- include a list of interviewed candidates;
- describe the process used for selection;
- describe and include the evidence used in making the decision, e.g. work based test, application, presentation, referee comment;
- provide rationale for the decision in an order of merit;
- include referee reports;
- contain signatures/approvals from all panel members;
- include the delegate's signature/approval, the date of the decision and clearly indicate the power being exercised;
- include, where applicable, more than one recommended applicant. It is very useful to draw the line between acceptable candidates who can be recommended, and candidates who are not recommended. In this situation should the highest ranked applicant decline the role, subsequent recommended applicants may be appointed or if there is more than one position, further recommended applicants can be engaged.

In the event that no applicant is recommended, a selection report, as above, is still required and must be signed by the Chief Executive, agency head or delegate.

Sufficient notes must be kept in the event of a review of the process.

If a panel member dissents with any aspect of the selection process, the issues raised should be addressed by the chair in a full panel discussion and may result in undertaking further processes.

There may be occasions where a selection panel is unable to reach a consensus, if the selection decision is not unanimous, the dissenting panellist should provide an addendum to the selection report detailing reasons for their disagreement. The selection report is then referred to the decision maker who should convene with the panel to resolve the matter, and/or request further assessment or make a final determination regarding the recommendation based on all evidence provided.

## ADVISING THE APPLICANTS

The selected candidate(s) should be notified as soon as possible after the Chief Executive, agency head or delegate has approved the recommendation, that they are the recommended applicant (subject to the seven day review period if relevant, and where required, criminal history, DHS or other background screening).

Once a preferred candidate is offered a role the candidate and the employer need to jointly agree on the employment conditions (hours, salary, work location, etc.). Chief Executives, agency heads or delegates should give serious and positive consideration to any potential employee's request to utilise flexible working arrangements within all roles. Where the application for flexible working arrangements is not supported due to organisational imperatives, the decision maker must advise the applicant in writing within 21 days of the applicant's request including reasons for rejecting the request.

If the candidate does not accept the offer of employment, this may result in an offer being made to the second recommended candidate.

Unsuccessful applicants need to be informed soon after the confirmation of the selected candidate(s). For interviewed candidates this should be verbally in the first instance. All unsuccessful candidates should be notified in writing / email and, where practicable, notifications should be sent out on the same day the successful applicant is advised.

Applicants should be advised of the opportunity to receive feedback from the panel chair (or a delegated panel member) on their participation and performance during the selection process if they wish.

Feedback should:

- be objective with reference to the role description, not general assumptions;
- focus on where the applicant could not demonstrate that they met the selection criteria to the degree of the higher rated applicant(s); and
- not advise or involve specific details about other applicants.

## PANEL DOCUMENTATION

The recruitment file, which should include approvals to fill existing vacancies, the advertising of vacant positions and the handling of applications, interviews, selection, and appointment, must be kept and disposed of in accordance with State Records of South Australia: General Disposal Schedule No. 30, State Government Agencies in South Australia, Disposal Schedule.

## EVALUATING THE PROCESS

A selection process is not complete without an evaluation of it.

Once a candidate has been selected and appointed, it is important there is an evaluation of the selection process to ensure that it really did identify the best applicant for the role. This requires assessing the performance of the successful candidate further down the track to see how well the selection processes predicted subsequent job performance. This will provide information on which processes should be maintained, modified or removed.

Salary costs make up the largest single component of general Government expenditure. Budget pressures are constant; therefore every appointment should be the best possible choice for maximising productivity, minimising turnover, and ensuring the best fit between role and applicant.

# INFORMATION SHEET FOUR

## SELECTION TOOLS

A good selection process must provide sufficient evidence upon which to base a selection decision. Selection tools should be chosen in consideration of the position requirements. A variety of selection tools are outlined below.

### INTERVIEWS

Interviewing is the most commonly used selection technique and if used appropriately can be a sound and valid predictor of work performance. However conducting interviews is not a mandatory part of a selection process if other selection assessments can accurately assess each candidate's ability to perform a role. In some instances, more than one interview may be appropriate. In other instances, agencies may decide not to conduct an interview and rely on other selection tools.

### INTERVIEWS INVOLVING BEHAVIOURAL - BASED QUESTIONS

The use of behavioural-based interview questions is recommended. Such questions should be designed to seek out examples of previous actual behaviours and experiences rather than enquiring about handling hypothetical situations such as, "What would you do if...?" Behavioural-based questions ask about a specific past event; what happened, how the candidate reacted, and what they learnt from the event. For example, "Tell us about an instance where you experienced conflict with a customer - what happened, what did you do, and what have you learnt".

- Interview questions should be the same for each candidate, and:
- focus on the most important job aspects and required skills and abilities;
- be relevant to specific selection criteria;
- enable comparison / levels of excellence between the applicants; and
- asked to interviewees in the same order, to ensure the process is fair and consistent, with follow-up questions, if required, to clarify individual responses / circumstances.

### FORMULATING QUESTIONS

Questions should be formulated against the role description and should be short, clear and unambiguous. Questions must not be unlawfully discriminatory and should include a combination of open, closed and behavioural questions.

## ASSESSING BEHAVIOURAL QUESTIONS

The STAR method outlined below is often a good way to determine if a candidate has effectively answered a question.

<b>Situation</b>	Describe the situation
<b>Task</b>	Describe the task that required resolution or accomplishment
<b>Action</b>	Exactly what did you do? – Focus on the 'what and why' Describe what happened including particular focus on the actions
<b>Result</b>	What was the result? – Was it successful? What did you learn? – What would you do differently

## PRESENTATION

Asking a candidate to present on a specific topic can be useful, particularly for roles where oral communication skills are crucial (e.g. presenting to media and other forums on a regular basis). This can assist with assessing a candidate's ability to articulate ideas and concepts with clarity and focus.

## TESTING - SKILLS/ABILITIES

Skills, such as typing speed or computer literacy, can be tested with a skills test. Tests can be designed to assess more than one skill (e.g. problem based scenario questions).

## CASE STUDY

Giving a real life work example of a situation which may arise on the job is particularly useful for identifying how an applicant would respond in a practical situation.

## PSYCHOMETRIC ASSESSMENT

Psychometric assessments can be valid and reliable if used correctly and interpreted professionally. However, like all other selection information, they should form part of the suite of selection tools and not be used on their own.

All psychometric assessments should be administered and interpreted by a qualified professional (i.e. a psychologist, and/or an accredited HR Professional).

## ASSESSMENT CENTRES

Assessment centre tests are based on the competencies of a role – the underlying skills and aptitudes that are needed for its performance. An assessment centre usually includes several behavioural tasks, such as role plays, interviews and optional personality and ability testing. In an assessment centre, capabilities are tested multiple times and observed and scored in a structured way by several assessors.

## REFEREES

The *Premier's Direction: Recruitment* requires agencies to have a recruitment system that incorporates as a minimum, completion of referee checks to verify the job performance of candidates who are being considered by the panel for recommendation.

A reference is used to provide evidence of past behaviour, knowledge, values and skills. It can be a standard means of comparing all candidates on certain criteria. References can also be part of the screening process, particularly if there is insufficient information in the application with which to make a decision. Where referee reports are used as an assessment tool during shortlisting; referee reports are to be sought for all shortlisted applicants.

A reference can be very reliable or unreliable, depending on the specificity of the information sought as well as the knowledge and honesty of the referee. A reliability concern about references is that candidates may nominate referees who will provide only positive information. To remedy this:

- use very specific questions to ask for evidence of past behaviour;
- seek information specific to the referee's knowledge of the person – not every referee can comment on all aspects of job performance;
- probe referees' responses;
- ask about job-relevant development needs of the applicant;
- ask what job-relevant behavioural issues have been noted;
- use more than one referee to corroborate information; if these differ, seek further information;
- seek evidence about what the applicant did not provide; and
- use non-nominated referees, if required.

In most cases, references should be obtained from a current or most recent line manager. If the candidate has not nominated their current / recent line manager, the panel may, subject to advising the candidate, contact the line manager or other referees that the panel believe are relevant. The panel does not need to get permission from the candidate.

References should be collected in a structured way, preferably in writing. In approaching referees, panel members should provide a clear explanation of the requirements of

the role and the selection criteria. If comments are obtained verbally, notes are to be taken and read back and confirmed by referees. Referees should be advised that their comments could be made available to the applicant on request.

References must be documented and maintained as a selection process record.

## COMPARING SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A selection decision based on multiple sources of information that provide consistent evidence is most likely to be a valid predictor of performance.

Selection panels (and Chief Executives, agency heads or delegates as decision makers) must focus their questions/ assessments on the candidate's ability and avoid considering irrelevant personal characteristics, unless they are genuinely related to the person's ability to perform the role.

The panel should:

- record candidates' responses;
- score / rate candidates against the requirements of the role;
- agree on a final score / rating for each criteria or question or assessment; and
- rank applicants on merit accordingly, involving all assessment tools used.

Whatever selection tools are used, information should be assembled as it proceeds, to assist in building a consistent picture. Where information is not consistent, an effort should be made to discern what is accurate and more information gathered if necessary. Beware that even agreement between two referees may not be as reliable as independent evidence, for example, a skills test. The responsibility of panel members is to make a recommendation on the best candidate(s), and they should keep gathering information until comfortably confident of the decision.

# INFORMATION SHEET FIVE

## HOW TO DEAL WITH RECORDED CONVICTION ON A NATIONAL POLICE CERTIFICATE

**If the National Police Certificate has a recorded conviction, the following important factors should be considered when assessing a candidate's suitability for employment:**

- the nature of the offence and relationship of the offence to the particular role for which the
- candidate is being considered and/or their suitability to be employed in the SA public sector;
- the period of time that has elapsed since the offence;
- for decision makers in agencies entitled to consider (other than spent convictions), whether the court recorded a conviction for the offence;
- whether there is evidence of an extensive criminal history;
- the number of offences committed. An accumulation of individual minor offences may be sufficient to warrant rejection of a candidate. Consideration will be given to whether the offences form a pattern of behaviour(s) that indicate the candidate is unsuitable for employment in the SA public sector;
- mitigating or extenuating circumstances, which may be revealed in relation to the offence(s), for example, provocation, peer group pressure, and effect of alcohol. However, such circumstances may not always favour the candidate;
- the severity of the punishment imposed;
- whether the offence is still a crime (i.e. has the offence been decriminalised or removed from the statutes); and/or
- evidence of the candidate's good character since the offences were committed, which may be ascertained through referee reports.

If it is likely that an offer of employment would have been made to the applicant if not for the disclosed information, it may be necessary to provide the applicant with procedural fairness prior to a decision on the applicant's suitability being determined. In that instance, the authorised officer or decision makers should invite the prospective employee to provide additional contextual information or other information as to why the information should not be relied upon prior to a final decision being made.

Further information can be found here: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/projects/discrimination-employment-basis-criminal-record>

# INFORMATION SHEET SIX

## DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS) SCREENING

Screening by the DHS Screening Unit involves a risk assessment specifically focused on the applicant's risk in relation to a particular work or volunteer role. There is no such risk assessment with a National Police Certificate, which is simply a record of the applicant's criminal conviction history.

In some cases, screening is mandated by legislation; where not mandated by legislation, a decision as to what type of screening is required is made by the Chief Executive or agency head.

The DHS Screening Unit conducts five types of screening assessment on behalf of employer organisations:

- Child-related Employment and Working With Children Checks;
- Aged Care Sector Employment Check;
- Disability Services Employment Check;
- Vulnerable Person Related Employment Check; and
- General Employment Probity Check.

The Authorised Officer in an agency will be notified if the Screening Unit determines that a person poses an unacceptable level of risk.

Further information in relation to DHS screening can be found on its website:  
<https://screening.sa.gov.au/>

# APPENDIX 1

## ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<b>Applicants</b>	An applicant is a person who has applied for a role, but who has not yet been assessed against the role criteria.
<b>Applicant pool</b>	People who have formally applied for a specific job.
<b>Assess</b>	Ascertain work-related knowledge, skills, abilities or other characteristics of an individual or group of individuals.
<b>Assessment</b>	Systematic method and procedure for ascertaining work-related knowledge, skills, abilities or other characteristics of people or a group of people, or the performance of people or a group of people.
<b>Attract</b>	Generate and induce interest of the potential targeted applicants.
<b>Attributes</b>	Are the inherent personal qualities/characteristics that are additional to the 'learned' abilities of a person.
<b>Candidates</b>	Candidates are applicants that have been screened and deemed suitable to progress to interview or further selection processes.
<b>Employ</b>	Engage the services of a person.
<b>Employee Value Proposition</b>	Is the balance of the rewards and benefits that are received by employees in return for their contribution at the workplace.
<b>Employer Brand</b>	Organisation's reputation and differentiating characteristics as an employer within and outside the organisation.
<b>Inclusive language</b>	Inclusive language is respectful, accurate and relevant to all.
<b>Induction</b>	Is part of on-boarding and is the first structured step in building a relationship between the organisation and the employee
<b>Gender neutral language</b>	Language that is inclusive and encompasses the diverse nature of gender.
<b>Job Analysis</b>	Involves determining the required knowledge, competencies, skills and attributes to perform in a particular role.

<b>Job Description</b>	List of specific or general tasks, or functions, and goals or responsibilities of a position, as well as organisational conditions under which those tasks and functions are to be performed.
<b>Merit Principle</b>	Choosing the best person for the job based on the candidate's skills, abilities and knowledge deeming them to be the most suitable for the job.
<b>On-boarding</b>	Refers to the process through which new employees acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviours to become effective organisational members and insiders. On-boarding commences after the new employee reports for work and continue until the new employee has become a fully engaged, culturally aware and productive member of the workforce.
<b>Recruitment</b>	The process of sourcing, attracting, assessing and employing talent for roles within an organisation.
<b>SAES</b>	South Australian Executive Service
<b>Selection</b>	The process used to identify the best person for the role.
<b>Short-listing</b>	The process used to reduce a large applicant pool to a smaller more manageable size, based on selection criteria.
<b>Skills Development</b>	The process of identifying skill gaps and development needs and developing and honing these skills.
<b>Source</b>	Identify a pool of potential applicants
<b>Succession Planning</b>	Process for identifying and developing current employees with the potential to fill key positions within the organisation in the future.
<b>Talent Pool</b>	Involves seeking expressions of interest from people to include their details in a database for consideration for employment opportunities.
<b>Talent Management</b>	Focuses on training, developing, retaining, promoting, and moving employees through agencies to ensure an agency has the depth of talent to respond to changing business needs.