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Recruitment Basics

# Introduction

Getting the right person into a job can be a time consuming and difficult task. This step by step guide aims to make it easy for you.

The guide covers the very basics of recruitment and selection. It includes information on:

* how to develop a good position description
* what you need to know about advertising the job
* how to conduct an interview
* how to go about selecting the right person for the job
* how to support for the new starter.

# Step 1 – Develop a position description

This is the first step in successful recruitment and it needs to be done each time you create a new position. And if you’re filling an existing position, it’s wise to review the one that you already have.

A position description includes the outcomes you require from the position, as well as the personal capabilities and attributes required of the person who will fill that role.

## What should you include within the position description?

* location of role
* key duties and tasks which the person filling the role will be required to do
* qualifications required for the role
* key capabilities and personal attributes required of the person who will fill the role. These are your ‘key selection criteria’ and they’ll be important when you come to shortlist applicants for interview.
* desirable capabilities and personal attributes. These are capabilities and personal attributes that ideally you would like the successful applicant to have, but are not essential.
* reporting relationships: who does the position report to and who reports to the position
* your organisational values so people can assess whether they will fit within your organisation
* job outcomes/key result areas so that applicants are aware of what they will be assessed against in the role, and how success will be measured
* whether the position is permanent or fixed term; full-time or part-time.
* the salary range for the position – if you include a range it will give you scope to employ someone with more experience or a bit less. Classifications and salary ranges are based on the relevant Enterprise Agreement or Award.
* the availability of any additional conditions, such as options to work from home or holiday closure arrangements.
* whether working with children checks or police checks are required for the role
* a date at which the position description was last reviewed.

# Step 2 – Advertise the job

Once you’re happy with the position description, then you need to find the right person to fill it. Advertising helps you get the best person for the job, and it also helps to promote your organisation in your community.

## Tip

Before you advertise it is important that you know your organisation’s policies on recruitment. For example, do you need to advertise internally in the first instance?

If there are no policies on recruitment, you must make a decision whether to recruit solely from within your organisation, or go to for a wider pool.

The first stage in advertising is to work out who you want to encourage to apply for the job – ‘your target audience’:

* Who are they?
* Where would they go if they were looking for a job? Are they likely to look at your website, the local newspaper, your organisational newsletter, through on-line recruitment sites?

Targeting your audience and advertising where they are most likely to look will help to ensure you get the best person for the job.

When you’re writing your advertisement, make sure you keep the text short, simple and informal:

* short paragraphs and short sentences make it easier for your reader to understand your message
* keep it informal. Use ‘you’ rather than ‘the applicant’ or ‘the candidate’
* include the most important details about the role (e.g. organisation details, classification level and salary range being offered, location of role, key duties and tasks, qualifications, skills and benefits)
* clearly state what you require in an application (e.g. resume, cover letter, response to key selection criteria and if references are required at application)
* add in any significant non-financial benefits that might appeal to your target audience (i.e. flexible working arrangements)
* include a closing date for applications – and don’t accept any applicants after this date
* include the name and details of a contact person that potential applicants can contact if they have queries about the position.

## Tip

To make it easier to select those you will interview from those that apply to your advertisement, ask applicants to respond to key selection criteria in their application. Put some thought into these. Base them around the key duties and tasks, capabilities and attributes described in the position description.

# Step 3 – Shortlist the applicants

Once the closing date for applications comes around and if your advertising strategy has been effective, you will have a good spread of applications. You now need to whittle these down to the best ones to interview.

The way you do this is via short listing. Use your key selection criteria – the key duties and tasks, capabilities and attributes described in the position description and decide which of the applicants’ best meets these.

It’s best if your prospective interview panel is involved in this short listing. Ask them to each look at the applications and select four or five of the applicants who best meet the key selection criteria. Then meet together to agree on four or five of these to interview.

Contact the people you have shortlisted and invite them to attend an interview. Those who have not been shortlisted should be notified that their application was unsuccessful. You could do this via mail or email.

# Step 4 – The interview

Take some time to get your interview panel together. The following checklist will help you with the interview task:

The ideal interview panel:

* has two or three people.
* includes people that represent the diversity of the community you are working in
* includes the person who is going to manage the new starter
* includes people who have conducted interviews before
* includes people who know the work culture and work colleagues
* has read the position description and includes people who are prepared to provide information about the conditions of employment
* uses a set of interview questions based on the key selection criteria for the position
* asks every applicant the same questions and treats them equally
* uses behaviourally-based questions (e.g. asks applicants what they would do if presented with a particular situation). For example: if ‘knowledge of recruitment practices’ is critical to perform effectively in the role, a question could be: “Please describe a time when you had to recruit someone. What was the situation, what did you do and what was the result?”
* gives applicants a realistic time frame regarding when a decision about the position is likely to be made.

## Tip

Don’t ask questions of a discriminatory nature; for example, about pregnancy, parental or carer responsibilities, or age. Asking a question such as when are you planning to start a family is illegal. For further information refer to: <https://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/the-workplace/employer-responsibilities/recruitment>

## How to work out which are the preferred candidates

To ensure fairness and to get the best person for the job, it’s best for each person on your interview panel to weigh up each candidate’s response to each question and then compare responses.

# Step 5 – Reference checking

After the interview, you’ll ideally have two or three preferred applicants. The next step is to follow up with their referees. If preferred applicants have not provided referees, make sure you ask for them.

It’s best to ask for referees who have worked with the applicant or have supervised them.

Some areas to follow up with referees:

* length of employment with the referee
* confirmation of the applicant’s claims in their application
* estimates of the applicant’s job performance capability
* the former employer’s willingness to re-hire the applicant.

## Tip

Conduct any necessary checks such as police checks or working with children checks at this stage. Your organisational policy should cover whether this is a requirement.

# Step 6 – Selecting the best person for the job

Following the interviews and reference checks, its time to decide who should be offered the job.

* Bring the interview panel together and rank those you interviewed based on their responses at interview and the referee reports. Also consider the best fit for your organisation.
* Contact your preferred applicant by phone and offer them the position. At this point you may need to negotiate salary and preferred start date. When they accept, send them a formal letter of offer, and ask them to complete any other formal documentation you may require (such as information for payroll).
* If your preferred applicant, for whatever reason, decides not to accept the job offer, you might then go to the next applicant on your ranking list.
* However if you decide there are no other suitable applicants, you may have to start the recruitment process again.

# Step 7 – The letter of offer

Once you have spoken with your preferred applicant and offered them the job, follow up with a formal letter of offer.

The letter of offer includes all the information relevant to the job, such as:

* a description of the job and its responsibilities
* the date the person will commence
* the rate they will paid
* the name of any industrial instrument that will govern the wages and conditions of the applicant i.e. Enterprise Agreement or Award.
* their leave entitlements
* access to salary packaging if applicable
* details of any probation period (for more information see Step 9 – welcoming the new starter)
* any other important policies or information relevant to the organisation and role
* and if the applicant’s wages and conditions will be governed by a workplace agreement, a copy of the agreement should be provided.

When you receive their signed letter of offer and other relevant documentation, these should be placed in the new employee’s employment record, along with a copy of the position description. Legislation requires employers to keep employment records for all staff.

## Resource

An employee record template can be found at the Fair Work Australia website: https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides#pay-slips

# Step 8 – Giving feedback to unsuccessful applicants

When you have successfully filled the position, contact the other applicants who made it to the interview stage, and let them know they were unsuccessful.

Be prepared to give feedback. It is best to do this over the phone, or in person.

## Tip

The way an organisation carries out recruitment can have a significant impact on the way it is seen by others in the community. Responding to unsuccessful applicants in a timely and courteous manner and providing them with constructive feedback is a really important part of the recruitment process.

# Step 9 – Welcoming the new starter

Induction is the first step in building a positive relationship between the organisation and your new employee.

Make a time to meet with your new employee. Talk with them about:

* your organisation’s vision, mission and values
* the strategic and operational plans
* any learning and development and performance management programs
* administrative forms (such as payroll information) as these need to have been completed prior to the new starter’s actually beginning the job.

Make sure you also introduce them to all the people they will be working with and show them around the workplace.

## Tip

A good way to ease a new starter into the organisation is to assign a ‘buddy’ to them. The ‘buddy’ should be from the same peer group as the new starter and have enough organisational experience to assist them in the initial phase of their employment.

Your new employee needs to be clearly told what is expected of them in their new role, and how it is anticipated they will meet these expectations. Arrange regular supervision meetings, to discuss expectations honestly and openly with the aim of assisting the employee to thrive.

A probation period enables you to make sure the role and your organisation is right for the new starter and for them to assess if the job is right for them. This also gives the new starter time to understand and appreciate job requirements and expected work standards, as well as their fit with the organisation. Any issues can also be addressed during the probation period.

If you have appointed a worker internally to the position, you generally don’t need to have a probation period, as you should already have a good understanding of that person.

## Tip

Probation periods generally last for the first three months of a job, and appointment to the role is conditional based on the successful completion of this probation period. Information about the probation period should be clearly explained in the letter of offer (Letters of offer are outlined in Step 7).

If you want to have the option of extending the probation period once it has completed, this must also be made clear to the employee before they start.

Make sure you schedule regular meetings with your new employee leading up to the end of the probation period. These meetings give both of you the chance to assess how the new starter is performing and coping with the role. They can also be used to clarify responsibilities and tasks and make sure that any support required is offered.

## Tip

Templates for conducting reviews of probation periods can be found at: <http://www.business.vic.gov.au/hiring-and-managing-staff/staff-recruitment/new-staff-induction-program-and-probation-period>

When the probation period is up there are some decisions to be made. Most likely, you will want to make the employee an ongoing member of staff. However, if there are any issues for you or your employee you may wish to extend the probation period, or cease the employment arrangement. If you choose to extend the probation period, this must be for a reasonable length of time with a clear end date and detailed information about what achievements or outcomes are expected in this time frame.

# Step 10 – Evaluate for next time!

It’s always important to improve your processes. Think about what you did during the recruitment process; talk to the new starter and to your selection panel. Work out what you did well and what you could have done better.

This will all help to ensure that next time you recruit, you’ll be improving your practices!

This document was adapted from ‘The basics of recruitment for NFP community organisations’ Office of the Community Sector 2012