



Merit Selection Training

in the Northern Territory Public Sector



Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment

Public Sector Appeals and Grievance Reviews

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Course Introduction

In the Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS), in order to be eligible to be on a selection panel you must have completed the merit selection training within the past three years.

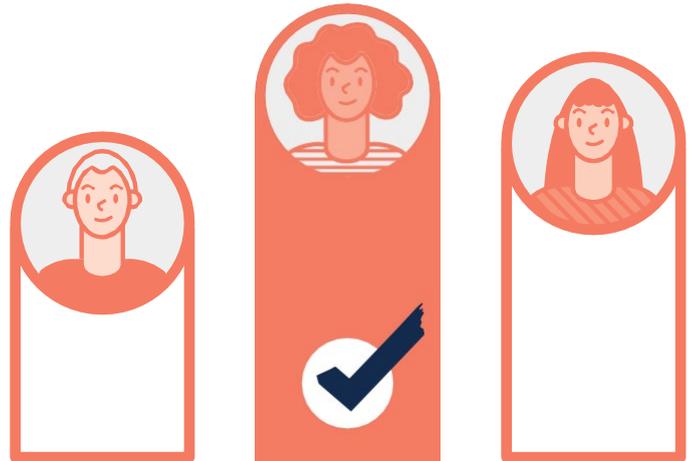
Merit selection training is suitable for all NTPS employees regardless of experience, level or classification.

Half-day face-to-face training, facilitated by subject matter experts from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE) is offered across the NT each year.

eLearning is available for employees who wish to refresh their merit selection knowledge in their own time, however the face-to-face training is recommended by the Commissioner for Public Employment.

The NTPS aims to build a diverse, agile and engaged workforce that is able to deliver government priorities and provide high quality service to Territorians. After completing merit selection training, panel members will:

- have the knowledge and skills to undertake a compliant recruitment process
- understand the merit principle and how skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications, and potential for future development are assessed
- be able to assess applications quickly and efficiently
- be able to recognise conflicts of interest and minimise perceptions of bias
- be able to document the outcome in the selection report and understand the importance of the Selection Outcome Advice for All Applicants (SOAFAA).



The recruitment process in the NTPS is designed to select the person who will perform best in the advertised vacancy, not the person who performed best in the selection process.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the NTPS recruitment process
- Understand how Special Measures recruitment plans are applied
- Ensure the job description is compliant and current
- Set up and responsibly participate in a selection panel
- Conduct best practice applicant assessment and shortlisting
- Identify suitable referees and conduct referee checks
- Effectively document a selection outcome.

NTPS Recruitment and Selection Policy

Purpose

The Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS) Recruitment and Selection Policy ensures that the most suitable applicants are selected to vacancies, and that NTPS selection processes are:

- simplified to ensure an efficient and timely process for candidates and agencies
- consistent across NTPS agencies
- fair and transparent
- courteous and respectful of applicants
- designed to assess applicants' suitability based on proven capabilities as defined in the Capability and Leadership Framework
- informative about the reasons for selecting successful applicants
- Accessible to all applicants

The Merit Principle

NTPS selection decisions must be based on merit.

Selection decisions must be based solely on the person's suitability to perform the relevant duties; and for employment in the relevant workplace; and for employment in the Public Sector. A person's suitability is determined: having regard to the person's knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience, and potential for future development. *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993* (NT)

Recruitment and Selection Policy

To ensure that the merit principle is applied in all selection decisions, and to achieve consistency and best practice the NTPS commits to the following selection policy:

- Job descriptions will be reviewed prior to advertising. Job Descriptions must be compliant with Determination 8 of 2018. They must be

written in plain English and identify the skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications required; and allow consideration of transferable skills and potential for future development.

- Job applications will be limited to a one-page summary with an attached resume including contact details for relevant referees.
- Selection panel members will be impartial, be aware of equal employment opportunity principles, avoid conflicts of interest, and have a clear understanding of the level, duties and requirements of the vacancy. Selection panel members will not also be the delegate approving the vacancy.
- Selection panel members must, unless there are exceptional reasons, have completed the Merit Selection training provided by OCPE within the last three years.
- Selection panels will use eRecruit and standardised NTPS selection report templates.
- Selection panels will clearly detail reasons for their selection decision for the consideration of the delegate recommending appointment, transfers or promotion.
- Selection processes will be finalised within a maximum of six weeks from the closing date of advertising, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- All applicants will receive a high standard of candidate care, and be fully informed of the selection outcome, including a summary of the merit of the selected applicant.
- When requested, public sector officers have a duty to provide frank and accurate comment on current and former public sector officers and on persons outside of the NTPS. A public sector officer must take care to avoid making statements which could be regarded as malicious. Situations in which a comment could potentially be regarded as having been made with malice include:
 - where a public sector officer knowingly includes false or doubtful allegations in a report;
 - where the language of the report is excessively strong or weak, in a manner which might unreasonably mislead the recipient of the report or misrepresent the public sector officer who is the subject of the report; and
 - where extraneous material is deliberately introduced or where omissions are deliberately made so as to create a misleading impression.
- Managers/supervisors will take care to prepare for the arrival of new employees and ensure that they are properly welcomed, inducted and oriented to the workplace.

Vicki Telfer PSM
Commissioner for Public Employment
July 2022



PREPARE

Understanding Merit

The merit selection process in the Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS) differs from selection processes undertaken by other public services and in the private sector.

The NTPS places significant weight on an applicant's demonstrated work performance, and this is evidenced by the way we assess applicants for vacancies.

Selections in the NTPS must comply with section 5D of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993* which states that an applicant's suitability is assessed based on their suitability:

- to perform the relevant duties
- for employment in the relevant workplace
- for employment in the Public Sector.

It also states a person's suitability is to be determined through:

- knowledge
- skills
- qualifications and experience
- potential for future development.

Knowledge

- Refers to the knowledge an applicant already has, prior to commencement that is relevant to the role.
- Facts, information, and understanding of the subject matter and how the duties are to be performed.

Skill

- Broad term and can relate to any skill critical to perform the role. Skills can include interpersonal skills, stakeholder engagement skills, public speaking capabilities, the ability to take reasonable direction, team playing and customer service. Skills can also include oral communication, report writing, management or leadership.
- For applicants applying for technical and professional roles, skills will be specific to the role, such as patient care, policy development, mediation skills or information technology programming.

Qualifications and Experience

- Some positions in the NTPS, such as teachers, nurses, lawyers and tradespersons, require a minimum qualification. Applicants must possess the qualification to be shortlisted for further consideration.
- Other job descriptions may list a qualification as desirable but not essential; in these circumstances a panel may weight experience over qualifications.

Potential for Future Development

- An applicant's potential to perform a role to a high standard, and how relevant transferable skills assist them to do this. Potential is demonstrated during periods of higher duties, undertaking alternative roles and seeking additional duties and responsibilities in the workplace.
- Potential for future development does not refer to an applicant's potential to meet the essential selection criteria with training, coaching, supervision and/or guidance and support.

Pre-employment Screening in the NTPS

The principle of merit-based recruitment processes is well established in the Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS) and selection panels are required to ensure employment decisions are merit-based.

Like all public service offices across Australia, NTPS practices are vulnerable to corruption and misconduct risks so care must be taken, by all selection panels, to ensure rigorous pre-employment checks are undertaken before making an offer of employment.

Robust pre-employment screening (such as requiring applicants to provide information about qualifications, work history, discipline and criminal histories, and conflicts of interest) can reduce the risk of fraudulent applications.

Common mistakes by selection panels:

- Engaging in processes compromised by nepotism and poor management of conflicts of interest
- 'Recycling' employees with problematic discipline or performance issues
- Recruiting applicants with unexplained attendance issues
- Recruiting applicants with a criminal history that should preclude them from employment in a public service such as fraud or theft
- Failure to ensure an applicant is suitable to have access to confidential information or public monies
- Not verifying the identities of referees
- Accepting at face value claims of qualifications and licences
- Appointment of an applicant based on just one positive reference.

Recruitment can be vulnerable to compromise by nepotism, favouritism and conflicts of interest. Selection processes can be corrupted in the earliest stages of recruitment (such as during the development of job descriptions) and by the failure of panel members to declare or manage conflicts of interest.

Applicants applying for jobs in the NTPS are required to answer a number of pre-employment screening questions online when submitting their job application for consideration. One of these questions asks "During any period of employment with the NTPS, have you been subject to disciplinary proceedings?"

If an applicant answers yes to this question the panel chair should first request further details, such as when the discipline took place so they can better understand the circumstances. The panel should also ask the applicant for a referee, from the relevant agency, to assist in determining whether the circumstances will reasonably affect the applicant's ability to perform the key duties and responsibilities of the advertised vacancy. A 'yes' response to this question does not automatically preclude a potential applicant. Care should be taken to ensure only relevant factors are taken into account when making decisions.

Information learned about a discipline process must be treated respectfully and confidentially by the panel and delegate.

Applicant of Potential Risk

Some applicants may pose a potential risk to the NTPS. This may be due to a number of reasons including:

- security or fraud risk - applicants known to be submitting fraudulent resumes including falsified work experience, qualifications or referee contacts
- compliance and operational risk - employees terminated from the NTPS for discipline, unsatisfactory work performance, inability or abandonment of employment
- financial or economic risk - applicants who have reached a financial settlement with the NTPS which included an agreement to resign from their employment or
- reputational risk - applicants who resigned prior to the finalisation of a serious discipline or inability process or retired on the grounds of invalidity.

CEO's will write to the Commissioner for Public Employment to identify a person their agency considers may pose a risk to the NTPS and request the person be considered as an Applicant of Potential Risk. The Commissioner for Public Employment will review the application and if it is determined the risk is justifiable, the person will be added to the eRecruit Applicant of Potential Risk register.

Should this applicant of potential risk apply for a position, the panel chair will receive email notification and be directed to contact the Public Sector Appeals and Grievance Review Unit for details as to the applicant's identity and advice on how to proceed.

This register is not a 'do not hire' list but a safety net to ensure, for those shortlisted applicants, that well-placed, recent and relevant referees are contacted to provide information about the applicants work history, performance and suitability for employment in the NTPS and relevant workplace. This register will be reviewed every 12 months.



Qualifications

As per Employment Instruction 1, successful applicants **MUST** supply evidence of any relevant tertiary qualifications held, as claimed in the person's job application, prior to receiving a contract of employment. The qualifications should be uploaded to eRecruit.

CASE STUDY

Verification of qualifications

In 2021, a long serving NTPS employee applied for a promotion within his agency. His resume listed work experience with various government agencies and claimed several tertiary qualifications including a Bachelor of Education (primary), a Bachelor of Laws and Certificate IV in Counselling. The applicant was well known to the panel and his referees provided information to support his application stating he had performed well over recent years and that the applicant demonstrated strong potential for future development.

The applicant was promoted based on the referee information.

Some months later, the director of the business unit questioned the applicant about his tertiary studies, specifically where he had studied law. This conversation caused some concern and the applicant was asked to verify his qualifications as listed in his resume. The applicant was unable to provide evidence of a Bachelor of Education or a Bachelor of Laws. He later disclosed that he had fabricated his qualifications.

The applicant was dismissed from the NTPS.

As part of pre-employment screening, any relevant tertiary qualifications applicants claim must be supplied by the applicant and sighted before an offer of employment is made.

CASE STUDY

Beware the mobile number

In early 2019, an applicant applied for an advertised vacancy with the NTPS. The applicant provided a well written resume, cover letter and details of one referee. The referee's name, title and mobile number was provided.

Based on the information outlined in the resume, the applicant was shortlisted for further consideration. The panel called the referee using the mobile number provided.

The referee identified himself as the general manager of a local Darwin business and confirmed he had supervised the applicant for over 12 months. The panel spoke with the referee for almost 25 minutes.

The referee said, among other things, that the applicant was a high performer and that the organisation would have engaged them further but the nominal employee had returned early from maternity leave and they did not have another vacancy.

The applicant was offered employment. A couple of months later, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the NTPS agency received a call from the general manager of the Darwin business where the applicant had worked. The general manager explained that they were surprised to learn the applicant had been selected for a role within the NTPS given they had been dismissed for fraud and theft.

The CEO advised the general manager that it was their referee report that had persuaded her appointment. The general manager advised that he had not provided a reference for the applicant.

Upon further investigation, it was discovered that the mobile number provided for the general manager was the same number listed as their emergency contact (next of kin) on personnel records.

The applicant was dismissed from the NTPS.

Panels are encouraged to call referees at their place of work rather than rely on a mobile phone number given by an applicant.

NTPS Special Measures Recruitment Plans

The majority of vacancies in the NTPS are advertised under an agency's Special Measures plan. Special Measures plans prioritise the assessment of Aboriginal applicants. This means that eligible Aboriginal applicants are assessed first, before all other applicants.

Special Measures plans aim to increase the recruitment of suitable Aboriginal applicants, provide greater promotional opportunities and increase Aboriginal representation in senior leadership roles.

There are two main Special Measures plans in the NTPS.

Designated positions

Specifically designated for a suitable Aboriginal applicant and cannot be filled by non-Aboriginal people. (Often used for jobs such as Aboriginal mental health workers or Aboriginal interpreters).

Priority consideration and preference in selection

Aboriginal applicants are considered before other applicants, and are selected if they meet all essential criteria at the required level.

Special Measures Recruitment Plans

Permit more favourable treatment of a group of people who have not yet achieved employment equality

Also sometimes known as 'affirmative action' or 'positive discrimination'

A program, plan or arrangement designed to promote equality of opportunity for groups of people who face, or may have faced, entrenched discrimination

The NTPS values diversity, and is working towards having 16% Aboriginal employees, and 10% representation of Aboriginal employees in senior leadership roles (SAO1 level or equivalent and above).

CRITICAL INFORMATION



Well written job descriptions are the first step to recruiting the right applicant



Job descriptions must be clear and accurate, and compliant with Determination 8 of 2018



Job descriptions cannot contain acronyms or make references to databases or systems that are unique to the NTPS such as TRM, GAS, JIRA, EIMS, ECMS, PIPS or eRecruit.

The job description must reflect whether the vacancy is being advertised under a Special Measures plan.



Job Descriptions

Agencies must carefully review the job description before a vacancy is advertised.

Job descriptions must be:

Clear	Accurate	Not too restrictive
Explain the key duties and responsibilities in simple language	Roles within the NTPS will change over time	Essential selection criteria must allow for transferable skills
Job descriptions will not list every duty or responsibility	Job descriptions must accurately reflect the role	Essential selection criteria must not be written in a way that unreasonably limits an external applicant from meeting the criteria

If knowledge and skills can be learned on the job, the criteria should reflect this, by using phrases such as:

- demonstrated ability to quickly acquire this knowledge
- similar experience in a related area
- other skills and knowledge which would be readily transferable
- demonstrated experience or relevant qualifications.

If the role requires a criminal history clearance, medical clearance, a working with children card, professional qualifications or membership of a professional body, the job description must clearly indicate this.

For more information on writing an effective and compliant job description check out the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE) website.

All applicants, other than redeployees, must meet all essential criteria. This includes applicants applying for jobs under a Special Measures plan.

Selection criteria must not be too specific, restrictive, or written in such a way that only a person who has performed the role previously could meet the criteria, or only people already employed in the NTPS or the relevant work unit.

Don't limit your ability to attract great applicants.

Essential selection criteria set out the capabilities required to perform the job well.

Special Measures Recruitment Plan

Agencies may apply for an exemption from applying the agency's Special Measures plan to a vacancy in circumstances where it would be unreasonable, unduly harsh or unjust to do so.

Agencies are encouraged to apply to OCPE for an exemption before advertising. If the exemption is granted, the job description must be amended to reflect this before uploading the document to eRecruit.

Requests for an exemption should be emailed to specialmeasures@nt.gov.au

Examples of circumstances when an exemption may be granted

When there is a high-performing long-term incumbent of outstanding merit

In situations where the application of Special Measures would create an imbalance in the work area

When a JES / JAQ process has changed the level of a position or group of positions and applying Special Measures would have an unfair affect on existing employees

Panel Structure and Responsibilities

Selection panels will generally consist of three or more people.

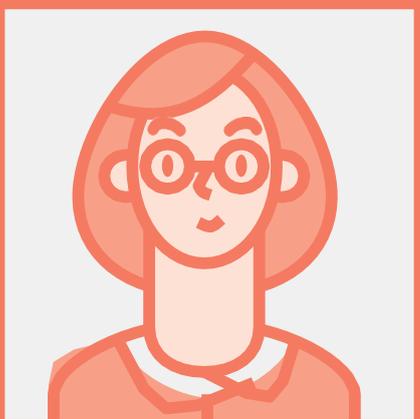
Panels must have an independent person, ideally at the same level as the chair.

All panel members should:

- understand the requirements of the job
- have the skills to participate confidently and knowledgeably, and make a competent assessment

- have no conflict of interest or be perceived to have a conflict
- understand the merit principle, Special Measures plans and equal employment opportunity and the natural justice principle
- be at the level or above the job being recruited
- have undertaken the OCPE merit selection training

It is vital that all members of the selection panel be free to speak their views and to have meaningful input into the process.



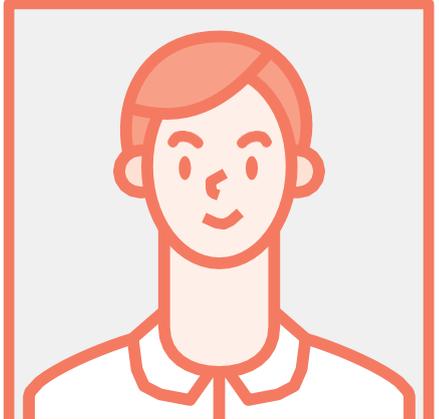
Panel chair

- Assembles the panel
- Generally the manager/supervisor of the advertised position
- Keeps the panel timeframe on track
- Often drafts the selection report
- Can also act as a referee for applicants



Independent panel member

- All selection panels must have an independent panel member
- Key to ensuring a fair process
- Ideally be at the level of the chair or above
- Can't be from the same work unit
- Can't be a referee for any applicant



Ordinary panel member

- Has a good understanding of the advertised role
- At level of the position or above
- Are allowed to act as a referee for applicants
- Can be from the same work unit

CRITICAL INFORMATION



Conflict of Interest

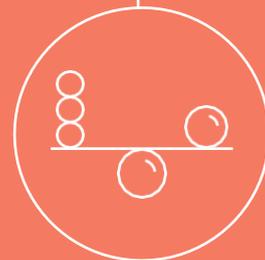
A conflict of interest occurs when the private interests of a public sector employee interfere with official duties.



Panel members **MUST** discuss potential conflict of interest as a group before any shortlisting takes place.



Panel members must give careful consideration to any conflict of interest that may be apparent in assessing the applicants for the vacancy. Panels should also consider what measures should be put in place to reduce perceptions of bias.



Conflict of Interest

What should a panel do if a conflict of interest is identified?

- A conflict of interest arises when a panel member has, or may be perceived as having, a private interest in the outcome of the recruitment.
- If a panel member has a clear conflict of interest with one of the applicants, the panel member must stand down.
- If the panel has a potential conflict of interest, they must discuss the potential conflict with the other panel members and as a group decide how the panel will progress. Considerations should include:
 - whether the panel member should continue on the panel; and
 - if the panel is to continue, how the panel will manage the perception of the conflict or bias.

Allegations relating to conflicts of interest and other mismanagement of a selection process may be referred to the Commissioner for Public Employment or the Office of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption NT.

A conflict of interest disclosure form is available for panels to use to disclose any actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest for a selection process before any short listing takes place. Refer to [Recruitment templates | NTG Central](#)

Role and Responsibility of the Delegate

- A delegate is a senior staff member (CEO, executive director or director) who has the delegation of the CEO to approve the panel's recommendation for selection.
- Delegates must read the selection report carefully and be satisfied that it is an informed and fair decision process conducted by an impartial panel.
- Delegates should be satisfied at least one of the panel members is independent of applicant's work area where the vacancy sits and that no conflict of interest is apparent.
- Delegates should review the Selection Outcome Advice for all Applicants (SOAFAA). The SOAFAA is critical as it ensures transparency of process. The SOAFAA must be well written and include sufficient detail to clearly explain the reasons for the selection decision.
- A delegate should not replace the panel's recommendation for selection with their own decision. If a delegate is concerned with the selection panel's recommendation, they should discuss this with the panel members, and if necessary direct the panel to undertake a further assessment of applicants.
- A delegate cannot be a member of the selection panel.

If the delegate and panel cannot reach an agreement, the matter should be raised with OCPE by contacting the Public Sector Appeals and Grievance Reviews Unit on 08 8999 4128.



ASSESS

Vacancies Advertised under an Agency's Special Measures Recruitment Plan

Most vacancies in the NTPS are advertised under a Special Measures recruitment plan whereby Aboriginal applicants are assessed first.

Applicants who apply for an NTPS vacancy via www.jobs.nt.gov.au will be asked if they identify as Aboriginal. If the applicant selects 'yes' they will be asked if they want their application to be given priority consideration under a Special Measures plan.

If the applicant selects 'yes' they will be prompted to sign and attach the NTPS statutory declaration which requires the applicant to swear that:

1. I am Aboriginal and have, or am in the process of applying for, Confirmation of Aboriginality from a recognised Aboriginal authority, and
2. I am accepted as Aboriginal by the community in which I live or formerly lived.

The applicant will be required to provide Confirmation of Aboriginality (COA) prior to starting in the new position.

Panels must obtain a signed NTPS statutory declaration before shortlisting an applicant under a Special Measures plan. If the Aboriginal applicant is unable to sign the statutory declaration, or advises that they cannot provide a COA, the application should be assessed with the non Aboriginal applicants.

STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER (ABORIGINAL) NTPS SPECIAL MEASURES RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

I, _____
(full name)

of _____
(address)

solemnly and sincerely declare that I meet the following eligibility requirements for Aboriginal special measures recruitment:

1. I am Aboriginal and have, or am in the process of applying for, Confirmation of Aboriginality from a recognised Aboriginal authority, **and**
2. I am accepted as Aboriginal by the community in which I live or formerly lived.

This declaration is true and I know it is an offence to make a statutory declaration knowing it is false in a material particular.

Declared at _____ the _____ day of _____ 20_____

(signature of the person making the decision)

Witnessed by:

*(Signature and contact number or email of the person before whom the declaration is made)

NOTE: This declaration may be witnessed by any person who is at least 18 (eighteen) years of age.
NOTE: This written declaration must comply with Part 4 of the Oaths Affidavits and Declarations Act.
NOTE: Making a declaration knowing it is false in a material particular is an offence for which you may be fined or imprisoned, or, as an employee of the NTPS, disciplined under the NTPS Code of Conduct

Job Applications and Resumes

Applications are a source of information to help a panel identify which applicants deserve further consideration. Attention should be paid to work history, the relevance of qualifications and experience, and the length of time an applicant has held various roles.

The job description informs applicants that they must limit their applications to a one-page summary and resume.

Applications are not statements of fact, they are claims made by an applicant about their suitability for a position.

Claims made by an applicant are verified through the reference checking process. Panels may request copies of qualifications from shortlisted applicants if they wish. However, panels must request copies of qualifications from selected applicants before finalising an offer of employment.

Selection panels should not place too much emphasis on how the job application is written, or use the application as evidence of merit. Merit selection is not an application writing contest.

Shortlisting Applicants

When shortlisting applications panels must assess an applicant against the essential selection criteria set out in the job description.

If the vacancy is advertised under a Special Measures plan, a panel must assess the Aboriginal applicants first.

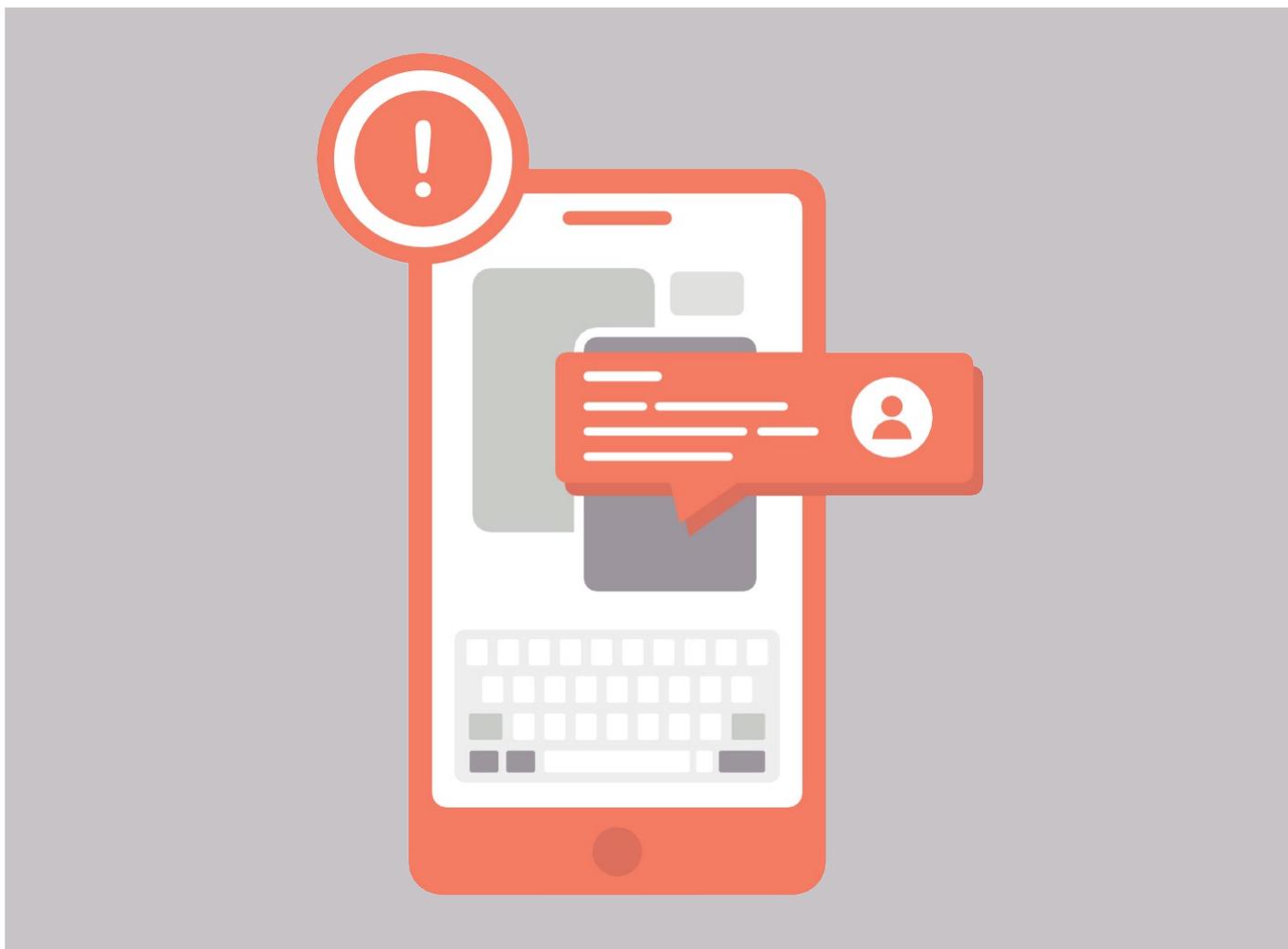
Selected applicants must meet ALL of the essential selection criteria. However, it is important that panels understand that not all essential selection criteria are equal. Panels must know which of the essential selection criteria are more important and the applicant selected as most suitable should have the strongest claims against the most important criteria.

A panel must agree which of the essential selection criteria are most important. Once this is decided the panel can assess the applicants for shortlisting. Panels should consider information found in resumes such as:

- past work history
- previous and current work levels (salary may assist in considering non NTPS applicants)
- education and qualifications
- experience in similar roles
- previous duties and responsibilities
- appropriate and contactable referees



Remember! Any applicants assessed as suitable must meet **all** the essential selection criteria, not just the most important criteria.



Social Media

Panels are encouraged to consider an applicant's public online profile (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, blogs, webpages) during the shortlisting phase. Online profiles should be considered in terms of an applicant's ability to meet the merit principle.

Remember, when assessing an applicant's skills, knowledge, experience and potential for future development, a panel must also consider an applicant's suitability for employment in the relevant workplace and in the NTPS.



IDENTIFYING & CONTACTING REFEREES

Identifying and Contacting Referees



Referees should be recent, relevant and well-placed to answer questions from the panel.



Information obtained from referees in advance may be useful later during discussions with applicants.



Panels should speak with at least two referees for each shortlisted applicant before deciding whether to proceed to interviews.



Contacting referees at the start of an assessment process may prevent unnecessary interviews.

Choosing recent, relevant and well-placed referees

Panels should think about what they want to learn from the referee about an applicant. Referees are not just someone nominated by an applicant to say good things about them. A panel may contact anyone that it considers relevant. To be effective, referees must be best-placed to provide information about an applicant's skills, knowledge and experience, e.g., their current direct supervisor.

The panel must ensure that a referee provides examples to support any conclusions they make about the applicant. It is not enough for the referee to say the applicant is great. Ask the referee what they observed

the applicant doing that made them form that view. This can include requesting samples of their work, and existing written performance reports.

Why are referees important?

Referees are able to discuss an applicant's performance in the workplace. Referee reports reflect on an applicant's character, work ethic, skills, experience levels and capabilities and are a much better indicator of day to day performance than a 30 minute interview.

Essential questions a panel should ask of every referee.

1. What is your level / title and reporting relationship to the applicant?
2. What role did the applicant perform when the referee and applicant worked together? What level was the role, how long was the working relationship, and did the applicant perform any periods of higher duties?
3. Having reviewed the job description, is there any area of concern that you have regarding the applicant's ability to perform the advertised vacancy?
4. If the role relates to the management of staff/ teams ask the referee what previous management experience the applicant has had. How large and diverse was the team, how many functions and what degree of responsibility and autonomy?
5. Explain to the referee what the most important aspects of the role are. This should relate to one or two of the essential selection criteria. Ask the referee if the applicant has the skills, knowledge and experience to perform this function to a high level.
6. You may wish to ask a broad question about productivity level, work ethic, understanding of confidentiality, customer service and customer experience, and the ability to work well with co-workers and stakeholders.

Last question should always be:

7. Is there anything else the panel should know about the applicant's daily performance and ability to perform this role?

Contacting non-nominated referees

There is no rule preventing a panel from contacting non-nominated referees. A panel decides who is recent, relevant and well placed.

It is courteous to advise an applicant that you will be contacting non-nominated referees. This is particularly important with applicants from the private sector.

Information from all referees is subject to the application of natural justice where appropriate, not just information from non-nominated referees.

Seek specific comparison among applicants

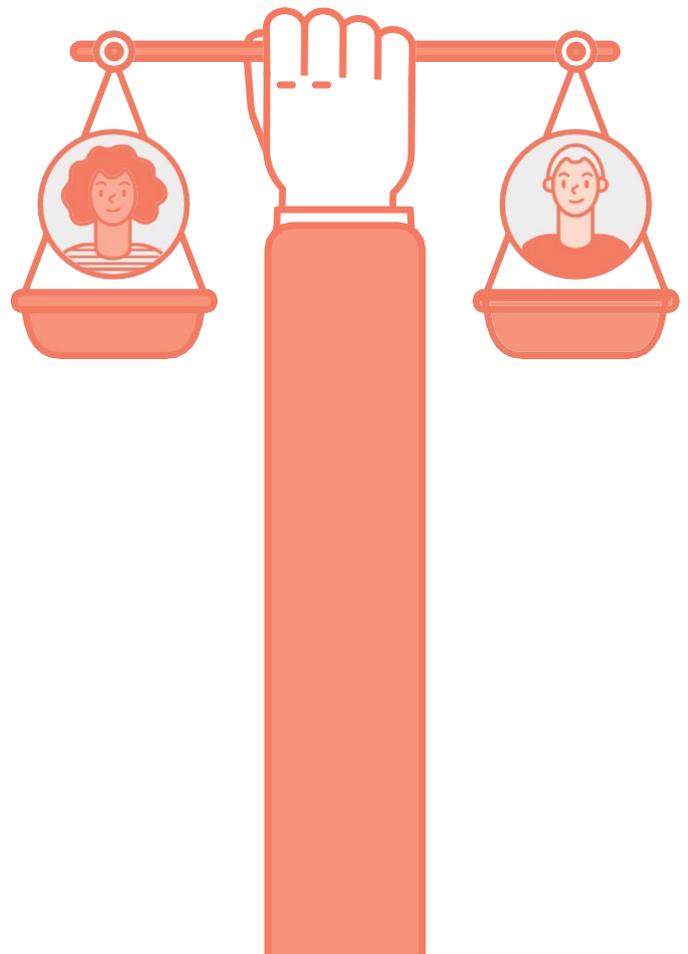
It is useful to ask a referee who supervises several applicants to compare their suitability for the role. This can be more meaningful than individual reports that the panel uses to compare applicants.

False and Misleading Referee Reports

The NTPS Recruitment and Selection Policy requires NTPS employees to provide frank and accurate reports on other staff if asked, and also those outside the public sector.

If an agency believes that a false or misleading referee report was provided by an NTPS employee, they should inform the referee's CEO and the Commissioner for Public Employment.

Procedural Fairness and Natural Justice



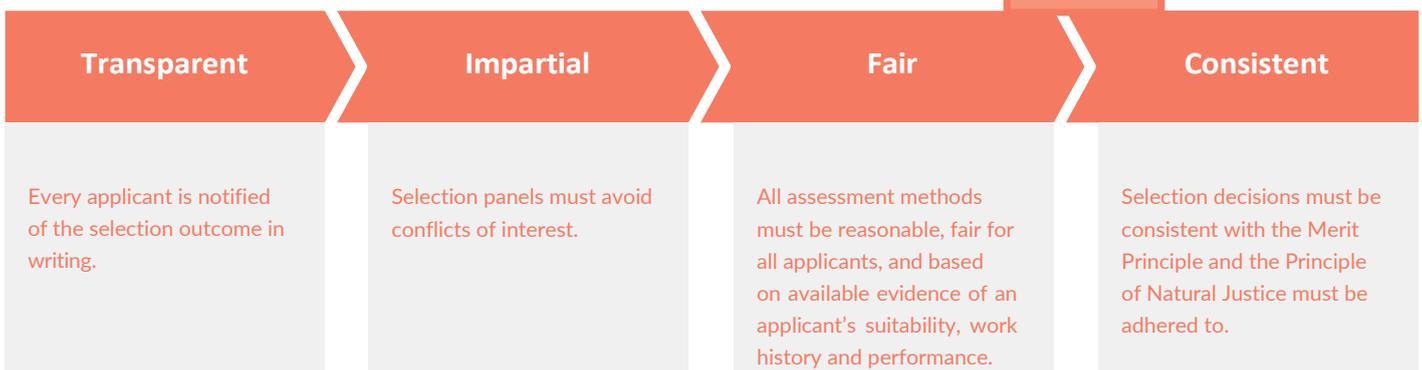
The NTPS is committed to selection processes that are transparent, impartial, fair and consistent.

Not every adverse comment by a referee will give rise to the need to afford natural justice.

Natural justice may apply in a recruitment situation where an applicant, who would otherwise have been selected, is adversely affected by unfavourable referee information.

In that case, before a panel makes its decision an applicant must be offered the opportunity to reply to the adverse comment and provide other referees if they choose to.

The information provided by the applicant must then be considered impartially by the panel before a decision is made about the applicant.



Interviews

Interviews are not mandatory in the NTPS and more than half of all selection processes are finalised without interview.

The decision on whether to interview is made by the panel. It is not an automatic next step after the applications are received or referee checks undertaken.

Interviews are a tool to gather more information about an applicant. A panel should ask itself, do we need more information or are we satisfied that we can make an informed decision without an interview?

Panels are encouraged not to interview existing employees, incumbents or applicants whose capabilities are well known to the panel.

Things to consider

Interviews should be a two-way discussion. Applicants should be encouraged to be involved in the discussion with the panel about themselves, the role and the organisation.

Interviews are not a test, or a tool to assess suitability. Interviews, if held, take place after the panel have satisfied themselves as to the applicant's suitability through thorough referee checks. Set tasks and hypothetical scenarios are not recommended as they do not reflect honest demonstrated work performance. Panels are encouraged not to set tasks or give hypothetical scenarios. Panels will have already obtained information about those skills from referees.

Superior interview performance is not evidence of merit. Remember some applicants are great at interviews, but may not deliver on a daily basis.

Assessment of Aboriginal Applicants First

Aboriginal applicants assessed under a Special Measures plan must be assessed first. If an Aboriginal applicant meets all of the essential selection criteria to the level required of the role the applicant will be selected for the vacancy. The panel will complete the selection report, detailing their recommendation for selection. Where an Aboriginal applicant is found suitable under a Special Measures plan, the selection process is concluded and the remaining applicants will not be assessed.

The panel should list the names of the remaining applicants in the selection report along with the advice that they were not assessed because an Aboriginal applicant was selected under the agency's Special Measures plan.

If the panel does not find a suitable Aboriginal applicant, they must complete a Finding of Unsuitability report and submit this to Public Sector Appeals and Grievance Reviews within OCPE for review and approval. These reports must be emailed to specialmeasures@nt.gov.au.

The review of the unsuitable report will be completed in 2-5 working days. Once the report is approved, a selection panel may assess the remaining applicants.

Copies of the latest selection templates are available at www.ocpe.nt.gov.au



**MAKE
SELECTION
DECISION &
FINALISE**

Make Selection Decision and Finalise

A selection report sets out the panel's recommendation. It explains which applicants were assessed as suitable and which applicant is the preferred applicant and why.

Step one

List all of the applicants who were not shortlisted for further consideration. Provide a clear, but brief reason for each applicant. The explanation should set out, in a few words, why the application was not progressed to the shortlisting phase.

Step two

Provide details of the applicants who were shortlisted and what assessment was undertaken by the panel to determine their suitability. The panel should provide a brief description of the applicant's work history, levels, skills, experience, knowledge, education, qualifications, work samples and performance reports etc.

Next, provide full details of the referees including their position title, and relationship to the applicant (i.e. Supervisor, former Director, Commissioner, Peer)

This section is important. Detail what the referees said, be specific and be clear about which referee said what.

Step three

If an interview was held, provide a summary of the interview.

Step four

Comparative discussion and reasons for recommendation.

The panel must clearly explain why one applicant is more suitable than another. If two or more applicants were similar in merit, explain what the determining factor was that placed one applicant in front of another. Every applicant is different, focus on what separates the applicants.

The comparison should explain, with specific examples and references to work experience, past levels and duties, education and qualifications, skill and potential, why the selected applicant is most suitable for the vacancy.

The analysis should clearly explain which applicants were found suitable and which is preferred.

Step five

The panel recommends the most suitable applicant/s to the delegate for appointment. The delegate cannot be a member of the selection panel.

Panels should limit their findings to one or more of the following:

Suitable and preferred – “The panel determined that John Smith is the most suitable and preferred applicant and recommends their selection to the delegate”.

Suitable but not selected – “Jane Smith was found suitable by the panel, although not preferred in this process. Panel recommends Jane Smith for selection should this or an identical vacancy become available within twelve months from the closing date of advertising.” (PSI 27)

The panel should not disclose its recommendation to any of the applicants until the delegate has approved the selection.

Panel is not required to make findings of unsuitability

The role of a selection panel is to find the most suitable applicant for a vacancy. It serves no purpose to rate applicants as 'unsuitable'.

Public Sector Instrument 27

Public Sector Instrument 27 allows for the appointment of suitable applicants to be placed in the same position or an identical role, if a vacancy arises within twelve months of the closing date of advertising.

Dissenting views / split panels

Dissenting views or split decisions are not uncommon in the NTPS.

The report should always recommend the applicant supported by the majority of panel members. However, if a panel member disagrees with the majority recommendation, they must detail their reasons in the selection report. The panel member must explain why they came to a different conclusion than the majority.

Dissenting views are important and must be noted. A delegate must have all relevant information before them to make an informed decision. Dissenting views are also of interest to the Commissioner for Public Employment if a grievance or promotion appeal is lodged at a later time.

Selection Outcome Advice For All Applicants (SOAFAA)

The NTPS is committed to selection processes that are transparent, impartial, fair and consistent.

Every applicant is advised of the outcome of a selection process.

The SOAFAA details the selection decision and the successful applicant's merit.

The SOAFAA is attached to the notification letters sent to all applicants advising them of the outcome.

The purpose of the SOAFAA is to allow all applicants to self evaluate their merit by comparing themselves to the selected applicant.

This document must be well written. A copy of the SOAFAA should be provided to the delegate with the selection report.

Applicant Care

How we treat an applicant is important to the perceived professionalism and culture of the NTPS. An applicant's experience of the selection process, whether good or bad, may influence their decision to accept a job offer and whether or not they apply for future vacancies.

The most common complaint applicants have about selection processes, is that potential employers never get back to them or they fail to provide information about delays.

Selection processes should be finalised within 6 weeks. If a selection process is taking longer than this, the panel should advise the applicant of the delay.

Finalising eRecruit

The final step in the selection process is finalising eRecruit.

Generally, the panel chair will take responsibility and finalise the selection process through eRecruit.

Ensure that the selected applicant has been contacted and has accepted the role before eRecruit is finalised.

The chair must ask the selected applicant to provide copies of their qualifications as outlined in their resume. These documents should be uploaded to eRecruit before a contract of employment is offered.

The panel must upload the following documents to eRecruit to finalise a selection process:

- Selection Report – signed by the panel members and approved by the delegate
- SOAFAA
- Copies of any NTPS Statutory Declarations and Confirmation of Aboriginality provided to the panel from Aboriginal applicants
- A copy of the approved Special Measures Unsuitability Report
- Copies of the selected applicant's relevant tertiary qualifications as outlined in their resume.
- All other documents relating to the selection process. This includes all referee notes, applicant interview notes, panel shortlisting notes, etc.

