



Management Support Unit (MSU)



Recruitment: Good Practice Information Sheet 15

Recruitment is the process of searching for, attracting and selecting qualified candidates for positions. This information sheet summarises good practice associated with the various stages of recruitment, including;

- Planning for recruitment
- Preparing job descriptions and selection criteria
- Advertising
- Short listing
- Selecting
- Reference checks
- Making an offer of employment

Recruitment is a process which leads to a formal offer of employment. As such it is governed by legislation, particularly in relation to anti discrimination law and equality of employment opportunities.

'Equal employment opportunity (EEO) means that everyone should have fair and equitable access to jobs, employment conditions, training and promotional opportunities. It does not assume that everyone has the same abilities but aims to ensure that everyone has a fair chance to demonstrate their abilities, to use them, improve them and benefit from them. EEO is consistent with the principle of merit. It means that the best person is chosen for the job, promotion or training opportunity and that they are selected only on criteria which are relevant.'

(NSW Office of Industrial Relations)

1. Planning for recruitment

A good recruitment process takes time and is well planned. You need to prepare or revise the job description and selection criteria, convene a selection panel, advertise, conduct interviews and negotiate commencement dates; and all the tasks should be timetabled in advance. It is also important to bear in mind that you may not successfully recruit during the first round of recruitment. The whole process can easily take months from the decision to recruit to the person commencing in the position.

The following is a checklist for managing the key steps in the recruitment process.

Before you recruit:

- Confirm that funding exists for the position
- Obtain the necessary approvals to staff the position
- Develop a job description if the position is new or review the existing job description

Establish Recruitment Criteria.

- Develop job-related and measurable selection criteria based on the job description, including the minimum (essential) experience and skills for the position

Manage the Recruitment Process.

- Determine the best method for recruiting for the position including where to advertise the position and who should be included on the selection panel
- Develop the advertisement using the job description, minimum qualifications and selection criteria. The advert should also include:
 - ✓ Deadline for applications
 - ✓ Salary range and other key benefits
 - ✓ Contact person for further information
 - ✓ Anticipated date for interviews

2. Job description and section criteria

Job descriptions and section criteria are critically important to the recruitment process. The job description describes the role; what it does, how it does it and reporting requirements (see job analysis below). The related selection criteria describes the skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications and personal attributes that a candidate needs in order to meet the requirements of the job description. The selection criteria should also clarify whether these 'competencies' are essential or desirable. Clear and informed job descriptions and selection criteria are essential for both the employing organisation and prospective candidates.

For the organisation, job descriptions provide the basis for not only recruitment but also performance appraisal and for ensuring that the work carried out by staff is aligned with the organisations objectives. A well developed job description assists candidates and position holders to understand their duties and responsibilities and also clarifies the boundaries of their role.

If an existing job description is to be revised before recruitment, it's a good idea to develop it with the person currently in the job. Alternatively, the job should be subject to a *job analysis*.

A job analysis typically asks the following key questions:

- What is the overall purpose of the job?
- What are the main duties (e.g. the five main things the job holder does)?
- What are the typical working conditions (location, client interaction)?
- What are the supervision and reporting responsibilities?

A selection criterion is based on the job description and develops the benchmarks that will be used to screen prospective candidates and select the most preferred person for the job. There are some key factors to consider when developing or revising the selection criteria including what are the skills, experience or qualifications that are essential to the position and what are the desirable skills, experience or qualifications that are desirable. It is also important to ensure that your criteria are specific, measurable and job-related.

Also ensure that the criteria do not either directly or indirectly discriminate against any potential candidates. This is often the stage at which potentially discriminatory values, explanations about how a job is done, or the 'type' of person required are inadvertently built into selection processes. It is always useful to include someone experienced in recruitment, but who is outside of with the process, to check key documentation and identify any potentially discriminatory practice.

3. Advertising

The most common way to advertise is through newspapers and more recently via job websites. With the increasing use of IT, many services may advertise in a high circulation newspaper but also promote the position via targeted e-bulletins or other email listings. Each of these methods has a target audience or 'demographic' so it is important to consider who you are including (and therefore excluding) as potential job candidates.

The information sent to prospective candidates should be accessible, including to those people with hearing and sight impairments and / or other disabilities. Effective strategies for responding to these needs include:

- ✓ Write in plain English
- ✓ Use job websites compatible with software that can 'read out' web pages (e.g. Browsealoud) for people who might have difficulty reading online (people with literacy and visual impairments).

For further access enabling suggestions check out the usable website @ www.usablenet.com/accessibility_usability/accessibility_usability.html

If you are using an agent to recruit on your behalf remember they must be clear about your requirements and act in accordance with your organisations employment practices and the relevant legislation.

4. Shortlisting

This part of the process should fully utilise the selection criteria, it is also desirable that the panel that shortlist the applications are also the people on the interview panel. All prospective candidates must be assessed against the essential and desirable criteria, in the same way, and by the same selection panel. The golden rule is to be consistent and document all decisions and the reasons for them. This documentation should be kept in a confidential file and referred to if there are any inquiries or complaints regarding the selection process.

5. Selection

There are a variety of ways to assess candidates against the required competencies for a position. It is important to consider the role and to employ a selection process or 'setting' that best suits the requirements of the position. The most common method is the interview involving the candidate and a selection panel comprised of 3-5 people.

Interviews: Most job interviews are of approximately 30-40 minutes, but frequently longer for very senior positions such as CEOs or Directors. The selection panel often includes Board members and staff, as well as one independent or external member. Typically the candidate is asked a series of questions relevant to the position and designed to test their knowledge, experience and skills. It is essential that all candidates are asked the same questions and that the interview process gathers the information required to make a decision on the preferred candidate or candidates.

Depending on the competencies being assessed, the interview may include the completion of a set exercise by the candidate; for example an analysis of a budget or a short presentation on a specific topic.

Psychometric testing refers to personality and/or psychological assessments that are conducted with candidates, often prior to a formal interview. Psychometric tests are more often employed for management positions or positions where high level specific skills are required. Most of the tests available must be used under license to those who developed them, with associated costs.

6. Checking references

References checks often reveal useful information and are a key part of the selection process. They often provide information that a candidate may be unlikely to reveal about themselves and provide another perspective on their performance in previous roles. Always verify the nature of the relationship between the candidate and the referee and the length of time they have known each other. It is also essential that at least one of the referees is a previous supervisor. Notes from referee checks should also be documented and kept on file.

7. Making an offer

Once the selection panel has received feedback regarding the referee checks, and they are satisfied that the chosen candidate is the best person for the position, then the candidate is offered the position, usually verbally in the first instance. If the candidate accepts the position, then the start date needs to be agreed and the offer must be formalised in writing. It is important that the offer is accepted in writing before the other candidates interviewed are advised of the outcome.

Once the formal offer has been accepted, then all other candidates should be advised in writing that they have been unsuccessful. It is also likely that some of the unsuccessful candidates may request feedback on their interview (strengths and weakness) and it is good practice and fair to ensure they receive useful feedback based on the notes from the selection panel.

General Principles

Matters regarding sex, age, color, race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability are inappropriate to consider at any stage of the recruitment process (other than how people with specific needs might need to be supported to equitably access the process).

It is also inappropriate to consider a persons housing status, criminal record or credit history unless these factors are relate to a specific requirement for the position, and for which there should be separate formal processes (e.g. child protection procedures).

Those involved in the recruitment process should be required to declare any conflict of interest relating to any candidate. For example, those involved in any stage of the recruitment process should make a declaration about any relationship with any candidates.

Confidentiality must be maintained at all times. All documentation and communications with prospective candidates should re-iterate a commitment that applications will be treated in confidence. In addition all recruitment files, from applications to interview assessments and the panels' deliberations, should be held in secure locations with restricted access.

Further Resources

Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission Best Practice for Employers
www.hreoc.gov.au/info_for_employers/best_practice/recruitment.html

Anti Discrimination Board of NSW
www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb